

THE KEY TO PEACE

by A. Marie Miles

Miles's devotional work exploring how Jesus destroys the works of the devil, explaining Christ's redemptive work and how the Holy Spirit's sanctifying power eliminates sin's dominion from believers' hearts through the gospel.

7 Chapters

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01 - What Is Sin?

What Is Sin? When I was a child and teen-ager, I was taught by my parents what the Bible said was right and what was wrong. Many other doctrines in the Bible were taught to me. I read them in the Bible, believed them, lived by them, and was blessed in my soul and life. There came a time in my life that I began to desire for God to teach me personally what was right and what was wrong. I never doubted that the Bible was true but I wanted to say that I believe this or that because God's Word says so. I began to search things out in the Bible. I believe God wants each of us to have this firm foundation to stand upon. So my dear grandson, you are not different from your grandmother. When I finished my search I was glad that I could say I believed this or that because it says in the Bible thus and so. I didn't believe it because someone else said it, but because God had said it. This is the way I want you to know it.

There is one thing that I had when I began my search, that was the Holy Spirit as my teacher. The Bible tells us definitely that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Corinthians 2:14. Since the Bible was written by "holy men of God" who "spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" and it is not "of any private interpretation," then we need to have the Holy Spirit to reveal, or help us to understand all of the Word of God. (2 Peter 1:20-21). Yet there are a lot of the basics that we can know. I do hope that you will understand what I write to you by the help of the Holy Spirit.

First, let us know what sin is. In other words that would be what is wrong. When we find out what is wrong then we can know what is right. Sin means "Willfully breaking religious or moral law." (Web. Dic.) The Bible also gives us the definition of sin. In 1 John 3:4 it says, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth [or breaks] the law [of God]; for sin is the transgression [or disobedience] of the [God's] law." Then in James 4:17 we read, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." We see that sin is either a direct disobedience of God's Word or a willful failure to live by its requirements. It is a serious thing to disobey God's law because it involves the destiny or end of our soul. It means living in either eternal torment or eternal bliss. To commit sin is a terrible thing and a very serious thing. That is the reason we need to search the Scriptures to find out how to live pleasing to the Lord in this world. We can't do this within ourselves. God had a plan for us by sending Jesus Christ to die on the cross for our salvation, so through Christ we can live right.

If sin is disobeying God's Word then we must find out what it says in the Word of God so we can live up to it. First we want to find out why we sin, and then get rid of the cause.

You, of course, know what the Bible tells us about Adam and Eve in the beginning and how they obeyed the devil who talked to them through the serpent. He got Eve to disobey the only commandment that God had given them. She ate of the fruit, which was forbidden, and gave to Adam and he did eat. (Genesis 3:1-24). They no longer could talk to God as before, but hid themselves. Sin separates us from God. God called to them and said, "Where art thou?" They

said, "We hid ourselves because we were naked." God said, "Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat of the tree whereof I commanded you not to eat?" Of course, we realize that because of sin, they knew they were naked. Before they had sinned, they didn't think anything about their nakedness. But after they sinned they made themselves clothes of fig leaves. No doubt they thought quickly of something or they would have chosen something more substantial than leaves. The leaves would soon dry and crack, but they were so ashamed of their nakedness because of their sin. Not only did they need a covering for their bodies but they also needed a covering for their souls. God can't look upon sin with any pleasure. Sin will cause us to be cast out of His presence. But oh, the Lord is so very merciful and He told Adam and Eve that He had a plan for them, so their sins could be covered as well as their bodies. In Genesis 3:15 we read that God promised a Saviour. God spoke to the devil, who had spoken through the serpent, and said, "I will put enmity [or warfare] between thee [the devil] and the woman, and between thy seed [Satan and his servants] and her seed [Christ and His followers]; it [Christ] shall bruise thy head [Jesus broke or crushed Satan's power], and thou [Satan] shalt bruise his heel." In other words we find a promise in this Scripture of Jesus being born. Jesus was the seed of the woman. In Luke 1:31-35 we read how the angel told Mary that she would have a child even though she was a virgin. God would be the father of this child. The angel said, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and ... that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Through Christ, sin could be conquered because He was the Son of God, and not from the seed of man, yet He was called the Son of man because He took upon Him flesh or the nature of man. The seed of Satan are those who have yielded themselves to him and are his servants. Jesus said to some who opposed Him, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." John 8:44. So we note that the warfare would be between the seed of Satan and his servants and the seed of the woman, or Jesus Christ and His followers. Now who will conquer? God said that "her seed, it shall bruise thy head." Jesus Christ would crush or break the power of Satan over mankind and men would be able to become sons of God. Isaiah 53:5 tells us that Jesus "was bruised for our iniquities [or sins]." Praise God for Jesus who conquered the enemy of our soul!

We have established the fact that sin displeases God. He punished Adam and Eve and put them out of the garden, yet He gave them a promise of a Saviour to come. It was over 4000 years before Jesus came. During this time they offered a Lamb, which was a type of Jesus, as a sacrifice for their sins. Today Jesus is our Saviour.

Let us note that in the 21st verse in Genesis 3:1-24, God killed an animal and made Adam and Eve "coats of skin" to wear. It says that God "clothed them." Clothed means "to cover." Here we find that it is a command for us to wear clothing. Paul in the New Testament tells us to dress in modest apparel. (1 Timothy 2:9). In other words we are to be clothed. It is still a sin to go without decent clothing today as it was in the Garden of Eden.

