

Captive's Corner



"Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"

2 Corinthians 10:5

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Feelings & Forgiveness

This is a letter written to a student some time ago who said, "Sometimes I feel like I'm real close to God and I've got the Holy Spirit in me. Sometimes in my depression and loneliness I feel God is so far away and that I don't have the Spirit in me anymore." In response to this comment I would first of all say that God understands how you feel. Yet, He

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gives us light where darkness at times seems to prevail. What you need to see is that the Holy Spirit's presence is not primarily a "feeling" but a "knowing." Our feelings change. He changes not. When we turn from our sins and put our trust in Jesus, God does a marvelous thing. He gives us new life by His will - John 1:11-13. This life comes to us in the Person of the Holy Spirit Who indwells us and seals us unto the day of the redemption of our bodies. Now, the book of 1John makes it clear how we know that we are saved and have the Holy Spirit. Nowhere are feelings mentioned as a "proof." Rather, "knowing" and "what we know" is stressed. You may find it profitable to read through this book carefully, noting the many references to "by this we know". In regard to the Spirit, you will notice that this subject is addressed from 1 John 3:24 to 4:16. There you will find that His presence is known primarily by His

confession and teaching. The Holy Spirit confesses that Jesus Christ has come to permanently reside in a bodily form - 1 John 4:1-3; Colossians 2:9-10. Further, He always encourages a confidence in what the apostles have taught, that is, faith in God's Word - 1John 4:5-6. Finally, He testifies to the fact that the Father has sent His Son Jesus to be our salvation - 1 John 4:13-15. In

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Romans 8:15-17 we see that the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are indeed children of God. In all these references the emphasis is on "knowing" and not "feeling" because feelings flow from knowing and not vice versa. We are not to judge reality by how we feel. Feelings are a result of body chemistry. They are, thus, subject to change. Again, He changes not. Your faith needs to focus on God and not yourself. The change in your life needs to come from the inside out. Thus, as you are renewed in the spirit of your mind [Ephesians 4:23] and as your mind is renewed [Romans 12:2], you will find that significant healing will take place that affects your emotions too. Praise God that His salvation affects the whole person we are, yet

let our faith be always focused in God and not in ourselves. God is always present regardless of how we feel or what our circumstances may be. Trust Him, and He will prove Himself ever faithful.

Now, the devil is the great accuser of the believers (Revelation 12:10). He would like to have us doubt God's faithfulness in forgiving and cleansing us. We need to quote God's Word against such accusations.

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Perhaps you could put to memory Romans 8:31-39. These verses have been a great comfort to me when the enemy attacks. I have had a number of students who have written to me and expressed how the Lord had brought comfort to them from the life of Paul in the Scriptures. Paul was originally known as Saul. He persecuted the church. You can read about him in Acts 8:1-3; 9:1-22; 1 Timothy 1:12-17 plus numerous other places in the Scriptures. He wrote many of the New Testament letters. He

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persecuted those who believed in Jesus to the point of death. Yet, God chose him out and sent him forth to proclaim the salvation that can be found in Christ alone. You will notice that in 1 Timothy Paul explains that his life was meant to be an example for those who were to believe on Jesus. If God could forgive him, then He could forgive all who come to Him on His terms. As we repent and put our trust in Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, we can be assured of His forgiveness and acceptance - Romans 5:6-11. Paul is living proof of this fact!

In further considering the subject of the forgiveness of sins, you should always keep in mind that there are two principal types of forgiveness. The first of these is known as judicial forgiveness and the second as parental forgiveness. The first has to do with the penalty of sin, and the second has to do with the restoration of fellowship that is broken by sin.

When we say that the Christian has been forgiven all his sins - past, present, and future - we are referring to the judicial forgiveness of sins. This means that the believer will never have to pay the penalty of his sins because Christ paid the penalty on the cross. When the Lord Jesus died, all our sins were in the future. Therefore, He died for all our sins - past, present, and future. The moment we trust Him as Savior, we receive complete forgiveness of sins as far as the penalty is concerned.

What happens then when a Christian sins? The answer is that fellowship with God is broken. The happy spirit of communion between the Father and His child has been severed. Fellowship remains broken

When a Christian sins, his fellowship with God is broken until that sin is confessed and forsaken - 1John 1:9.

until that sin is confessed and forsaken. When we do confess these sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness - 1 John 1:9. Here we are speaking about parental forgiveness. It is not a judge forgiving a criminal, but a father forgiving his child.

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