




Monergism

# **SOLUS CHRISTUS**

THE GOSPEL FOR SINNERS

EDITED BY JOHN HENDRYX



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# **Solus Christus:**

## **The Gospel For Sinners**

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## **Preface**

(Key Quotes on the Gospel)

### **John Calvin**

“There is nothing more notable or glorious in the church than the ministry of the gospel.”

"Men are to be taught, indeed, that the Divine benignity is free to all who seek it, without any exception; but since none begin to seek it, but those who have been inspired by heavenly grace,... not even this diminutive portion ought to be taken from his praise. This is the privilege of the elect, that being regenerated by the Spirit of God, they are led and governed by his direction. Wherefore Augustine as justly ridicules those who arrogate to themselves any part of a good volition, as he reprehends others, who suppose that to be given promiscuously to all, which is the special evidence of gratuitous election. "Nature," says he, "is common to all men, but not grace." He

calls it "a transparent subtlety, which shines merely with vanity, when that is extended generally to all, which God confers on whom he chooses."

### **R. B. Kuiper**

"If it were left to sinners, totally depraved as they are, to respond of their own volition to the gospel in faith, no one would respond."

### **Martin Luther**

"The Law is for the proud and the Gospel for the brokenhearted."

### **D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

We must have the full message. . . 'deliver the whole counsel of God'. . . . It starts with the Law. The Law of God ... the demands of a righteous God, the wrath of God. That is the way to bring men and women to conviction; not by modifying the Truth.... We must confront them with the fact that they are men and that they are fallible men, that they are dying men, that they are sinful men, and that they will all have to stand before God at the Bar of Eternal Judgement....And then we must present to them the full-orbed doctrine of the Grace of God in Salvation in Jesus Christ. We must show that no man is saved 'by the deeds of the Law', by his own goodness or righteousness, or church membership or anything else, but solely, utterly, entirely by the free gift of God in Jesus Christ His Son. . . . We must preach the full-orbed doctrine leaving nothing out-conviction of sin, the reality of Judgement and Hell, free grace, justification, sanctification, glorification. We must also show that there is a world view in the Bible ... that here alone you can understand history-past history, present history, future history. Let us show this great world view, and God's Eternal purpose.... Let us at

the same time be very careful that we are giving it to the whole man ... the gospel is not only for a man's heart, that you start with his head and present Truth to it ... Let us show that it is a great message given by God which we in turn pass on to the mind, to the heart, to the will. There is ever this danger of leaving out some part or other of man's personality... Let us be certain that we address the whole man- his mind, his emotions and his will.

### **William Tyndale**

"Evangelion (that we call the gospel) is a Greek word and signifieth good, merry, glad and joyful tidings, that maketh a man's heart glad and maketh him sing, dance, and leap for joy... [This gospel is] all of Christ the right David, how that he hath fought with sin, with death, and the devil, and overcome them: whereby all men that were in bondage to sin, wounded with death, overcome of the devil are without their own merits or deservings loosed, justified, restored to life and saved, brought to liberty and reconciled unto the favor of God and set at one with him again: which tidings as many as believe laud, praise and thank God, are glad, sing and dance for joy."

### **Modern Reformation** *Good News: The Gospel for Christians* (May/June 2003)

"When God gives orders and tells us what will happen if we fail to obey those orders perfectly, that is in the category of what the reformers, following the biblical text, called law. When God promises freely, providing for us because of Christ's righteousness the status he demands of us, this is in the category of gospel. It is good news from start to finish. The Bible includes both, and the reformers were agreed that the Scriptures taught clearly that the law, whether Old or New Testament commands, was not eliminated for the believer (those from a Dispensational background may notice a difference

here). Nevertheless, they insisted that nothing in this category of law could be a means of justification or acceptance before a holy God ... The law comes, not to reform the sinner nor to show him or her the "narrow way" to life, but to crush the sinner's hopes of escaping God's wrath through personal effort or even cooperation. All of our righteousness must come from someone else-someone who has fulfilled the law's demands. Only after we have been stripped of our "filthy rags" of righteousness (Isa. 64:6)- our fig leaves through which we try in vain to hide our guilt and shame-can we be clothed with Christ's righteousness. First comes the law to proclaim judgment and death, then the gospel to proclaim justification and life. One of the clearest presentations of this motif is found in Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. In the sixteenth century, the issue of law and grace was more clearly dealt with than at almost any other time since the apostles."

**- Zacharius Ursinus, Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism, 1534-83**

The gospel is... the doctrine which the Son of God, our Mediator, revealed from heaven in Paradise, immediately after the fall, and which he brought from the bosom of the Eternal Father; which promises, and announces, in view of the free grace and mercy of God, to all those that repent and believe, deliverance from sin, death, condemnation, and the wrath of God; which is the same thing as to say that it promises and proclaims the remission of sin, salvation, and eternal life, by and for the sake of the Son of God, the Mediator; and is that through which the Holy Spirit works effectually in the hearts of the faithful, kindling and exciting in them, faith, repentance, and the beginning of eternal life. Or, we may, in accordance with the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth questions of the Catechism, define the gospel to be the doctrine which God

revealed first in Paradise, and afterwards published by the Patriarchs and Prophets, which he was pleased to represent by the shadows of sacrifices, and the other ceremonies of the law, and which he has accomplished by his only begotten Son; teaching that the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; which is to say that he is a perfect Mediator, satisfying for the sins of the human race, restoring righteousness and eternal life to all those who by a true faith are ingrafted into him, and embrace his benefits.

**William Perkins (Art of Prophecy VII, [Abingdon, 1970], 341-342).**

“The Gospel, as it teacheth what is to be done, so it hath also the efficacy of the Holy Ghost adjoined to it, by whom being regenerated we have strength both to believe the Gospel and to perform those things which it commandeth”

**Sinclair Ferguson**

The ultimate tragedy of man's self-understanding is that he believes himself to be free, has all the feelings of a free agent, but does not realize that he is a slave to sin and serves the will of Satan."

**Michael Horton**

"Arrested, arraigned, and indicted, in repentance we turn away from ourselves - our untruths, our sins, and our fraudulent claim to righteousness - and in faith we look to Christ for salvation and every spiritual gift."

**Richard Sibbes, The Bruised Reed**

"What is the gospel itself but a merciful moderation, in which Christ's obedience is esteemed ours, and our sins laid upon him, wherein God, from being a judge, becomes our Father, pardoning our sins and accepting our obedience, though feeble and blemished? We are now brought to heaven under the covenant of grace by a way of love and mercy."

### **Thomas Watson**

[Some people being very moral have] "nothing to do with the business of repentance. They are so good, that they scorn God's offer of mercy. Indeed these are often in the worst condition: these are they who think they need no repentance (Luke 15:7). Their morality undoes them. They make a "savior" of it, and so on this rock they suffer shipwreck. Morality shoots short of heaven. It is only nature refined. A moral man is but old Adam dressed in fine clothes. The king's image counterfeited and stamped upon brass will not go current. The moral person seems to have the image of God—but he is only brass metal, which will never pass for current. Morality is insufficient for salvation. Though the life is moralized, the lust may be unmortified. The heart may be full of pride and atheism. Under the fair leaves of a tree, there may be a worm. I am not saying, repent that you are moral—but that you are no more than moral. Satan entered into the house that had just been swept and garnished (Luke 11:26). This is the emblem of a moral man, who is swept by civility and garnished with common gifts—but is not washed by true repentance. The unclean spirit enters into such a one. If morality were sufficient to salvation, Christ need not have died. The moral man has a fair lamp—but it lacks the oil of grace."

## **Joseph Alleine**

[Some people end up] “Trusting in their own righteousness. This is a soul-ruining mischief. When men trust in their own righteousness they do indeed reject Christ’s. Beloved, you had need be watchful on every hand, for not only your sins—but your duties may undo you. It may be you never thought of this; but so it is, that a man may as certainly perish by his seeming righteousness and supposed graces—as by gross sins; and that is, when a man trusts to these as his righteousness before God, for satisfying His justice, appeasing His wrath, procuring His favor, and obtaining His pardon. This is to put Christ out of office, and make a Savior of our own duties and graces. Beware of this, O professing Christians; you are much in duties—but this one fly will spoil all the ointment. When you have done most and best, be sure to go out of yourselves—to Christ; reckon your own righteousness as filthy rags (Phil 3:9; Isa 64:6).”

## **Tim Keller**

The 'gospel' is the good news that through Christ the power of God's kingdom has entered history to renew the whole world. When we believe and rely on Jesus' work and record (rather than ours) for our "

"There are two ways to read the Bible. The one way to read the Bible is that it's basically about you: what you have to do in order to be right with God, in which case you'll never have a sure and certain hope, because you'll always know you're not quite living up. You'll never be sure about that future. Or you can read it as all about Jesus. Every single thing is not about what you must do in order to make yourself right with God, but what he has done to make you absolutely

right with God. And Jesus Christ is saying, “Unless you can read the Bible right, unless you can understand salvation by grace, you’ll never have a sure and certain hope. But once you understand it’s all about me, Jesus Christ, then you can know that you have peace. You can know that you have this future guaranteed, and you can face anything...”