Now one thing that God showed me in my search, was that because Adam and Eve sinned, that sin passed down upon all the human race. Adam was created holy and pure but when he sinned, he lost that purity. When he had a son, the Bible tells us that his son was "after his [Adam's] image" or had the principle of sin within him. (Genesis 5:3). The Apostle Paul tells us "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death [spiritual death] by sin; and so death [or spiritual separation from God] passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Romans 5:12. We see that every child who is born has that sin principle within him. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity;

and in sin did my mother conceive me." Psalms 51:5. Then we read in the Bible in another place where it says, "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies." Psalms 58:3. Thus the Bible explains that children are born with a bent, or inclination, toward sin, but if they die without first coming to a knowledge of sin, they are saved through Jesus' blood. There comes a time in a child's life when he knows he has sinned. He understands it and then he is responsible. The Apostle Paul says, "sin is not imputed [or charged or ascribed] when there is no law [or understanding]." Romans 5:13.

Now you have come to the time in life when you are responsible. You know what sin is. I remember when I realized that I had sinned. I had a big imagination but the time came when I knew the difference between imagining things and telling lies. The Bible says that "all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." Revelation 21:8. So telling lies is wrong and is a sin, as well as many other things that we will mention later.

02 - Jesus Destroys the Works of the Devil

Jesus Destroys the Works of the Devil When we realize that we have sinned and know that sin will keep us away from living in eternity in the presence of God, we are filled with sorrow. First, we do not want to be cast into the "lake of fire," nor be with the devil and his angels as Jesus has warned. He spoke of those being "cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Mark 9:44. The next thing we think of is how Jesus loved us so much, He came willingly to take the punishment for our sins. Sin had to be punished. Man could not redeem us from our sins as all men had sinned. Jesus was innocent and without sin. He was with God from the beginning but He was born of woman, and took upon Himself flesh and blood. He lived here in this world, was mistreated and finally put on the cross to die a horrible death, although He was innocent. Why? Because He loved you and me. "God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." 1 John 4:9. "He that committeth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not committ sin, because he is born of God." 1 John 3:8-9. Through Jesus' death on the cross, sin can be forgiven and we can come into the presence of God. When we realize that we have sinned and are sorry for that sin, we come to Jesus, and with "godly sorrow" ask Him to forgive us. Jesus hears our prayer and forgives us of our sins. By believing that He took our punishment for our sins, in dying on the cross, we are forgiven by God, and all is clear between us and God. Our sins are under the blood of Jesus. In olden times, in the Old Testament, they offered a lamb, but after Jesus came He was the Lamb who was sacrificed on the cross once and forever for sins. John the Baptist said, when he saw Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John 1:29. He will take away our sins, when we confess them to Him, and in prayer, believe that He takes them away. I surely can't forget when the Lord did just that for me. It was wonderful to know that all was clear between God and me. I could sleep better and it was wonderful to know that if death overtook me I would be ready to go. When I realized that I needed to be sanctified, or the sin principle needed to be cleansed out of my heart, I sought the Lord to give me the Holy Spirit. You can't ask forgiveness for the sin that passed down upon all men from the fall, or the sin of Adam and Eve. It has to be cleansed out of your heart by the purging of the Holy Spirit. There are two works in the heart. First we are saved from our volitional sins and then we are sanctified or cleansed of that sin principle or carnal nature. Peter speaks of some receiving the Holy Spirit and said, "purifying their hearts by faith." God had given "them the Holy Ghost." Acts 15:8-9. Then we can have power over all the power of the devil. The works of the devil are destroyed out of our hearts. Praise God forever! It is a wonderful experience.

Oh, how we love our Lord and Saviour for all that He has done for us! How sad we would be if He had not come to this world to take our punishment. How thankful we are for the Holy Spirit that was promised to us after Jesus went away. He told His disciples that the Holy Spirit, or the Comforter, could not come unless He went to the Father. (John 14:1-31).

We read how God gave the disciples the Holy Spirit, after Jesus arose into the skies, after His resurrection from the grave. In Acts, second chapter, they were waiting in the upper room and the Holy Spirit came upon them and God performed a miracle. They spoke the wonderful news and 17 or 18 different nations heard about it in their own language. It was on the day of Pentecost when people from all of these nations had come to the temple to worship God. Many of them believed on Jesus as the promised Saviour, were saved from their sins, and were filled with the Holy Spirit. It's a glorious experience and is for everyone who has been saved from sin.

03 - Sins Named

Sins Named My grandson, let us look at the Bible and see some sins that are mentioned. In Galatians 5:19 we read that adultery is a sin. In Galatians 5:21 it is clearly stated that "they that do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." So there is no doubt about these sins. Adultery means, "violation of the marriage-bed." Romans 7:2-3 says "For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man." We know that when a couple marries, it is for life or until one of them dies. Read Matthew 19:7-8, where Jesus reaffirms this truth.

Fornication is the "illicit sexual intercourse of unmarried persons," which is also adultery. This is a sin. Many today are just living together. This is a sin and a stench in the nostrils of God. It is terrible and so immoral, even if many today are doing it. "But fornication, ... let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints." Ephesians 5:3. "Flee fornication.... What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." 1 Corinthians 6:18-20. You see our bodies are to be kept pure and clean. That means our minds are to be clean and pure also. Sometimes the devil will bring evil thoughts to our minds but we must not think upon them. Think pure thoughts.

