

# How to Obtain Certain Knowledge of Forgiveness of Sins

George Müller

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This is taken from the *Autobiography of George Müller: A Million and a Half in Answer to Prayer* published by Westminster Literature Resources. George Müller was an example to us all and one of the most admirable men in relatively recent history that I know of. I highly recommend the *Autobiography*, and you could probably profit from any book by or about him.—PD

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A sister in the Lord in Ireland, who did not see her acceptance before God, and who was habitually without the assurance that she is a child of God, that she is born again, that her sins are forgiven, and that she will be saved, in her distress of mind wrote to me about this time. As her case is by no means a solitary one, but as there are so many children of God *who do not know* that they are children of God; as there are so many whose sins are forgiven who *do not know* that they are forgiven; and as there are so many who will be saved, who *do not know* that they will be saved, and who are continually afraid of what would become of them were they to be taken out of the world; I have thought it well to say something here on this most important subject.

*Question.* How may I obtain the knowledge that I am a child of God, or that I am born again, or that my sins are forgiven, or that I shall not perish, but have everlasting life?

*Answer.* Not by my feelings, not by a dream, not by my experience being like this or that one's, or unlike this or that one's; but this matter is to be settled, as all other spiritual matters, entirely by *the revealed will of God*, the written Word of God, which is the *only* rule, the *only* standard for believers.

*Question.* By what passages, then, for instance, may I make out that I am a child of God, or born again?

In Galatians iii. 26, it is written: "*Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.*" The question is: Do I believe in the Lord Jesus? Do I depend upon Him alone for the salvation of my soul? If so, I am a child of God, whether I feel it or not.

In John i. 11-13, it is written of the Lord Jesus: "*He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to*

*them gave He power (or the right or privilege) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name; which were born, not of blood, not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."* The question here again is simply this, Have I received the Lord Jesus, *i.e.*, Do I believe in His name? If so, I am born of God, I am a child of God, *else I should never have believed in the Lord Jesus; for none but the children of God do believe in Him.*

*Question.* How may I know that my sins are forgiven? Have I to wait till I feel that they are forgiven, before I may take comfort concerning this matter? Or, must I wait till I have in some powerful way a portion of the Word of God applied to my mind, to assure me of it?

*Answer.* This point is again only to be settled by the Word of God. We have not to wait till we *feel* that our sins are forgiven. – I myself have now been a believer for more than nineteen years (*i.e.* in the year 1845). How long it is, since I have had no doubt whatever about the forgiveness of my sins, I cannot tell with certainty; but of this I am quite sure, that ever since I have been in England, which is now about sixteen years (in 1845), I have never once had a single moment's doubt that my sins are all forgiven; and yet I do not remember that I ever once have *felt* that they were forgiven. To *know* that they are forgiven, and to *feel* that they are forgiven, are two different things. – The way to settle whether our sins are forgiven, is, to refer to the Word of God alone with reference to it. In Acts x. 43, it is written concerning the Lord Jesus, "*To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins.*" All the prophets, speaking under the immediate power of the Holy Spirit, bore testimony that through the obedience and sufferings of the Lord Jesus, whereby he becomes our Saviour, all who believe in Him for salvation, who depend upon Him and not upon themselves, who receive Him to be the One whom God declares Him to be, should receive the forgiveness of their sins. The questions therefore to be put to ourselves are simply these: Do I walk in utter carelessness? Do I trust in my own exertions for salvation? Do I expect forgiveness for my sins on account of living a better life in future? Or, do I depend only upon this, that Jesus died upon the cross to save sinners – and that Jesus fulfilled the law of God to make sinners righteous? If the latter is the case, my sins are forgiven, whether I feel it or not. I have already forgiveness. I shall not have it merely when I die, or when the Lord Jesus comes again; but I have it *now*, and that for all my sins. I must not wait to *feel* that my sins are forgiven, in order to be at peace, and in order to be happy; but I must take God at His word, I must believe that what He says is true, and He says, "*That whosoever believeth in*

*the Lord Jesus should receive remission of sins;" and when I believe what God says, peace and joy will be the result.*