...the gospel is news about what God has already been done for you, rather than instruction and advice about what you are to do for God. The primacy of his work, not our work, is part of the essence of faith. In other religions, God reveals to us how we can find or achieve salvation. In Christianity, God achieves salvation for us. The gospel brings news primarily, rather than instruction. " ...the gospel is all about historic events, and thus it has a public character. "It identifies Christian faith as news that has significance for all people, indeed for the whole world, not merely as esoteric understanding or insight." [Brownson, p. 46] ...if Jesus is not risen from the dead, Christianity does not "work". The gospel is that Jesus died and rose for us. If the historic events of his life did not happen, then Christianity does not "work" for the good news is that God has entered the human "now" (history) with the life of the world to come....the gospel is news about what God has done in history to save us, rather than advice about what we must do to reach God. The gospel is news that Jesus' life, death, and resurrection in history has achieved our salvation...Jesus does not just bring good news; he is the good news.

...The Gospel actually means “good news.” You see it spelled out a little bit when it says “he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ”. Why do we say that the gospel is good news? Some years ago, I heard a tape series I am sure was never put into print by Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones. It was an evening sermon series on 1 Corinthians 15. He clarified how the



Gospel is based on historical events in how the religion got its start. He said there was a big difference between advice and news. The Gospel, he would say, is good news, but not good advice. Here's what he said about that: "Advice is counsel about something that hasn't happened yet, but you can do something about it. News is a report about something that has happened which you can't do anything about because it has been done for you and all you can do is to respond to it.

...So he says think this out: here's a king, and he goes into a battle against an invading army to defend his land. If the king defeats the invading army, he sends back to the capital city messengers, envoys, very happy envoys. He sends back good newsmen. And what they come back with is a report. They come back and they say: It's been defeated and it's been all done. Therefore respond with joy and now go about your lives in this peace which has been achieved for you. But if he doesn't defeat the invading army, and the invading army breaks through, the king sends back military advisers and says . . . "Marksmen over here and the horsemen over there, and we will have to fight for our lives." Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones says that every other religion sends military advisers to people. Every other religion says that if you want to achieve salvation, you will have to fight for your life. Every other religion is sending advice saying "here are the rites, here are the rituals, here's the transformation of the consciousness and here are the laws and the regulations. Marksmen over here and horsemen over there and we are going to fight for our lives." We send heralds; we send messengers and not military advisers. Isn't that clarifying? It's just incredibly clarifying. And it's not like there's nothing to do about it, my goodness. Both the messenger and the military adviser get an enormous response. One is a response of joy and the other one is a response of fear. All other religions give advice and they drive everything you do with fear . . . as you know, when

you hear the gospel, when you hear the message that it's all been done for you, it's a historical event that has happened, your salvation is accomplished for you, what do you want to do? You want obey the Ten Commandments, you want to pray, and you want to please the one that did this for you. If, on the other hand, military advisers say you have to live a really good life if you want to get into heaven, what do you do? You want to pray and you want to obey the Ten Commandments. It looks the same, doesn't it? But for two radically different reasons: One is joy and the other one is fear. In the short run, they look alike. But in the long run, over here we have burn out and self-righteousness and guilt and all sorts of problems. And that's fascinating."

"What must we do, then, to be saved? To find God we must repent of the things we have done wrong, but if that is all you do, you may remain just an elder brother. To truly become a Christian we must also repent of the reasons we ever did anything right. Pharisees only repent of their sins, but Christians repent for the very roots of their righteousness, too. We must learn how to repent of the sin under all our other sins and under all our righteousness – the sin of seeking to be our own Savior and Lord. We must admit that we've put our ultimate hope in both our wrongdoing and right doing we have been seeking to get around God or get control of God in order to get hold of those things.

It is only when you see the desire to be your own Savior and Lord—lying beneath both your sins and your moral goodness—that you are on the verge of becoming a Christian indeed. When you realize that the antidote to being bad is not just being good, you are on the brink. If you follow through, it will change everything—how you relate to God, self, others, the world, your work, your sins, your virtue. It's called the new birth because its so radical"

## **D.A. Carson, from "What is the Gospel?" – Gospel Coalition Address**

The gospel is integrally tied to the Bible's story-line. Indeed, it is incomprehensible without understanding that story-line. God is the sovereign, transcendent and personal God who has made the universe, including us, his imagebearers. Our misery lies in our rebellion, our alienation from God, which, despite his forbearance, attracts his implacable wrath.

But God, precisely because love is of the very essence of his character, takes the initiative and prepared for the coming of his own Son by raising up a people who, by covenantal stipulations, temple worship, systems of sacrifice and of priesthood, by kings and by prophets, are taught something of what God is planning and what he expects. In the fullness of time his Son comes and takes on human nature. He comes not, in the first instance, to judge but to save: he dies the death of his people, rises from the grave and, in returning to his heavenly Father, bequeaths the Holy Spirit as the down payment and guarantee of the ultimate gift he has secured for them—an eternity of bliss in the presence of God himself, in a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. The only alternative is to be shut out from the presence of this God forever, in the torments of hell. What men and women must do, before it is too late, is repent and trust Christ; the alternative is to disobey the gospel.

1. The gospel is Christological.
2. The gospel is theological.
3. The gospel is biblical.
4. The gospel is apostolic.
5. The gospel is historical.

6. The gospel is personal.
7. The gospel is universal.
8. The gospel is eschatological.

### **Mark Dever, from *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism***

"Here is what I understand the good news to be: the good news is that the one and only God, who is holy, made us in his image to know him. But we sinned and cut ourselves off from him. In his great love, God became a man in Jesus, lived a perfect life, and died on the cross, thus fulfilling the law himself and taking on himself the punishment for the sins of all those who would ever turn and trust in him. He rose again from the dead, showing that God accepted Christ's sacrifice and that God's wrath against us had been exhausted. He now calls us to repent of our sins and to trust in Christ alone for our forgiveness. If we repent of our sins and trust in Christ, we are born again into a new life, an eternal life with God. Now that is good news."

### **A .W. Pink**

How may I know I have understood the gospel and that I am elect? First, by the Word of God having come in divine power to the soul so that my self-complacency is shattered and my self-righteousness is renounced. Second, by the Holy Spirit convicting me of my woeful, guilty, and lost condition. Third, by having had revealed to me the suitability and sufficiency of Christ to meet my desperate case and by a divinely given faith causing me to lay hold of and rest upon Him as my only hope. Fourth, by the marks of the new nature within me - a love for God; an appetite for spiritual things; a longing for holiness; a seeking after conformity to Christ. Fifth, by the resistance which the new nature makes to the old, causing me to hate sin and loathe myself for it. Sixth, by avoiding everything which is condemned by

God's Word and by sincerely repenting of and humbly confessing every transgression. Failure at this point will surely bring a dark cloud over our assurance causing the Spirit to withhold His witness. Seventh, by giving all diligence to cultivate the Christian graces and using all diligence to this end. Thus the knowledge of election is cumulative.

"When the believer sins he does not forfeit eternal life, and why? Because it is a gift - a free gift from God. He could do nothing to merit this gift (if he could, it would cease to be a gift: in such a case it would be a reward), consequently, he can do nothing to demerit it."

### **John Colquhoun**

The second Adam's perfect holiness of human nature, and obedience of life to the precept of the law as a covenant, are as necessary to the justification of sinners as is His suffering of its penalty. The doctrine of justification by faith establishes the law, the whole law, the honor of the precept as well as that of the penal sanction. But this it could not do if it did not represent the righteousness of Jesus Christ as consisting in His active obedience as well as in His passive. Active obedience, strictly speaking, cannot be said to satisfy vindictive justice for sin. And, on the other hand, suffering for punishment gives right and title unto nothing, it only satisfies for something; nor does it deserve any reward, as John Owen mentions in his work on justification. Christ's satisfaction for sin could not render His perfect obedience to the precept unnecessary; nor could His perfect obedience make His satisfaction for sin by suffering the penalty unnecessary, because it was not of the same kind. The one is that which answers the law's demand of perfect obedience as the ground of title to eternal life; the other is that which answers its demand of complete satisfaction to divine justice for sin. The meritorious

obedience of Christ to the precept could not satisfy the penal sanction; and the sufferings and death of Christ, could not satisfy the precept of the law. The commandment of the law as a covenant requires doing for life; the curse of that law demands dying as the punishment of sin. These, though they are never to be separated as grounds of justification, yet are carefully to be distinguished. The perfect obedience of Christ is as necessary to entitle believers to eternal life as His suffering of death is to secure them from eternal death. His satisfaction for sin, applied by faith, renders them innocent or guiltless of death; and His obedience makes them righteous or worthy of life (Romans 5:19). As the latter, then, is as necessary to complete their justification, according to the gospel, as the former, so it is as requisite as the former to establish the honor of the law.