God created our bodies and every part is for a purpose. We want to keep our bodies free from impurities. There are urges in our body, and sometimes a drawing to the opposite sex, but we must not let that urge have control. We must keep our bodies under control. The Apostle Paul tells us what he did. He said, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." 1 Corinthians 9:27. Jesus also tells us "that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Matthew 5:28. We need to be very careful of our thoughts, and where our eyes wander. Keep the right kind of thoughts. A mother told her son when he was taking a trip, "Son, never do anything to place your body where your soul would not be the master." Petting and kissing among young people will lead to wrong thoughts and lead them into traps. We need to be careful and watchful about all of these things. "Keep thyself pure." My dear Grandson, we are in a battle in this world against all evil. The devil wants to destroy our souls and cause us to miss eternal life with Jesus Christ, the Lover of our souls. The devil has many agents in the world who also help him. In the schools today your teachers are taught how to change your thinking. They will slowly but surely work on you day by day to do so. Beware of this. Don't let anyone destroy your faith in God, in the Bible, nor in what it teaches as being the Eternal Word of God. Guard this faith and live by it. It means your eternal destiny. Whether anyone says God's Word is true or false, it will still be true. Men's thoughts and ideas will never change God's Word. The next sin is uncleanness. The dictionary says that uncleanness means "morally impure, foul,

filthy, unchaste and obscene." The Bible says, "God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." 1 Thessalonians 4:7. This means that we are to keep ourselves pure in thought, word, and deed. Keep a rebuke in your heart against dirty jokes and those things that lead to impurity. The Bible says, "Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled." Titus 1:15. Homosexuality would come under this sin. The Bible plainly condemns this sin. In Romans we read about the corrupt man and it says, "God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:... For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet [fit]. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness." Romans 1:24-28. It is very plain that homosexuality is a terrible sin. God has a purpose for the use of each member of our bodies and it is not to be used in sinful ways. Sex is for a purpose and that is to bring children into the world and for the purpose of love-making between married couples. But it is not to be abused and temperance is to be used. Temperance is one of the fruits of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:23). Each member is to be used for the purpose that God has intended. Remember this and the Lord will give you understanding.

Lasciviousness means "lustful, wanton, loose; a person who excites lustful emotions in others." Let us study this with careful thought. The world today advertises the fact that this or that will give "sexual appeal." This is lasciviousness. Wearing clothing that does this is sin. Acting in a way to cause others to have lustful emotions is a sin. That is, if a person purposely acts in this way, or dresses in this way. Speaking words and making signs that does this are sins. Oh, God is calling for a pure and holy people! His church, which is made up of holy (sinless) people, is without spot and blemish and has been cleansed and made pure through the blood of Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 5:27). We must be pure to be in it. The next sin mentioned is idolatry which means "divine honors paid to idols, images, or any created object." (Web. Dic.) It also says it means "excessive admiration, or love, for any person or thing." To worship any image or man-made god is sin. There is only one true God and we must worship Him in spirit and in truth. Also we do not want to have an "excessive love" for any person or thing more than our love for God. Some people allow *things* to keep them from having a true love for God. This is a sin. If you let money, possessions, or any person keep you from serving the Lord with all of your heart, then you have an idol. The Apostle John said, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." 1 John 5:21. We are to "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." Matthew 22:37. Surely that means a lot, doesn't it? There can't be one thing or person between us and God. He must absolutely be first in our life. Oh, my grandson, it truly is a wonderful thing to put God first! He is so precious to my soul and I know He will be to yours as you love and serve Him with all of your heart! Jesus has said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Matthew 6:33. What God adds is just perfect even though at the time we might not understand it. The next sin is witchcraft. Today many people are turning to magical powers and are having communion with evil spirits and the devil. This is what witchcraft is. Fortune tellers, spiritualist readers etc. are all of the devil and should never be considered nor tampered with. Many have, in fun, or wanting to know something, imbibed an evil spirit and were

tormented by it day and night. God will protect His people if they will look to Him and not yield to evil spirits. It is dangerous. Read Leviticus 19:31; Deuteronomy 18:10; Deuteronomy 18:12; Acts 16:16-19; Acts 8:11-21; Acts 13:6-12.

Hatred is a sin. Even if someone does us a wrong we must forgive them or Jesus has said that He would not forgive us. (Matthew 6:14-15). Ill-feeling toward someone is a cousin to hatred. We need to forgive and ask God to help us to love everyone regardless of what they do to us. Wrath is also a sin and many times is connected with hatred. We must not give vent to our anger but bring it under control. God has help for everyone who will pray to Him and seek after Him.

Variance means "a verbal strife followed by strained or severed relations: wrangle or squabble: to dispute angrily." This is connected to hatred and wrath.

Emulations means "to strive to equal or excell with a view to out do; ambitious or envious rivalry." In other words stepping on someone else to get ahead of them or others. Oh, the Lord wants us to be considerate of others!

Strife and envyings come under this same thing. We must love every soul and not try to disregard their feelings or desires. Be happy for others to get ahead and "rejoice with them that rejoice and weep with those who weep," is what the Bible tells us to do.