Again, in Acts xv. 8, 9, it is written in reference to us Gentile sinners: *"And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as He did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith."* Here we see how the guilt is to be removed from the heart, how we can get a clean heart, obtain the forgiveness of our sins- even by faith in the Lord Jesus. Depending upon the sufferings of the Lord Jesus in the room of sinners, and depending upon His obedience in fulfilling the law of God, His sufferings are considered as endured by us, His obedience as if found in ourselves: in Him (if we believe on Him) we are considered to have hung on the cross, and therefore were punished in Him, on account of which God, though perfectly holy and just, can forgive us our sins for Jesus' sake, as well as reckon us righteous, through faith in the Lord Jesus, who in the room of those who believe on him fulfilled the law of God.

*Question.* How may I know that I shall be saved?

In John iii.16, it is written: *"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."* Notice here in particular: (1) It matters not how great a sinner I am. (2) The promise is positive concerning my salvation, if I believe in the Lord Jesus. (3) I have *only to believe* in the Lord Jesus. No matter how it may have been with me hitherto; if only now I trust in and depend upon the Lord Jesus for salvation, I shall have everlasting life.

Further, in Acts xvi. 30, 31, it is written: *"Sirs, what must I do to be saved: And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."*

Further, in John iii.36, it is written: *"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."* As assuredly as I depend upon and trust in the Lord Jesus for the salvation of my soul, I shall be saved, I have already everlasting life; for He died, to deliver those who believe on him from the wrath of God, under which all men are in their natural state; but if I do not believe in the Lord Jesus, the wrath of God, which rests upon all men in their natural state, will finally destroy me, if I *remain* without faith in the Lord Jesus; for then I reject the one only remedy, in refusing to take Jesus as my substitute, who bore

the punishment that he might deliver the sinner from it, and who fulfilled the law of God that he might make the sinner who believes on him a just one before God.

*Question.* How may I know that I am one of the elect? I often read in the Scriptures about election, and I often hear about election; how may I know that I am a chosen one, that I am predestinated to be conformed to the image of the Son of God?

*Answer.* It is written: "*As many as were ordained (i.e. appointed) to eternal life believed*" (Acts xiii. 48). The question therefore simply is this: Do I believe in the Lord Jesus? Do I take Him to be the One whom God declares Him to be, *i.e.* His beloved Son in whom He is well pleased? If so, I am a believer, and I should never have believed, except I had been appointed by God to eternal life – except I had been made by God to be a vessel of mercy. Therefore the matter is a very simple one: if I believe in the Lord Jesus, I am a chosen one – I have been appointed to eternal life.

Again, in Rom. viii. 29, 30, it is written: "*For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified.*" How are we justified, or counted just ones, before God? By faith in the Lord Jesus (Rom. iii. 20-26). Therefore if I believe in the Lord Jesus, it follows (on account of the inseparable connection of all the precious things spoken of in these two verses), that I have been foreknown by God, that I have been predestinated by Him to be conformed to the image of his Son, that I have been called, that I have been justified, and that, in the sight of God, I am already as good as glorified, though I am not as yet in the actual possession and enjoyment of the glory.

The reason why persons who renounce confidence in their own goodness for salvation, and who only trust in the merits and sufferings of the Lord Jesus, do not know that they are the children of God, that their sins are forgiven, and that they will be saved, generally arises from one of these things: (1) They do not know the simplicity of the gospel; or, (2) They seek to settle it by their feeling; or, (3) They wait for some powerful impulse, or a dream, or something like a voice from heaven to assure them of it, or for some passage being in a powerful way applied to their mind to assure them of it; or, (4) Because they are living in sin. Should the last be the case, then, however correctly we may understand the gospel; however much we may desire by the

Holy Scriptures alone to settle these questions; yea, however much in former times we may have enjoyed the assurance of the forgiveness of our sins, or of our being the children of God, or that we shall be saved: in such a state of heart all peace would be gone, and would not return as long as we live in sin. There may be found much weakness and many infirmities even in the believer who has assurance about these points; but the Holy Ghost does not comfort us, and will not comfort us, if we habitually indulge in those things which we know to be contrary to the mind of God. An upright, honest heart is of the utmost importance in all divine things; and especially with reference to the assurance about our standing before God.