### **John Piper**

In Acts 26:17-18 Jesus told Paul to do something that only Jesus can do. But that didn't stop Paul from obeying and being used as a means to accomplish Jesus' end. "Don't stop because you can't. Of course you can't. But the fact that you can't make electricity or create light never stops you from flipping light switches. The fact that you can't create fire in cylinders never stops you from turning the car key. The fact that you can't create cell tissue never stops you from eating your meals. So don't let the fact that you can't cause the new birth stop you from telling the gospel. That is how people are born again—through the living and abiding word, the good news of Jesus Christ."

### **C.S. Lewis**

We must not suppose that if we succeeded in making everyone nice we should have saved their souls. A world of nice people, content in

their own niceness, looking no further, turned away from God, would be just as desperately in need of salvation as a miserable world.

### **Graeme Goldsworthy, Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics**

"The gospel is the event (or the proclamation of that event) of Jesus Christ that begins with his incarnation and earthly life, and concludes with his death, resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father. This historical event is interpreted by God as his preordained programme for the salvation of the world...It cannot be stressed too much that to confuse the gospel with certain important things that go hand in hand with it is to invite theological, hermeneutical and spiritual confusion. Such ingredients of preaching and teaching that we might want to link with the gospel would include the need for the gospel (sin and judgment), the means of receiving the benefits of the gospel (faith and repentance), the results or fruit of the gospel (regeneration, conversion, sanctification, glorification) and the results of rejecting it (wrath, judgment, hell). These, however we define and proclaim them, are not in themselves the gospel. If something is not what God did in and through the historical Jesus two thousand years ago, it is not the gospel. Thus Christians cannot 'live the gospel,' as they are often exhorted to do. They can only believe it, proclaim it and seek to live consistently with it. Only Jesus lived (and died) the gospel. It is a once-for-all finished and perfect event done for us by another."

### **Jeremiah Burroughs**

The gospel of Christ in general is this: It is the good tidings that God has revealed concerning Christ. More largely it is this: As all mankind was lost in Adam and became the children of wrath, put under the sentence of death, God, though He left His fallen angels and has reserved them in the chains of eternal darkness, yet He has

thought upon the children of men and has provided a way of atonement to reconcile them to Himself again...Namely, the second person of the Trinity takes man's nature upon Himself, and becomes the Head of a second covenant, standing charged with sin. He answers for it by suffering what the law and divine justice required, and by making satisfaction by keeping the law perfectly, which satisfaction and righteousness He tenders up to the Father as a sweet savor of rest for the souls that are given to Him...And now this mediation of Christ is, by the appointment of the Father, preached to the children of men, of whatever nation or rank, freely offering this atonement unto sinners for atonement, requiring them to believe in Him and, upon believing, promising not only a discharge of all their former sins, but that they shall not enter into condemnation, that none of their sins or unworthiness shall ever hinder the peace of God with them, but that they shall through Him be received into the number of those who shall have the image of God again to be renewed unto them, and they they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

### **John Calvin**

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast made known thy law, and hast also added thy gospel, in which thou callest us to thy service, and also invitest us with all kindness to partake of thy grace; O grant, that we may not be deaf, either to thy command or to the promises of thy mercy, but render ourselves submissive to thee everywhere, and so learn to devote all our faculties to thee, that we may in truth avow that the rule of a holy and religious life, has been delivered to us in thy law, and that we may firmly adhere to thy promises, lest through any of the allurements of the world, or through the flatteries and delusions of Satan, thou shouldst suffer our minds to be drawn away from that love which thou hast once for all manifested to us in thine



only begotten Son, and in which thou daily confirmest us by the teaching of the gospel, until we at length shall come to the full enjoyment of this love in that celestial inheritance, which has been purchased for us by the blood of thine only Son. Amen.

## **Notes on Our Ongoing Need of Redemption as Christians**

**by John Hendryx**

"Fear, lest, by forgetting what you are by nature, you also forget the need that you have of continual pardon, support, and supplies from the Spirit of grace, and so grow proud of your own abilities, or of what you have received from God, and fall into condemnation ... Fear, and that will make you little in your own eyes, keep you humble, put you upon crying to God for protection, and upon lying at his footstool for mercy; that will also make you have low thoughts of your own parts, your own doings and cause you to prefer your brother before yourself. And so you will walk in humiliation and be continually under the teachings of God, and under His conduct in your way, God will teach the humble. "The meek will He guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach His way." - Psalm 25:9 (John Bunyan - The Fear of God, page 96)

When the Lord opened my heart to the gospel in December of 1985, He set me on a radical new course, having delivered me from a wild life which was characterized by various anti-social behaviors, selfishness, drugs, crime, and the occult. Out of the most unlikely place, as I was reading the Scripture, the Lord revealed to me my lost condition: that I was without hope save in the mercy of Jesus Christ alone. In a moment, the Holy Spirit graciously united me to Christ, adopted me into God's family, turning me from my idols to serve the Living and True God. I reflect back with awe as I consider that during the honeymoon period of my newly granted life in Christ, how the Lord actually poured out on me an extraordinary grace to overcome some of my previous bad habits and gave me a remarkable heart for prayer, especially for the lost. With zeal and great affection my greatest desire was to follow and obey the Lord. He stirred my heart to pray for a couple hours each morning as I arose, knowing that I must call down blessing from God if I was to have any power to live effectively during this age. And the result was much fruitfulness and effective personal and corporate ministry to the glory of God.

Well one day in His great wisdom ... and for His sovereign good purposes, God decided to remove part of that extraordinary initial grace. I don't know if you have had a similar experience but the first years after conversion I felt invincible, that all sins were there to be overcome and souls were there to be harvested. There was a zeal that felt as if I would never fall, yet one day, perhaps due to my great personal and ministry success, and God wanting to show me what was really dormant in my heart, allowed a subtle pride began to creep in. Even though I knew intellectually that my conversion and newfound devotion were all a gift from God, there was self-righteousness which entered my heart in my daily life. I began to believe the lie which presumed that it was my own zeal, my own prayers and my own obedience which kept me in good standing with

God. As a result, Christ's finished work became increasingly minimized by my own efforts and activism. The result was fruitlessness and sin. And when I fell into sin I would hold in the guilt because I considered repentance as something more related to what people do at the beginning of their Christian life. I feared to look at myself in the mirror of God's word and so hesitated to acknowledge my weakness. Christians were not supposed to be like this, especially me. Pride kept me from recognizing how largely dependant I still needed to be on Christ every day. Being in a far away land I was not able to access good teaching or shepherding, and my understanding became distorted by my sin. A moralistic strain became somewhat more evident in my Christian walk. I had become too reliant on my successful walk in the past and forgot, that all I had was wholly of the Lord, a gift from Christ and not something self-generated.

To my surprise, this forgetfulness, though evil on my part, was in God's plan and He used for good. Over an extended period, since I am a slow learner, He again took me back showed me the basics that He was God, and I was not. As the majesty of God grew larger in my eyes, there was an increasingly uneasy sense that, even as a Christian I fell woefully short of obeying God's clear commands to love Him with all my heart, mind, soul, and strength and my neighbor as myself. In light of God's holy law I saw myself as, not getting better, but increasingly aware of my own sinfulness. But as it turns out, while this "classroom" revealed my own corrupt heart yet it was for my own benefit so the Lord could shine a light on once dark recesses of my being which were not previously exposed. I learned from this that inwardly, as we grow in grace, the greatness of God (and what Christ has done for us) increases in our hearts, while we become less. In fact it is normal that as we grow in the Lord our sense of our own sinfulness and ill-deserving lives may often even become more

apparent. However, at the same time, this is in the Lord's plan and He uses it to make us simultaneously more dependent on Christ. And thanks be to God, that in Christ, God does not treat us as our sins justly deserve ... and that is something we need to remind ourselves, and praise Him for, daily.

Ichabod S. Spencer once said, "To cut off the sinner from all reliance upon himself, his merits and his powers; and throw him, naked and helpless, into the hands of the Holy Spirit to lead him to Christ in faith; should be the one great aim of the ministry." So the way God works in us through the gospel is that as the Holy Spirit broods over us prior to redeeming us, and works repentance and faith in us by confronting our self-righteousness and spiritual blindness such that our heart recognizes that we have no hope unless we throw ourselves entirely on Christ's mercy alone. With a heart renewed by the Holy Spirit we then repent of known evil and, just as important, of trusting in any and all good works. When the Lord opens our heart to the gospel and unites us to Christ through faith, the Spirit of God is said to seal us for the day of redemption, thus guaranteeing our inheritance (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13, 4:30). **To many Christians the gospel ends there as a one time event.** It is often seen as some past experience having happened at the time of conversion before we graduate on to "higher" truths. But, may I suggest that this most foundational understanding of the gospel is also the basis of our ongoing relationship with Jesus Christ? While our ultimate redemption is as certain as Christ is risen, he still reminds us as Christians that apart from Him we can do nothing (John 15:5). I intend to show this to scripturally be the case in the next few paragraphs.