Murderers are those who wilfully kill and are sinners. They must seek forgiveness to be ready for heaven. If a person accidentally kills, that is not a sin, but it is a tragedy. It is the person who purposely kills who is a murderer and a sinner. To take one's own life is a sin, that is if the person is in his right mind. We know that some people's minds are afflicted (or wear out), and they are not responsible, yet there are some close lines even in these cases.

Drunkenness is a sin. Drunkenness is the "state of being drunk with strong drink or alcoholic liquor so that the use of the faculties is materially impaired." (Web. Dic.) Oh, the sorrow and trouble that drunkenness has brought to little children, homes, wives and husbands, mothers and fathers, sisters, brothers and nations! It is a terrible thing! Today there is so much dope being taken. It is a terrible thing to abuse one's body. God will not hold a person guiltless who abuses his body in any manner. Read Proverbs 23:29-32. God has deliverance for all who get into this sin if they will only seek after God. But my dear grandson, flee from all of it. "Touch not the cup." Never even taste it and you will never be a drunkard. Some say they can take it or leave it, but many did that for awhile and today they are on "skid row." They lost their health, their wealth, their children, and their companions. Their life is wretched. Some might say, "It would not happen to me," but they must flee from it as they would a serpent that is ready to strike.

Smoking cigarettes and taking anything that harms the body is a sin. The Bible says, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy: for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." 1 Corinthians 3:17. What could be plainer? My dear grandson, I am expecting you to flee from all of these sins which are against the body which will destroy your body and soul in eternal torment for all eternity. Remember that eternity never ends. There is no time in eternity. Death seals your doom. It will pay to live each day in a way that we will be ready to meet God, or will be ready in that hour of death. It might come unexpectedly.

Seditions and heresies are sins. False teachings which are contrary to the Bible teachings are heresies. They are sin. We want to live according to the Bible and know its doctrines so we can not be led into heresies. So many are being deceived by false teachers. People today believe everything they hear and do not search the Bible to see if it is true. We must not believe teaching from false teachers. Some will say, "But that person has studied the Bible many years and he ought to know." He may have a degree in theology etc., but that doesn't make any difference. We still must stay upon a firm foundation and find it in the Word for ourselves. There is a chain running through the Bible that links truth and it must not be broken, or it will not be truth. We are instructed in the Bible to "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness." 2 Timothy 2:15-16. The next sins that are given are revellings and such like. Revelling means "a noisy or riotous feast; or to feast with joyous or clamorous merriment, boisterous festivity." In other words it means a loud, boisterous manner of acting, or being in a crowd that acts that way. In 1 Peter 3:4 it says for us to have a "meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." This is in harmony with God's Spirit and His Word.

I do trust that you have an idea of what God is expecting of us. In other words, we have listed what the Bible teaches about some things that are wrong, and what is right. As you said, the Bible is a big book and we can't find everything, unless we are familiar with it, so I trust these few things have been a help, as you study them. Remember that we need to have Jesus to help us daily to obey the Word of God and be ready to meet the Lord. First, it takes being saved from our sins, being filled with the Holy Spirit and praying and studying God's Word. It is a precious life when we are in the center of God's will. When we are saved, we can have the fruits of the Spirit in our life which are named in Galatians 5:22-23. They are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance and many other good things that God will give to us as we live and serve Him.

Romans 1:29-32 mentions more sins. It says that those who turn themselves over to the devil to work his evil ways are "filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." What a terrible list of sins! Oh, we must flee from any of them. If you get your dictionary and look up the meaning of each one of these you would see how sinful sin is. No wonder God looks down upon sinful mankind and is grieved. Now mercy is held out to all who will turn to Him and through Jesus Christ seek forgiveness and turn away from sin, but the time is coming when mercy will be withdrawn. This old world will be on fire and only the holy and true will be taken to that prepared place for a prepared people who have sought God. Oh, I surely want to be ready in that day and hour, don't you?

04 - Seeking Forgiveness Was the Key

Seeking Forgiveness Was the Key When I was about twelve years of age, the teacher asked me to erase the blackboard after school. After I finished, I walked down one aisle between the seats. On one girl's desk I saw a match box, and in this box was a tiny doll. I had seen her play with this doll and I thought it was the cutest doll I had ever seen. I never had dolls when I was small, as my folks could not afford to buy me one. I would wrap up a stick or something and carry it around for my doll. So this doll attracted me very much. As I looked at it, I wanted it so very much.

Before I tell more about this incident let us read a Scripture in the Bible which tells us about being tempted to sin. In James 1:14-15, it brings out how it works. "But every man [woman or child] is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Let us see what the word tempted means. Tempt means "to induce; entice; allure." The devil works through us to tempt us. First, we are tempted by our own lust. Lust means an "overmastering desire." Entice means to "attract by offering hope of reward or pleasure." So we see that the devil will induce us to do wrong by placing an overmastering desire for something, which he convinces us will bring a reward or some pleasure.

Note the next verse says, that when this lust or desire for a certain thing is conceived, which means "formed in the mind," or it is decided by the person that he is going to do a certain thing that is wrong, then that brings forth sin. Now sin is finished [completed] when the act is committed. After the act is committed then it brings forth death to the soul. In other words, sin separates a person from God. That means spiritual death. If a person continues to live in sin, or in spiritual death, and then dies a physical death, he would be eternally separated from God. But thank God, this need not be. The key to being restored to God is found in God's Word. Since sin has to be punished, we find that Jesus, the Son of God, was willing to come here, live and die and arise from the grave so we can have forgiveness for our sins, as we, with godly sorrow, seek for it.