Its like this: Just as when the gospel saved us, as Christians the Word of God still comes to us in divine power so that our self-complacency

is shattered and our self-righteousness renounced ... the Holy Spirit still reminds us of our woeful, guilty, and lost condition without Christ and when, as our Father, He lovingly confronts the idols in our heart, so the Spirit again reveals to us our only hope to be the sufficiency of Christ to meet our desperate case ... and a divinely given faith still causes us to lay hold of and rest upon Christ as our only hope for every situation we face. No amount of my own good works will make me more accepted with God. Christ is still all in all so I do good works not in order to be redeemed but because I am redeemed in Christ and must hold that ever before me, by God's grace.

We all agree that the event of conversion did have a beginning at some point in the past, but I cannot emphasize this too much: the recognition of our spiritual helplessness and bankruptcy does not end at the time of our conversion. The means which God used to bring us to faith is much the same means he uses to sanctify us and strip us of our remaining idols as we grow into Christ's likeness. This gospel is never something which a Christian graduates from because the gospel continues to be the central means of the Christians' growth and relationship to God. A.W. Pink got it right when he said: "Just as the sinner's despair of any hope from himself is the first prerequisite of a sound conversion, so the loss of all confidence in himself is the first essential in the believer's growth in grace." As the Spirit now enables us to abide in Christ, God continues to remove the functional idols from the Christians' heart. Since we continue to be susceptible to sin, the ongoing characteristic in every encounter and situation in our Christian lives should be the gospel. The gospel for salvation and the gospel for loosening the grip we have on the idols which still captivate our hearts. Only as we exhibit real acknowledgement of our personal weaknesses daily will we begin to live redemptively on a daily basis. We then allow the world to see

that we are about Christ, and not about ourselves or our moral programs. Christianity is not for those unwilling to constantly face their weaknesses for in them God's power is most revealed in us (1 Cor 1:25, 15:43; 2 Cor 11:30, 12:5,9). But this is one of the hardest lessons to learn.

But what does this mean in an everyday practical way?

It means that since we have complete forgiveness in Christ we no longer need to fear approaching Christ when we fail. In fact, he encourages it. No more excuses or blaming others for our sin since we need no longer deny we are weak. Next is also means we recognize that our growth in grace is frustrated every time we have counterfeit hopes ... when we are trusting in something other than Jesus Christ, that is, letting some other idol capture our highest affection. These hopes or idols could be anything, including money, sex, being well-thought of, Christian activity and even theological knowledge. You see God is not simply repairing the house we already have, he wants to demolish it. It is a false gospel which says that you are ok and God just wants to improve you. No, God wants to remove all the false foundations and beams you have erected in your house and replace them entirely with new ones. The gospel is not about moral improvement but about making a new man. Our inability to grasp this means that we have a serious gap in our apprehension of the gospel. Our identity as Christians is subverted when the holes in our lives are filled with anything other than Christ. Our relationship to God and others suffer as a result.

I want you to take a close look with me at a passage in 2 Peter 1:3-8.

**“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him** who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has

granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, **having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.**”

If you are going to take away anything from this article, take this away: The reason, Peter says, that your Christian life is ineffective and unfruitful and still laden with sin is not because you have not tried hard enough, but rather, that you have forgotten the gospel ... forgotten what Christ has done for you. You have forgotten to apply the gospel to every situation.. The ramifications of this are profound. And take note, Peter also says that in the gospel He has provided everything we need for life and godliness NOW. This is why it is so essential for Christians to gather together every week to encourage one another and hear the pastor remind us what Christ has done, and is doing for us, through the Holy Spirit who unites us to Him. The people Peter describes in the above passage are nearsighted and blind to how the gospel applies today for them as Christians. That is why they do not grow in grace and exhibit the fruit of sanctification such as faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, and brotherly love in increasing measure. Instead of simply attempting to obey the commands with our sheer willpower, Peter says that it is our constant need to feed on Christ, forsaking our

self-sufficiency that is the only means God has provided if we are to live God-glorifying lives. So the gospel is not only for our conversion but for our growth in grace as Christians. Do not underestimate your own tendency to sin and misapprehend the current benefits of the gospel available for you in Christ.

One of the biggest problems of preaching today is that it does not use the gospel to meet all the specific challenges we face in today's world. The prevalent moralistic "how-to" sermons all but forsake Christ except in name. As a result, our identities get taken up by personal achievement and not the gospel ... but the gospel strips us of these self-justifying illusions and gives all glory to Christ. We constantly are tempted to chase after Christ-replacements finding some other way to justify ourselves aside from Christ. But we must learn to distrust our own hearts because our natural blind tendency as Christians is not to view ourselves as desperate sinners, thus failing to see that we need an ongoing Savior. We must never see Jesus as Lord and not, at the same time, as Savior, even after conversion. The converse is also true, as Lord and Savior are inseparably intertwined as a package. Seeing Jesus only as Lord leads to judging ourselves by our morals, where we inevitably compare ourselves to others, and boasting or envy is usually the unintended consequence. Our personal virtue then functionally becomes a savior. But when we come to understand the gospel of free grace in Christ, as we should, then all pretence falls away because I see myself as I really am ... a sinner who justly deserves the wrath of God save for Christ's mercy alone. Only then will we rightly have true sympathies and union with the poor, the disenfranchised, the racist, the proud, and the criminal, because that's me, if left to myself. It is the grace of God ALONE that makes us to differ, and so what free grace does is that it makes it so that I can only point to Jesus and what He has done for me, for in the gospel there no longer anything I can point to in myself which makes



me superior to others in light of God's majesty and holiness. Therefore a robust Calvinistic understanding of the sovereignty of God and the finished work of Jesus on our behalf would go a long way in recovering the gospel which is essentially lost in most modern evangelicalism.

It is this forgetting of the gospel which creates the empty hole in our hearts which tempts us to replace our identities with, or justify ourselves with some God-replacement. Our identity then becomes rooted in something other than God's grace. The nature of our hearts are such that it will seek something to fill that hole if left void. Even as Christians we can become blind to our spiritual condition and daily need for Christ to rescue us. Nothing gives you standing before God, save Jesus Christ and Him alone: Not your performance; not your knowledge of the Bible; not your activism in confronting evil in society or others and not your acceptance with others. All of these can potentially become idols for us and will try to replace our dependence and sweet communion with Christ.

The greatest danger in the church today is not some societal immorality "out there" but in our misapprehension of the gospel. Because so many have not heard a clear gospel, the church itself is one of the greatest mission fields. I fear that a significant percentage of evangelicalism is now not much better off theologically than the semi-Pelagianism of the Roman Catholic Church at the time of the Reformation: Recovering the gospel for Christians and non-Christians, therefore, must be our top priority. The gospel teaches that we are much worse off than many of us are willing to hear so we are tempted to subtly change the gospel that will, in some way, appeal to our self-righteousness.

Consider that as Christians whenever we become angry, covetous, and proud or break any of God's commands it is because, at that moment, we fear and worship something else more than we do God. As an example: a woman grows in bitterness toward her husband who is not spending enough time with his young boy. She fears that her son will grow up receiving bad influences and go down the wrong road. She follows Christ but says the one thing she would not endure is if her son went down a bad path in life. If something like this happened, she might lose her faith in God. While it is right to have good intentions for our children, this woman is letting her son become an idol that replaces the true God. This person cannot be helped with mere psychological counseling. Her real problem is a "worship disorder". She must see that her justification comes from Christ and that He alone can fill that gap she has been filling with false gods.

The work of God in the Christian is to grow them in grace by the ongoing process of eliminating these gospel replacements. He does this by shining his light in the dark corners of our hearts, in places we hardly knew were dens of iniquity. Painful though it may be at the time, he does this for our good and our eternal felicity. Sin arises in our hearts when we replace fear of God with the fear of some created thing. In their book *How People Change*, Timothy Lane and Paul David Tripp write,

“While external conditions can be very influential in our lives and should not be ignored, the Bible says that they are only the occasion for sin, not the cause. Difficulties in life do not cause sin. Our background, relationships, situation, and physical condition only provide the opportunity for the thoughts, words, and actions to reveal whatever is already in our hearts. Our hearts are the ultimate cause of our responses, and where the

true spiritual battle is fought ... [while] we must never minimize our suffering - ours or anyone else's ... we must make the important distinction between the occasion for sin and the ultimate cause of sin. This will determine what you think the solution to the problem will be ... The bible says that my real problem is not psychological (low self-esteem or unmet needs), social (bad relationships and influences), historical (my past), or physiological (my body). They are significant influences, but my real problem is spiritual (my straying heart and my need for Christ). I have replaced Christ with something else, and as a consequence, my heart is hopeless and powerless. Its responses reflect its bondage to whatever it is serving instead of Christ. Ultimately my real problem is a worship disorder."

It is when we set our hopes on something other than God to add meaning, hope and justification to our life that we fall into sin. So our growth in Christ is essentially the ongoing removal of deeply buried idols. Christ has redeemed us, is redeeming us and one day will consummate our redemption. Idols often begin as good things in and of themselves like work, leisure, marriage and children but become sin when we make them the highest good in our lives. According to Paul in the Epistle to the Romans it is when we take these good things of creation and let them take the place of God (Rom 1:23). Sinfulness is the inevitable result. Good things like respect, material goods and family become the object of worship and so we conclude that the true God cannot help and we must be in control. When our desires are not met we will use sinful ways to meet them ... and understanding this opens up the opportunity to apply the gospel to every situation. Consider this; both hardship and blessings both help us to see the idols of our heart, our God replacements. Our responses to hardship and blessing show what we most value and give weight to. Our sin reveals what we fear. But union

and identity with Christ will override whatever struggle you may be going through at the moment. We are not merely to follow Christ's example, which by itself would lead only to despair, but we must daily come to Him for the mercy and grace if we are to become like him.

"He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it." (1 Thessalonians 5:24)

## **Part One:**

### **Intro to the Christian Faith**

#### **What is the Gospel?**

**by John Hendryx**

"...Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?...If you would enter life, keep the commandments."

- Matthew 19:15-17

"God bids us do what we cannot, that we may know what we ought to seek from him."

- Augustine

"For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin."

- Rom 3:20

In short, the Gospel is the life-altering news that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became man, lived a sinless life under the Law, died for sinners and rose again to reconcile them to himself, eternally victorious over every enemy that stood between God and man. Now, because of this redemptive work, there is nothing that separates those who believe from their Creator and all the benefits that He promises in him. D.A. Carson says the gospel centers "upon Jesus Christ and what God has done through him. The essential points of the gospel are Jesus Christ's status as the Son of God, his genuine humanity, his death for our sins, his burial, resurrection, subsequent appearances, and future coming in judgment. That no one is justified but in the gracious work of Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection. It is not merely a recital of theological truths and historical events; rather, it relates these truths and events to situations of every individual believer."

But in order to fully understand what the Gospel is, it is important to understand why the Gospel is needed.

It is helpful to see the gospel in the context of human history starting with God's creation of all things, man's rebellion against the Creator, his subsequent fall into corruption and God's redemption of that which was lost. Adam, the first man, had the capacity to do every good work the law required; which men, since the fall, have not. Having fallen headlong into sin, God cursed Adam with death (Gen 2:17, 3:19-22), and with the removal of His Spirit (1 Cor 2:14), a penalty he passed on to all his posterity. Man squandered his stewardship and put himself in the position of a moral debt he

cannot repay. Now mankind's spiritually bankrupt condition and fallen nature, which is beyond repair, render it necessary that if he is to be restored, the help will have to come from the outside. That redemption comes from God and comes in the form of the gospel. This gospel is not something man made up or a well-informed opinion, but is good news directly revealed from Almighty God regarding what He has done in Jesus Christ to rescue all those who have called on His name. Yes, it is a divine rescue, a complete deliverance ... not advice, not a moral improvement program, nor a philosophy of life, since we need sovereign mercy, not assistance. The proud, or those who fail to see their moral impotence to save themselves, will reject this gospel. But this is GOOD NEWS to the poor and broken hearted, (the spiritual bankrupt who have lost all confidence in their own efforts) ... So all you poor, broken sinners, abandon despair and banish your laments because of what God has done in His Son, Jesus Christ the Messiah to deliver His people from their sins.

I once heard it said that there are two religions in the world: 1) human attainment and 2) Divine accomplishment. Lets consider the first one; human attainment, which is the natural inclination of us all. In His Law, God calls us to perfect obedience to His holy commands, yet an honest assessment of ourselves will force us to acknowledge that we all fall woefully short of doing so, leaving no hope in ourselves. But in the Gospel, Jesus mercifully obeys the commands for us. Christ's full obedience to all the prescriptions of the divine law...and His willing obedience in bearing all the sanctions imposed for our disobedience to that law is both the ground of God's justification of sinners like us and makes available a perfect righteousness that is imputed or reckoned to those who put their trust in him. In other words, The gospel is not about any merit I have, but is based upon Jesus' Person and merit alone. It is not what

we have done for Jesus, but what Jesus has done for us (Rom 5:19, 2 Cor 5:21, Phil 2:8). Where Adam failed, Jesus prevailed. It is God's promise to us, not our ability to keep our promise to Him. In the covenant rainbow sign with Noah, God says He "remembers" never to flood the world again, so likewise in the covenant in Christ's blood, God "remembers" not to treat us as we justly deserve for our sins. The mystery of God has been made manifest in the Person and work of the Son, who, in his wrath absorbing sacrifice, frees the prisoners, gives sight to the blind, breaks loose the chains and changes hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. We were once taken captive to do Satan's will and could not escape using our own resources, but Christ has set us free. Christ, in His cross work, does for us what we could not do for ourselves. He lived the perfect life that we should have lived and died the death we should have died, in order to free us so that we might then proclaim His excellencies, make known his gospel and spread justice and mercy to the poor.

Dr. Tim Keller once said "...the gospel is news about what God has already done for you, rather than instruction and advice about what you are to do for God. The primacy of his work, not our work, is part of the essence of faith. In other religions, God reveals to us how we can find or achieve salvation. In Christianity, God achieves salvation for us. The gospel brings news primarily, rather than instruction. " ...the gospel is all about historic events, and thus it has a public character. "It identifies Christian faith as news that has significance for all people, indeed for the whole world, not merely as esoteric understanding or insight." [Brownson, p. 46] ...if Jesus is not risen from the dead, Christianity does not "work". The gospel is that Jesus died and rose for us. If the historic events of his life did not happen, then Christianity does not "work" for the good news is that God has entered the human "now" (history) with the life of the world to come....the gospel is news about what God has done in history to

save us, rather than advice about what we must do to reach God. The gospel is news that Jesus' life, death, and resurrection in history has achieved our salvation...Jesus does not just bring good news; he is the good news."

There is no salvation outside of the Lord Jesus Christ. So trust in Christ and not in your own righteousness. But some refuse the free gift of God because they trust in their own goodness. As the Puritan Thomas Watson once said:

[Some people think] ...they are so good, that they scorn God's offer of mercy. Indeed these are often in the worst condition: these are they who think they need no repentance (Luke 15:7). Their morality undoes them. **They make a "savior" of it**, and so on this rock they suffer shipwreck. Morality shoots short of heaven. It is only nature refined. A moral man is but old Adam dressed in fine clothes. The king's image counterfeited and stamped upon brass will not go current. The moral person seems to have the image of God—but he is only brass metal, which will never pass for current. Morality is insufficient for salvation. Though the life is moralized, the lust may be unmortified. The heart may be full of pride and atheism. Under the fair leaves of a tree, there may be a worm. I am not saying, repent that you are moral—but that you are no more than moral. Satan entered into the house that had just been swept and garnished (Luke 11:26). This is the emblem of a moral man, who is swept by civility and garnished with common gifts—but is not washed by true repentance. The unclean spirit enters into such a one. If morality were sufficient to salvation, Christ need not have died. The moral man has a fair lamp—but it lacks the oil of grace."



Jesus is Lord and creator - the only rightful king of all creation ... king of all things both seen and unseen. To those who worship the false idols of their hearts (any God-replacement) take heed ... Jesus will soon be invading with His armies and will overthrow his enemies and all injustice with the breath of His mouth. But He is offering pardon in advance of His invasion to all those who receive Him (John 1:12, 13). Those who have joined themselves to Him now before He invades will be considered His ally and He will raise them up to be co-heirs with Christ as sons. The alternative is to be under the wrath of the king. We herald this announcement: that the True King is on the throne and he'll be invading. The gospel is not merely an invitation it is a command to all those going their own ways. Will you heed the command? Jesus is Lord, repent and believe."(Bill Wilder) But because of the blindness sin has cast over us, Jesus says, no one can believe in Him unless the Father grants it through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit (John 6:63-65). So those who, by the grace of God, trust in Jesus and His work can be assured, on the sure testimony of Scripture, that their sins are forgiven and have the promise of God: eternal life.

### **To Summarize:**

#### **Man was created to glorify God & Enjoy Him forever**

"Worthy are you, our Lord and our God to receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things." (Rev 4:11) "Do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:31)

#### **Man has failed to glorify God & is under His just condemnation**

"For all have sinned..." (Rom 3:23) The wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23) "These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction" (2 Thes 1:9)

## **Jesus fully bore the wrath and suffered the punishment sinners deserve**

Not wishing that sinners perish forever, God determined to save a people for Himself in the Eternal Son who became a man and lived the life we should have lived and died the death we justly deserve. God loves sinners and sent His Son to be the wrath absorbing sacrifice for their sin (1 John 4:10; John 6:37) he "...gave His life as a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45) & "rose again" from the dead (2 Cor 5:15) on their behalf.

## **All who, by the grace of God, turn to Jesus in submissive faith are forgiven**

If you confess you are a sinner in need of Christ then God has begun to work in you a life-changing, eternally satisfying relationship with Himself! "Repent and believe the gospel (Mk 1:5) "In Your presence is fullness of Joy (Ps 16:11). So leave your self-righteousness, and your sins. Fly unto the Lord Jesus Christ, and receive his righteousness to be your covering, and his blood to be your atonement. If your trust is in Jesus alone for your salvation (that is, if you have no hope save for Christ's mercy alone) then you can be assured that your sins are forgiven and He has granted you eternal life.