Now I will continue with the incident in my own young life. First, I want to say that from a child I loved the Lord and my parents taught me what sin was and I didn't want to displease the Lord. But I was not above temptations. So when I saw this little doll, I was tempted by the devil. I had an overmastering desire to have that doll and I was enticed by the hope of the reward of having it for my own and thought no one would know about it. So quickly I picked it up and took it home. You see, when I let lust, or that overmastering desire, become conceived, or formed, in my mind, and I took the doll, I committed sin. Sin was finished and I was cut off from God. Spiritual death took place in my heart. No longer could I come to God and have communion with Him. Sin had separated me from God. So as the Scripture says, "when it [sin] is finished, it bringeth forth death."

I brought the doll home with me, but oh, I didn't feel good in my heart! I knew I had sinned and I wished I had not taken the doll, but I had it and was on my way home. I came into the house and my watchful mother saw it. She asked, "Where did you get that doll?"

"Old Tennessee gave it to me," I quickly said, which was a lie. Another sin was added to my first sin. The devil not only gets a person to sin but he gets them to commit other sins to cover up the first sin. Thus, he leads people on and on, and deeper into sin they fall. (Old Tennessee was an elderly black man who drove a horse and wagon by our home, filled with junk that he had collected. Sometimes, when he would stop and talk to us children, he would give us some of his junk which we would value.)

I took the doll upstairs to my room and put it in my dresser drawer. I didn't want to play with it. It didn't look so pretty anymore. My heart was heavy. I didn't rest very well that night as I dreaded going back to school. I just knew the teacher would guess that I had taken the doll. To my surprise, nothing was said the next day about the doll. I avoided the girl and hurried home after school. But yet the fact of stealing that doll weighed heavily on my heart. A few days later I took the doll out in the alley and took a brick and smashed it all to pieces and buried it, but that didn't take away the sin or the guilt. I had sinned against God and was still a liar and a thief. Oh, how bad I felt! I had been taught to pray from a little child, and had always prayed, but every time I would try to pray that sin would come up before me, so finally I quit praying.

School was soon out and a few weeks passed by. Bro. John Wilson came to our house from Missouri and held a few nights' meeting at the chapel. One night he preached on hell fire. Oh, I could almost feel the fire of hell around me! I trembled, but hurried out as soon as meeting was over and the invitation had closed. I went home and to bed as soon as possible, but not to sleep. I rolled and tumbled on my bed. The weight of sin was so heavy on my heart that it seemed the mattress was on top of me instead of me on the mattress. I knew I was on the road to hell. Finally, toward morning, I told the Lord that if He would spare my life until I heard the alarm go off in my parent's room that I would get up and go ask my father to pray for me to get saved and I would seek forgiveness for my sins from God. This calmed me, and I lay there waiting. When I heard the alarm, I ran to their room and knelt beside their bed. I began to weep and beg Papa to pray for me to get saved. He prayed for me and I prayed. I asked the Lord to forgive me of my sin of stealing and lying and promised I would make it right. I told the Lord I would tell the girl I had stolen the doll and pay her for it. God took my word for the act and He forgave me and flooded my soul with peace. Oh, I had found the key to peace for my inner longings! The key was a desire to find peace and then obeying God's Word which said, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9. That key opened the lock to my heart and let Jesus come in. Jesus has said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." John 6:63 b. Oh, the peace that filled me and I became a new creature in Christ Jesus! I was happy again.

I had promised the Lord that I would make my sin right when school started. So one day I was sitting behind this girl and I tapped her on the back. I told her about my taking the doll and offered to pay her for it. She said, "I often wondered where that doll went to, but I didn't care anything about it anyway." I insisted on paying her but she said to forget it. Oh, the relief that I then had because the devil fought my making it right by telling me that she would tell every one in school about my being a thief. I never heard anything more about it.

Then I had to make the lie right, for I had told my mother and all of my brothers and sisters that old Tennessee had given it to me. One time in family worship I started to tell it and broke down and

wept, but kept on telling about it. I asked forgiveness and my father said that they all forgave me. I didn't know until years later that none of them understood anything I said because I had cried so hard, but I thought they did and that was what counted. I had obeyed the Lord who makes us know that we are to make our wrongs right. When Jesus came to Zacchaeus' house and he sought salvation from Him, Zacchaeus said, "If I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." Luke 19:8. We must make our wrongs right. If we do, and have repented and confessed our sins, we can hear the same words that Jesus said to Zacchaeus, "This day is salvation come to this house, ... For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:9-10)

I am thankful to say that this was the only thing that I ever took in my life and it was a great lesson to me. Oh, how wonderful it is to be the Lord's! If we love and serve Him, we can have peace in our souls. We might have many problems and troubles in this life but if we have peace in our heart and are in contact with God, these things can't take away our peace and we can face life. The Bible says, "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble." Job 14:1. Troubles will come to us but if we obey God's Word, we can have peace in our soul and be ready to meet the Lord when He comes in the clouds of glory.

I do pray that all who may read this will take the key, which is the Word of God and through obedience use it to unlock your heart and let that Word fill your heart and life, and you will have peace. Every longing will be satisfied as you continue to obey the Word.