**GOD**

**God the Creator**

**J. Gresham Machen**

*Machen (1881-1937) was Professor of New Testament, first at Princeton Theological Seminary, and afterwards at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia. Excerpts from The Christian Faith in the Modern World (1936).*

The Bible is doctrinal through and through. It gives not the slightest bit of comfort to the skeptical notion, so much in vogue today, that doctrine is merely the necessarily changing form in which Christian experience expresses itself. The Bible, unlike this skepticism, grounds life squarely on truth. Christianity, according to the Bible, is a life founded upon a doctrine.

That doctrine upon which the Bible grounds life is not one isolated doctrine, and it is not a mere series of doctrines, but it is a system of doctrine. If the Bible contained a number of divergent systems, it could not possibly be the Word of God, because it could not possibly be true throughout. The ordination pledge is quite right in speaking of *the* system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures.

I think great stress ought to be laid upon that fact. A great deal of harm is done when people take one part of the teaching of the Bible out of its connection with the rest, or when they leave gaps in their presentation of what the Bible teaches. It is very important to see that the Bible does far more than present isolated truths. It is not a system which man has devised, but a system which God has revealed - revealed graciously in His holy Word.

Where shall we begin in our study of that great system of revealed truth that the Bible contains? I think we ought to begin where the Bible begins. I think we ought to begin with a consideration of what the Bible teaches about God as the Creator and Ruler of the world.

There are many today who insist that we ought to begin at another place. There are many who tell us that we ought to begin with a consideration of the human life of Jesus. In fact these people often tell us that that is where we ought not only to begin but also to end. They are telling us that that is all we really need to know.

All that we need to know about God, they tell us, is that God is like Jesus. We do not need to know how the universe came into being, they tell us, or whether there is a God who governs it in its course. We are not interested, they say, in the question whether God is powerful, but are only interested in conceiving of Him as good.

Such is the view of those who use the phrase "the Christlike God." That phrase, as it is commonly used, grates upon Christian ears. It grates upon the ears of those who believe not that God is like Jesus, but that Jesus Himself is God.

But what is wrong with that view? Aside from the terminology that is used to set it forth, what is wrong with the view itself? What is wrong with this notion that all that we know about God is that He possesses the moral excellencies that are found in the man Jesus?

Two things at least are wrong with it. In the first place, it is terribly degrading to Jesus. That may seem strange at first sight. It may seem strange that a view which holds that all we need to know about God is that God is like Jesus should be derogatory to Jesus, but a little reflection will show that it is derogatory to Jesus in the extreme.

It is derogatory to Jesus because it does despite to the deepest things in Jesus' teaching and example. At the very heart of the life of Jesus was just that view of God which is being so contemptuously rejected by those who say that the moral life of the man Jesus tells us all that we need to know about God.

Jesus certainly believed that God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe, and that belief belonged to the foundation of everything that He believed. Not a sparrow, He said to His disciples, shall "fall on the ground without your Father." It is God, according to Jesus, who clothes the lilies of the field, and it is God who makes the sun to rise on just and unjust. There can be no doubt whatever but that Jesus held just that view of God which the persons of whom we have been speaking reject. He put at the very foundation of His teaching and His life that divinely revealed metaphysic which is found in the first verse of Genesis. Everything that He did, with everything that He said, was based upon the great truth: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." God, according to Jesus, is the Creator and the absolute Ruler of the universe, bringing all things to pass in accordance with the counsel of His will. You may not like that view of God, but if you are a historian who sees things as they are you will be obliged to recognize the fact that it was certainly the view held by Jesus of Nazareth.

Moreover, Jesus certainly held that men had a true knowledge of God before He appeared upon the earth. He held that they had that true knowledge of God from the Old Testament. Jesus regarded the Old Testament as the very Word of God and He put that conviction about the Old Testament at the very heart both of His teaching and of His life. How, then, if you reject that conviction, can you possibly think that you are doing honor to Jesus? If you hold that the revelation of God contained in the Old Testament is valueless and that all that we need to know about God is found in the moral character of the man Jesus of Nazareth, what will you do with the fact that the Jesus to whom you appeal put at the very basis of that moral character which you so much admire a view of the Old Testament and a view of God which you contemptuously reject?

Jesus did, indeed, present Himself as revealing God and as being in His very person the revelation of God. "He that hath seen me," He said, "hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?" But that certainly does not mean that the disciples who were with our Lord on earth were told by our Lord suddenly to regard as of no value the knowledge of God which they already had. The key to what our Lord meant when He said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," is to be found, I am inclined to think, in the words in John 1:18: "No man hath seen God at any time; God only begotten, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared Him." Devout readers of the Old Testament had known God, but they had not seen Him, since God is invisible. But now the one who is both God and only begotten, the eternal Son, has become flesh, and because He has become flesh can actually be seen with men's eyes. A man who sees Him sees the Father, since He is Himself one in substance with the Father. Thus, in Christ, the longing of men actually to see God is satisfied.

At any rate, what is perfectly clear is that everywhere Jesus presupposed the knowledge of God which His disciples had from the Old Testament. He just assumes that His disciples have that knowledge, and then, building upon that knowledge, He leads them on into a fuller and more glorious knowledge.

To hold, then, that all that we need to know about God is found in the moral character of the man Jesus of Nazareth, and that we can be indifferent to the question whether God is the Maker and Ruler of the world, is to treat Jesus Himself with contempt, since it means that we reject what He Himself put at the very foundation of His life and of His teaching.

But that view is not only derogatory to Jesus. It is also derogatory to God. What a low view of God it is, to be sure, when men say that they are not interested in the question whether He is powerful, whether He is the Creator or Ruler of the world, but are only interested in the question whether He is good!

Is that view of God really right? Has all our trust in the infinite power of our God been wrong when in the midst of storms and trials and a host of enemies we have quoted the words of Scripture: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Was Isaiah wrong when he turned his eyes to the starry heavens and said: "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth"? Was Jesus wrong when He bade His disciples trust in Him who clothes the lilies of the field and when He said: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom"?

What then is the view of God which the Bible presents to us?

If you will let me answer that question in one word, and if you will not forbid me to make that one word a convenient word which philosophers use, I will just say that the view of God which the Bible presents is the view which philosophers call "theism" - that is, it is the view which holds that there is a personal God who is Creator and Ruler of the world. That is the view which Jesus presents with particular clearness, and that is the view which the Bible presents as a whole.

To understand just what that view of God is, we cannot do better than contrast it with the view that is stifling the life of such large portions of the Church today. That is the ancient error called "pantheism." It is held in very many different forms, and with many

degrees of consistency. According to the strict meaning of the term, it is the view that "all is God," the view that simply identifies God with the totality of existing things.

I suppose the first impulse of the ordinary man, untrained in philosophy, is to regard that view as absurd. It was in that way that I regarded it when I first heard of it when I was young. It seemed to me almost more preposterous than the idolatry of the heathen who bows down to idols of wood and stone.

But here is the strange thing - a great many people who regard pantheism as wrong if the meaning of the term is explained to them are practically pantheists themselves. They are not aware of the fact, but they are pantheists all the same.

We find ourselves in the midst of the mighty process of nature. It manifests itself in the wonders of the starry heavens and the equal wonders that the interior of the atom now reveals. It is seen in the revolving seasons and also in the achievements of the human mind. In the presence of that mighty process of nature, we stand in awe; we are impressed with our own littleness; we understand that we are but infinitesimal parts of a mighty whole. And to that mighty whole, to that stupendous world-process, whose vastness we moderns have come to understand as never before, the pantheist applies the dread name of God. God is thus no longer thought of as an artificer apart from his machine; He is thought of rather as the universe itself, conceived of not in its individual manifestations but as a mighty whole.

Such is pantheism in the strict sense of the word. We can well understand the appeal which such a view has for many minds. It has stimulated some of the most brilliant thinking and inspired some of the grandest poetry of the race.



But it contains no comfort whatever for oppressed and burdened souls. If God be merely another name for the totality of things, then if we possess Him we have nothing that we did not have before. There is for us now no more appeal from nature to nature's God. We are now nothing but the playthings of blind force.

Feeling, perhaps, the defects of the stark pantheism which identifies God with all that exists, some men have sought for a "higher pantheism" of various kinds. No, they say to themselves, God is not simply another name for the universe as a whole, but is to be identified rather with the spiritual purpose that runs through the universe. Some of them have said that God is the soul of the universe. As the human body has a human soul, so the universe has a soul, they say, and that soul is to be called "God."

Two profound defects are found in all these forms of pantheism, high and middling and low. In the first place, they give us a God who is in some kind of necessary connection with the world. Not only does the world not exist apart from God, they tell us, but God does not exist apart from the world. What becomes, then, of the holiness or separateness of God? Clothe such a view with all the beauty of language with which it has been celebrated by poets and philosophers, and still it gives us a God who is merely a function or an aspect of the world. Such a God can never bring us into contact with that dread and mysterious realm of the beyond into which our souls long to enter.

In the second place, pantheism high or low can never really give us a personal God. A God of which we are parts can never be a God with whom we can have communion. We can never stand in the presence of such a God as one person stands in the presence of another. We can never say "Thou" to such a God, and such a God can never say

"Thou" to us. We can never love such a God, and such a God can never love us. An abstraction can neither love nor be loved. Never could we say to a "world process" or to a "spiritual meaning" or to a principle of goodness: "Our Father which art in heaven."

How gloriously are those two defects of pantheism avoided in the teaching of Holy Scripture!

The former of the two defects is certainly avoided. What is it that stands out sharply in the Bible from beginning to end? Is it not the awful holiness or separateness of God, the awful distinction between the finite and the infinite, between the creature and the Creator?

The Bible does indeed teach us that God is immanent in the world. He is not a God afar off. He is not a God who stands aloof from the universe as an artificer stands aloof from his machine. The devout reader of the Bible can say with Tennyson: "Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet."

But if God is thus immanent in the world, He is also transcendent. The world is dependent upon Him, but He is not dependent upon the world. He has set bounds to the world, but the world has set no bounds to Him. It is the work of His hands, but He is from eternity. "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." Running all through the Bible is the awful separateness of God from the world. That is what the Bible calls the holiness of God. The Bible, unlike the pantheists, presents to us a holy God.

But the Bible also - and again unlike the pantheists - presents to us a personal God. The God of the Bible is not just another name for the universe itself, nor is He a name for a spiritual purpose supposed to run through the universe, or for any impersonal principle of

goodness. No, He is a person. That much is clear at the start. We shall speak subsequently of the deeper mystery of the three persons in one God. But at least it is clear that God is personal. He is not a force or a principle or a collective somewhat of which we are parts. He is a person, to whom we can say "Thou," a person who can, if He will, speak to us as a man speaketh to His friend, and who can, if He will, become to us a heavenly Father.

But what is needed first of all is that we shall stand in awe before His throne. We are living in an age when men have forgotten God. They have become engrossed in their own affairs. They have been puffed up in their pride. They have put God out of their thoughts.

How is it with you, my friends? Have you been walking in your own paths? Have you forgotten God? If so, I bid you read the blessed book that will tell you how He may be found. If you heed His Word you may first stand in awe before His throne, and then, by the way that He has provided, you may come to be at peace with Him and be His child forevermore.

## **The Triune God**

**J. Gresham Machen**

Machen (1881-1937) was Professor of New Testament, first at Princeton Theological Seminary, and afterwards at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia. Excerpts from *The Christian Faith in the Modern World* (1936).

The Bible tells us there is a personal God, Creator and Ruler of the World. God, according to the Bible, is not another name for the mighty process of nature, and He is not some one part or aspect of that process, but He is a free and holy person, who created the process of nature by the fiat of His will and who is eternally independent of the universe that He has made.

Now we ask more in detail what the Bible tells us about God. When we ask that, I know we shall be met with an objection. We are seeking to know God. Well, there are many people who tell us that we ought not to seek to know God. Instead of seeking to know God, they tell us, we ought simply to feel Him; putting all theology aside, they say, we ought just to sink ourselves in the boundless ocean of God's being.

Such is the attitude of the mystics ancient and modern. But it is not the attitude of the Christian. The Christian, unlike the mystic, knows Him whom He has believed. What shall be said of a religion that depreciates theology, that depreciates the knowledge of God?

According to the Bible, we love God because He first loved us; and He has told us of His love in His holy Word. We love God, if we obey what the Bible tells us, because God has made Himself known to us and has thus shown Himself to be worthy of our love.

I do not mean to say that the Christian in his communion with God is always rehearsing consciously the things that God has told us about Himself. But underlying that sweet and blessed communion of the Christian with his God there is a true knowledge of God. A communion with God which is independent of that knowledge of God is communion with some other god and not with the living and true God whom the Bible reveals.

Every true man is resentful of slanders against a human friend. Should we not be grieved ten times more by slanders against our God? How can we possibly listen with polite complacency, then, when men break down the distinction between God and man, and drag God down to man's level? How can we possibly say, as in one way or another is so often said, that orthodoxy makes little difference? We should never talk in any such way about a human friend. We should never say with regard to a human friend that it makes no difference whether our view of him is right or wrong. How, then, can we say that absurd thing with regard to God?

The really consistent Christian can have nothing whatever to do with such doctrinal indifferentism. There is nothing so dishonoring to God, he will say, as to be indifferent to the things that God has told us about Himself in His holy Word.

What, then, has God told us about Himself in His Word? In the Shorter Catechism of the Presbyterian churches, there is the following answer to the question, "What is God?": "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." That answer is certainly in accordance with the Bible. I think it will help us a little bit to get straight in our minds what the Bible says about God.

Notice that God is here said to be infinite, eternal and unchangeable. What is meant by saying that He is infinite? Well, the word "infinite" means without an end or a limit. Other beings are limited: God is unlimited. I suppose it is easy for us to fall into our ordinary spatial conceptions in trying to think of God. We may imagine ourselves passing from the earth to the remotest star known to modern astronomy -- many, many light-years away. Well, when we have got there, we are not one slightest fraction of an inch nearer to

fathoming infinity than we were when we started. We might imagine ourselves traveling ten million times ten million times farther still, and still we should not be any nearer to infinity than when we started. We cannot conceive a limit to space, but neither can we conceive of infinite space. Our mind faints in the presence of infinity.

But we were really wrong in using those spatial conceptions in thinking of infinity, and particularly wrong were we in using spatial conceptions in thinking of the infinite God. It may help us to the threshold of the truth to say that God pervades the whole vast area of the universe known to science, and then infinitely more; it may help us to the threshold of the truth to say that God inhabits infinite space: but when we look a little deeper we see that space itself belongs to finite things and that the notion of infinite space is without meaning. God created space when He created finite things. He Himself is beyond space. There is no near and no far to Him. Everything to Him is equally near.

So it is when we try to think of God as eternal. If the word "infinity" is related, by way of contrast, to the notion of space, so the word "eternity" is related by way of contrast, to the notion of time. When we say that God is eternal, we mean that He had no beginning and that He will have no end. But we really mean more than that. We mean that time has no meaning for Him, save in connection with the creatures that He has made. He created time when He created finite creatures. He Himself is beyond time. There is no past and no future to Him. The Bible puts that in poetical language when it says: "For a thousand years in thy sight are as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night." We of course are obliged to think of the actions of God as taking place in time. We are obliged to think of Him as doing one thing after another thing; we are obliged to think of Him as doing this today and that tomorrow. We have a perfect right so to

think, and the Bible amply confirms us in that right. To us there is indeed such a thing as past and present and future, and when God deals with us He acts in a truly temporal series. But to God Himself all things are equally present. There is no such thing as "before" or "after" to Him.

It is very important to see clearly that God is thus infinite, eternal and unchangeable. These attributes of God are often denied. Those who have denied them told us that God is a finite God. We must not blame Him, they tell us, if things are not just right in the world. He is doing the best He can, they say; He is trying to bring order out of chaos, but He is faced by a recalcitrant material which He did not create and which He can mold only gradually and imperfectly to His will. It is our business to help Him, and while we may at first sight regret that we have not the all-powerful God that we used to think we had, yet we can comfort ourselves with the inspiring thought that the God that we do have needs our help and indeed cannot do without it.

What shall we say of such a finite God? I will tell you plainly what I think we ought to say about Him. He is not God but a god. He is a product of men's thoughts. Men have made many such little gods. Of the making of gods, as of the making of books, there is no end. But, as for us Christians, with our Bibles before us, we turn from all such little gods of man's making, out towards the dread mystery of the infinite and eternal, and say, as Augustine said, with a holy fear: "Thou hast made us for thyself, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee."

The definition in the Shorter Catechism, which we are taking to give us our outline of what the Bible tells us about God, says not only that God is infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His being and in His

power and in His holiness, but also that He is infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His wisdom and in His justice, goodness and truth.

Does that seem surprising to you in the light of what we have just been saying? Well, perhaps it might seem to be surprising. These qualities -- wisdom, justice, goodness and truth -- are such startlingly human qualities. Can we ascribe them to that infinite, eternal and unchangeable God of whom we have just been speaking? If we do try to ascribe them to that God, are we not guilty of a naive anthropomorphism? Are we not guilty of the childish error of thinking of God as though He were just a big man up in the sky? Are we not guilty of making a god in our own image?

The answer is: No, we are not guilty of that. If we think of God as having some attributes which we also possess, we may conceivably be doing it for one or the other of two reasons. In the first place, we may be doing it because we are making God in our own image. But, in the second place, we may be doing it because God has made us in His image.

The Bible tells us that this second alternative is correct. God made man in the image of God, and that is the reason why God possesses some attributes which man also possesses, though God possesses them to an infinitely higher degree.

The Bible is not afraid of speaking of God in a startlingly tender and human sort of way. It does so just in passages where the majesty of God is set forth. "It is He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth," says the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, "and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers." "All nations before Him are as nothing; and they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity." But what says that same fortieth chapter of Isaiah about this same terrible God? Here is what it says: "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: He shall gather



the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those who are with young."