05 - The Keys to Continued Peace

The Keys to Continued Peace When a person has confessed his sins with godly sorrow, and they are all under the blood of Jesus that was shed on the cross, he is "born again" and has become a new creature in Christ Jesus. (2 Corinthians 5:17). How precious it is to know that "old things are passed away" and "all things are become new!" His wrongs have been made right, as far as possible, and according to his knowledge. Then he needs to walk in this kind of way and life. It takes some watching and praying to keep the peace in the soul that God has given. Only through the power of the Holy Spirit can one continue in contact with God. After a person has fully surrendered himself to the Lord and has the cleansing work of the Holy Spirit in his soul, he is equipped to go forth and fight the devil who goes around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. (1 Peter 5:8). The devil is no respecter of persons. He is more than a match for the child of God but when the child of God seeks grace and help from God, the devil has to flee. He now needs to know how to face the devil, so he can be "more than a conqueror through Christ Jesus."

We read in James 4:6-8 that first, we need to know that God gives grace or help to the humble. We need to humbly realize our need of God's help. Then we are to submit ourselves to God, draw close to God and "he will draw nigh to you." Every step we take toward God, He will take one toward us. After we are in the will of God and have implored His help, we can then, in the name of Jesus, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." One brother said he talked to the devil just like he did to his dog. He said, "Get out of here!" The devil had to pack his bags and leave. When a person is saved, one of the first things the devil tells him is that he isn't saved. This is a famous trick of Satan and it's sad to say, that he uses it over and over and it has worked on many souls. We need not be "ignorant of his devices." It's a pretty sure fact that you are saved or the devil would not bother about you. So don't let that trouble you, but "resist the devil," or he will take your peace.

Prayer is another thing we must do to keep our peace. God knows what we need before we ask Him, but His plan is for us to ask. Prayer is not just always asking God for something, but it's a means of fellowship with God. It's a communion between God and us that brings love, joy, peace, comfort and all that we need. It's a heart to heart talk to God. In prayer we tell our Lord and Saviour of our great love for Him. In prayer we never cease to praise Him for dying on the cross and taking our punishment for our sins. In prayer we, so to speak, just lift our hearts and minds up into that heavenly realm and we touch heaven. A thrill of heavenly love flows from God down into the very depths of our inner being. Power, strength and grace is given, and with a deep inner joy we go forth and face the world. Others might wonder how we can have the courage to face the hard things, but it's because of grace gained through prayer. Prayer should never be neglected or we will feel our peace slipping away.

Prayer can be a groan, a sigh, a dropping of a tear, a smile, an inner praise going up to God, laughter in the spirit, or an inward or audible "praise the Lord!" Prayer is the sincere desire of the heart or an attitude of the heart. Surely we can "pray without ceasing," as we keep a heart full of

love for our Lord and a feeling of utter dependence upon Him. In living in this way, our peace will be abounding.

Another foe we must watch is self. Often it has been said that we must die out to self, but it goes deeper than just saying it. Self longs to live, but it must be crucified. We must remember that "ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. If we belong to God then we do not belong to ourselves. We must be aware of the fact that self will make many concessions to live. Self sometimes will allow its owner to do many sacrificial deeds if it can live. It will even bear hard things, but it must go. Self must be crucified. We must die to good deeds, and to bad deeds, successes, failures, exaltations, humiliation, friends and foes. Oh, it must not be us but Jesus that will be lifted up in our lives! The Apostle Paul said, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Galatians 2:20. So it must not be self that lives but Christ must live in us.

We need to watch our thoughts to keep our peace. We are told that God "wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." Isaiah 26:3. When our peace is disturbed we need to check to see where our mind has been or what we were thinking about. The mind is the battle ground. The devil has access to the mind as well as God. We are tempted through the mind. The devil will present wrong thoughts and then the Lord is right there to bring us good thoughts or suggest the right thing to do. We need to separate our thoughts. We need to cast out the wrong thoughts and only think on the good thoughts from God. The devil is like a persistent salesman. He will talk and talk at the door and if you are not careful he will get the door open and have his foot in it. If you give him any encouragement he will be sitting in your living room and have his wares all spread out before you. So we must not let the devil get past the door of our mind. Just tell him right off, "I am not interested."

We think of the children of Israel in Egypt, when God told them to put the blood of the lamb on their doorposts one night, so their eldest son would be spared when the death angel passed over. Exodus 12:12-13. The blood on the door was the powerful warning to keep evil from the Israelites on that night when the Egyptians were visited and death was in every home. Just so, dear Grandson, the blood of Jesus on the door of our heart and mind will keep the devil from coming into our mind, sitting down and displaying all of his wares of evil. When tormenting thoughts, thoughts of fear, thoughts of unjust deeds of others done to you, thoughts of self-pity, anxiety, doubts, unforgiveness, mistrust of God, or evil of all kinds appear to take up your thoughts, just resist them and point to the blood on the door of your heart. Those thoughts will have to flee. Sometimes a person can think upon an injustice done to him and it will grow bigger and bigger. The mistake is made by not resisting it in the beginning and forgiving the injustice. God's ways are right, if we will follow them. When bold and daring thoughts move in and are persistent, trying to fill every corner of our mind, we need to point to the blood. They have to leave. Bring the mind under subjection to the blood and think of good things. "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things." Php 4:7-8.

06 - Obedience to God's Word

Obedience to God's Word Be careful to obey the Word of God, and do not let others influence you to do wrong. Be strong and courageous to stand for right and truth. Dear Grandson, there will be many in the world who will sneer at you for your stand for right. Some will persecute you, but don't let this influence you to let down your standard from God of what is right. God expects us to obey Him. Others might try to make you think that the way they have figured it out is right, but still we must obey the Lord. When I was about 13 years of age I learned a lesson on obedience and resisting others influence that I never forgot. I let others influence me to disobey my father's command. It was presented to me in a way so that it seemed that it would be all right, but yet it was a direct disobedience.

Unexpectedly, my parents were to be gone on Sunday. Early that morning my father came upstairs to my bedroom, and told me about their going, and told me to take the three younger children to Sunday school and church services, and then come home, prepare dinner and stay at home until they returned in the late afternoon.

After the morning services, some of the young people wanted me to go home with them for dinner and then in the afternoon they were going to another town close by, and have young people's meeting. I repeated what my father said and told them that I couldn't go. One girl especially began to beg me to go by saying that she was sure my father would not care. I still refused to go, so she talked to her mother about it. Her mother told me that she would take care of the three smaller children if I wanted to go with the young people to the meeting and she was sure my father would know they were in good care. This over-persuasion was hard to turn down, so I went home with them for dinner and to the young people's meeting in the afternoon. I didn't feel very good over it as I knew what my father's command was and I knew that when he told me to do something he expected me to do it. Needless to say, when my father heard about it, I was punished for disobeying him. He also had prayer with me, instructing me to seek God's forgiveness. The good intentions of others did not sway him. He told me I should not let others influence me to disobey him, regardless of what they presented. It grieved him very much to think that I didn't do as he had told me, and he said that he didn't know if he could trust me again. I was very sorry and grieved also, as I did want him to trust me. My dear grandson, God is grieved when we let others influence us to do wrong, even though it may seem right to them. They might present a plausible thing, but if God said for us not to do it, we must not. We must obey God. We are individually responsible to God to give an account for our deeds. We can't tell God that others thought it was all right. That will never excuse us.

We read of Saul, the king of Israel, who let the people persuade him to keep the sheep, oxen, etc. of the wicked nation of the Amalakites, when God had told him to completely destroy everything. The people said that they should take the best and offer them as a sacrifice to the Lord. This might have seemed plausible, but it was a direct disobedience to the Lord's command. The Lord told Saul, "to obey is better than sacrifice." Saul's punishment was great. Samuel, the prophet of the

Lord said, "thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel." 1 Samuel 15:20-26.

God expects us to obey Him and when we do, we will have peace in our souls. Disobedience will bring the disfavor of God upon our soul and it will have to be punished.

Jesus has said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." John 14:15. Love for God will make us careful to keep His sayings and He will give us a peace that the world cannot take away from us. We can't find soul peace in the world. And after all, my dear grandson, we want to live so we can live with our inner self. God created us with a part of Himself in us. There is something within us that looks up to a Creator. Some will disregard the true God and worship the gods of stone etc. They think that will satisfy the longing in their souls but it doesn't. Only when we are in contact with the true God can we find real peace.

Now my dear grandson, and all who read this, take the true key to peace and let it open your heart and by prayerfully seeking God, you can have peace in your soul. I love the souls of all mankind and want everyone who will desire peace in their heart with God, to make it into heaven by observing the Word of God.

—Grandma Miles (A. Marie Miles)

07 - "I Can Handle It"

"I Can Handle It"

"What does Jeff's death mean to me? Well, some kids will probably stop dropping flippies for awhile. I mean, you got to watch that stuff and know what you're getting so you don't take some with too much rat poison in it. Me, I know what I am doing, I can handle it." This was the answer to a question asked of one of Jeff Stewart's friends who came to the cemetery, with other barefooted friends, who were clutching wild flowers, to place on his grave. Jeff Stewart was the son of a Methodist preacher and had refused to listen to his parents. They had pled with him in tears to turn away from drugs. He had gotten into it through others' influence, but when his parents tried to help him, he would generally say, "I can handle it."

Jeff Stewart was a handsome boy, so said his mother, and a B student. He was only 17, but had died of an overdose of barbiturates on August 22, 1970 in a shack that he and his drug addicted friends had built on a side street in Hopewell, New York. In the midst of "rock music" he and his friends "smoked marijuana" and "dropped acid," (LSD) regularly. At times Jeff wanted to get off drugs and had told his mother that he wished he had never started taking drugs, was a little boy again and could start life all over.

There is a struggle going on in the minds of every young teen-ager. At times he is a carefree person but then at other times he tries to act grown up or feels that he knows what he should do and the path he should walk. These are difficult times in a teen-ager's life. Influences from within and from without will cause him to decide upon his course. Parents see this indecision and they try to guide their teen-agers in the right direction. The pastor, Sunday school teacher, and the young people's leader are all interested in the teen-agers and are trying to show them the right way. At times the teen-ager thinks his parents or other spiritual instructors are right, but the crowd at school, and often the teacher, use their influences to pull him the other way. Day after day he is making decisions. The wrong influences seek to turn the teen-ager away from morality and God's Word but they do not give anything to take its place in his heart or erase guilty feelings. Therefore he finds emptiness within, so is compelled to continue to seek something else to satisfy him. Then he is led deeper into grosser evils, trying to "handle" his inner longings.

Some might say, "But how do you know?" I know because I went through those years and I know the influences to which I was exposed. One time I wanted a certain thing or would want to do a certain thing but then later I didn't like or want it. Some at school would present their ideas and my parents and spiritual advisers presented their ideas. In my mind I was continually weighing out what was right or what I really wanted to do. As we think of the young boy who died of continually taking drugs and felt that he could "handle" his own life, we see how he chose to travel the wrong road. Even though his buddies saw what had happened to him they were so stuck on drugs that they, too, thought they could still "handle" their lives. What a mistake they are making and I am sure you are convinced of that fact. None of us are able to *handle* our own lives. When we are born we have within our very nature a bent toward evil. That bent toward evil has to be curbed.

God gave children parents because they needed help to face life and to curb that which was within them that would lead them to the wrong path. Children and teen-agers should recognize this fact and listen to them. Even if you do not want to admit it, you can't *handle* your own life without the aid of your parents. Furthermore you can't handle your life and walk the right path without God's help. The devil works through the influences of others to lead you astray. Only through the power of God can the power of the devil be broken, the bent toward evil be destroyed, and you be able to do the right or choose the right path. Never feel that you can *handle* your own life. No man, woman, child, or teen-ager can *handle* his life or obey the Word of God, which teaches him the way to live in this life and be ready to die, without help from outside of himself. In my early teen-age life there were two verses of Scripture that I had learned by memory which were a guide to me. One was, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right," Ephesians 6:1. The other one was, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16. The first one made me know that God would bless me if I obeyed my parents. Many times my idea of what they required wasn't the thing that I wanted to do, but I obeyed. Why? Because I loved Jesus. I was convinced that I was doomed for hell, but Jesus had loved me so much that He came to this world, lived, and died on the cross and arose again for my salvation. If it had not been for Jesus taking my sins and loving me so much I would be eternally lost. That was a great influence in my life and today I am very glad that I obeyed my parents and also let Jesus handle my life and lead me in a right direction. When teen-agers rebel they are headed for trouble and oh, what great trouble! Let us remember the young man who thought he could handle his life but had a tragic ending and was eternally lost. Dear Grandson, remember the Bible has the answer to every problem, and Jesus will help you handle your life if you will let Him.

* * * * *

"Two Italian boys of New York City were returning from a swim. They were each about fifteen years of age. Pietro had picked up a piece of copper wire and thought he would have a little fun with the third rail of the New York Central track, along which they were walking.

"He poked away around the wooden covering of the rail, but nothing happened.

"That's funny,' he said. 'I guess I didn't touch the right spot.' Then he pushed the point of the wire down underneath the covering.

"There was a flash of blue flame and a shriek of pain as 11,000 volts of electricity shot through the wire. In a moment Pietro's clothing was on fire and his hair and eyebrows were burned off. He tried to drop the wire, as it hissed and sputtered at white heat, but it wouldn't let go. He tried to pull it away, but it stuck to the rail as if it were soldered there. The other boy tried to pull him away, but he was hurled to the ground with a terrific shock. Then the brave fellow threw his rubber coat around Pietro and pulled him loose.

"Pietro started to run but fainted and fell. They took him to the hospital, and the doctor said, 'One chance in a thousand to recover.'

"The boys said they knew there was something dangerous about that rail. They had heard other people say so, but they didn't think it would hurt to play around with it a little.

"Just so, sin is dangerous. It scorches and burns and kills, like the live third rail. People know it, and yet they play around with sin. Many times there are signs near high voltage wires—Danger, Do Not Touch! God has put up some signs, too. In His Word He warns against the danger of sin. If we want to be safe, and happy, we will heed these warnings."

* * * * *

"A minister of Geneva, on a trip to Paris, one day fell into a conversation with a man who began to reason with him about Christianity. The minister answered every argument with a quotation from Scripture—not venturing a single personal remark or application. Every quotation his companion evaded or turned aside, only to be met by another passage. The skeptic became enraged. 'Don't you see, I don't believe your Bible! What's the use of quoting it to me?' he shouted. The minister's reply was another thrust of the Sword of the Spirit, 'If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.' Years passed, then one morning the minister received a letter. Opening it he read, 'You took the Sword of the Spirit and stabbed me through and through one day, and every time I tried to parry the blade and get you to use your hands, and not the Heavenly steel, you simply gave me another stab. You made me feel I was not fighting you, but God.' It was signed by the former skeptic in whom the 'seed of the Word' had finally been mixed with faith.

"Even as the natural seed changes soil into plants, so the living seed of the Word changes the character of the individual who comes in contact with it. For example, in the night of the Dark Ages when the Word of God was planted by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of chosen men, it brought forth the fruit of the Reformation. There was a rediscovery of the truth, that salvation is not by ritual or works, but by faith in Jesus as our Saviour."

* * * * * My grandson, I will close these instructions to you, as well as to all who read them, with a prayer for each one. As a teen-ager I found that it paid to live for God. As a mother I found that God was there to help me in all the needs of life and as a grandmother and a possible great-grandmother, I find great joy in living for God. It pays to put God first in our lives. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added unto you," is the safe way to live because Jesus, our Lord and Master, who has all wisdom has told us.

—Grandma Miles (A. Marie Miles) THE END

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