How wonderfully the Bible sets forth the tenderness of God! Is that merely figurative? Are we wrong in thinking of God in such childlike fashion? Many philosophers say so. They will not think of God as a person. Oh, no. That would be dragging Him down too much to our level! So they make of Him a pale abstraction. The Bible seems childish to them in the warm, personal way in which it speaks of God.

Are those philosophers right or is the Bible right? Thank God, the Bible is right. The philosophers despise children who think of God as their heavenly Father. But the philosophers are wrong and the children are right. Did not our Lord Jesus say: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

No, God is no pale abstraction. He is a person. That simple truth -- precious possession of simple souls -- is more profound than all the philosophies of all the ages.

But now we come to a great mystery. God, according to the Bible, is not just one person, but He is three persons in one God. That is the great mystery of the Trinity.

The Trinity is revealed to us only in the Bible. God has revealed some things to us through nature and through conscience. But the Trinity is not among them. This He has revealed to us by supernatural revelation and by supernatural revelation alone.

The New Testament is founded throughout on the doctrine of the Trinity, and the doctrine was really established by the great facts of

the incarnation of the Son of God and the work of the Holy Spirit, even before it was enunciated in words.

What the New Testament ordinarily does is to state parts of the doctrine, so that when we put those parts together, and when we summarize them, we have the great doctrine of the three persons and one God. For example, all passages in the New Testament where the deity of Jesus Christ is set forth are, when taken in connection with passages setting forth the deity and personality of the Holy Spirit, passages supporting the doctrine of the Trinity.

But what needs to be observed now is that although by far the larger part of the Biblical teaching about the Trinity is given in that incidental and partial way -- presupposing the doctrine rather than formally enunciating it as a whole -- yet there are some passages where the doctrine is definitely presented by the mention, together, of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The most famous of such passages, I suppose, is found in the great commission, given by the risen Lord to His disciples according to the twenty-eighth chapter of Matthew. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." There we have a mention of all three persons of the Trinity in the most complete co-ordination and equality-- yet all three persons are plainly not three Gods but one. Here, in this solemn commission by our Lord, the God of all true Christians is forever designated as a triune God.

We think also, for example, of the apostolic benediction at the end of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all." Here the terminology is a little different from that in the great commission. Paul speaks of the Son as "the Lord." But the

word "Lord" in the Pauline Epistles is plainly a designation of deity, like the other Greek word which is translated into English by the word "God." It is the Greek word used to translate the holy name of God, "Jehovah," in the Greek translation of the Old Testament which Paul used, and Paul does not hesitate to apply to Christ Old Testament passages which speak of Jehovah.

That brings us to something supremely important in the teaching of the whole New Testament about the Trinity. It is this -- that the New Testament writers, in presenting God as triune, are never for one moment conscious of saying anything that could by any possibility be regarded as contradicting the Old Testament teaching that there is but one God. That teaching is at the very heart and core of the Old Testament. It is every whit as much at the heart and core of the New Testament. The New Testament is just as much opposed as the Old Testament is to the thought that there are more Gods than one. Yet the New Testament with equal clearness teaches that the Father is God and the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God, and that these three are not three aspects of the same person but three persons standing in a truly personal relationship to one another. There we have the great doctrine of the three persons but one God.

That doctrine is a mystery. No human mind can fathom it. Yet what a blessed mystery it is! The Christian's heart melts within him in gratitude and joy when he thinks of the divine love and condescension that has thus lifted the veil and allowed us sinful creatures a look into the very depths of the being of God.

I ask you now to consider one great central part of the doctrine, the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. When the Bible says that Christ is God, it does not ask us to forget a single thing that it has said about

the stupendous majesty of God. No, it asks us to remember every one of those things in order that we may apply them all to Jesus Christ.

The Bible tells us in the first verse that God in the beginning created the heaven and the earth. Does it ask us to forget that when it tells us that Jesus Christ is God? No, it asks us to remember that. It says of Jesus Christ: "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made."

The Bible tells us that God is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable. Does it ask us to forget that when it tells us that Christ is God? No, it tells us to remember that. "I am Alpha and Omega," says Christ, "the beginning and the end, the first and the last." "Before Abraham was, I am." "In the beginning was the Word." "He is before all things, and by him all things consist."

The Bible tells us that God is holy. Does it ask us to forget that when it tells us that Christ is God? Let the whole New Testament give the answer.

The Bible tells us that God is mysterious. Does it ask us to forget that when it tells us that Christ is God? No, it tells us that there are mysteries in Christ which only God can know. No one knoweth the Son but the Father, says Jesus, as no one knoweth the Father but the Son.

The Bible tells us that God is the final judge. Does it ask us to forget that when it tells us that Jesus is God? No, Jesus Himself said in the Sermon on the Mount that He would sit upon the judgment throne to judge all the earth.

Everywhere it is the same. The Bible from Genesis to Revelation presents a stupendous view of God, and then it tells us that Jesus

Christ is all that God is.

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creatures that He has made. He created time when He created finite creatures. He Himself is beyond time. There is no past and no future to Him. The Bible puts that in poetical language when it says: "For a thousand years in thy sight are as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night." We of course are obliged to think of the actions of God as taking place in time. We are obliged to think of Him as doing one thing after another thing; we are obliged to think of Him as doing this today and that tomorrow. We have a perfect right so to think, and the Bible amply confirms us in that right. To us there is indeed such a thing as past and present and future, and when God deals with us He acts in a truly temporal series. But to God Himself all things are equally present. There is no such thing as "before" or "after" to Him.

It is very important to see clearly that God is thus infinite, eternal and unchangeable. These attributes of God are often denied. Those who have denied them told us that God is a finite God. We must not blame Him, they tell us, if things are not just right in the world. He is doing the best He can, they say; He is trying to bring order out of chaos, but He is faced by a recalcitrant material which He did not create and which He can mold only gradually and imperfectly to His will. It is our business to help Him, and while we may at first sight regret that we have not the all-powerful God that we used to think we had, yet we can comfort ourselves with the inspiring thought that the God that we do have needs our help and indeed cannot do without it.

What shall we say of such a finite God? I will tell you plainly what I think we ought to say about Him. He is not God but a god. He is a product of men's thoughts. Men have made many such little gods. Of the making of gods, as of the making of books, there is no end. But, as for us Christians, with our Bibles before us, we turn from all such little gods of man's making, out towards the dread mystery of the



infinite and eternal, and say, as Augustine said, with a holy fear: "Thou hast made us for thyself, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee."

The definition in the Shorter Catechism, which we are taking to give us our outline of what the Bible tells us about God, says not only that God is infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His being and in His power and in His holiness, but also that He is infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His wisdom and in His justice, goodness and truth.

Does that seem surprising to you in the light of what we have just been saying? Well, perhaps it might seem to be surprising. These qualities -- wisdom, justice, goodness and truth -- are such startlingly human qualities. Can we ascribe them to that infinite, eternal and unchangeable God of whom we have just been speaking? If we do try to ascribe them to that God, are we not guilty of a naive anthropomorphism? Are we not guilty of the childish error of thinking of God as though He were just a big man up in the sky? Are we not guilty of making a god in our own image?

The answer is: No, we are not guilty of that. If we think of God as having some attributes which we also possess, we may conceivably be doing it for one or the other of two reasons. In the first place, we may be doing it because we are making God in our own image. But, in the second place, we may be doing it because God has made us in His image.

The Bible tells us that this second alternative is correct. God made man in the image of God, and that is the reason why God possesses some attributes which man also possesses, though God possesses them to an infinitely higher degree.

The Bible is not afraid of speaking of God in a startlingly tender and human sort of way. It does so just in passages where the majesty of God is set forth. "It is He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth," says the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, "and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers." "All nations before Him are as nothing; and they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity." But what says that same fortieth chapter of Isaiah about this same terrible God? Here is what it says: "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those who are with young."

How wonderfully the Bible sets forth the tenderness of God! Is that merely figurative? Are we wrong in thinking of God in such childlike fashion? Many philosophers say so. They will not think of God as a person. Oh, no. That would be dragging Him down too much to our level! So they make of Him a pale abstraction. The Bible seems childish to them in the warm, personal way in which it speaks of God.

Are those philosophers right or is the Bible right? Thank God, the Bible is right. The philosophers despise children who think of God as their heavenly Father. But the philosophers are wrong and the children are right. Did not our Lord Jesus say: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

No, God is no pale abstraction. He is a person. That simple truth -- precious possession of simple souls -- is more profound than all the philosophies of all the ages.

But now we come to a great mystery. God, according to the Bible, is not just one person, but He is three persons in one God. That is the great mystery of the Trinity.

The Trinity is revealed to us only in the Bible. God has revealed some things to us through nature and through conscience. But the Trinity is not among them. This He has revealed to us by supernatural revelation and by supernatural revelation alone.

The New Testament is founded throughout on the doctrine of the Trinity, and the doctrine was really established by the great facts of the incarnation of the Son of God and the work of the Holy Spirit, even before it was enunciated in words.

What the New Testament ordinarily does is to state parts of the doctrine, so that when we put those parts together, and when we summarize them, we have the great doctrine of the three persons and one God. For example, all passages in the New Testament where the deity of Jesus Christ is set forth are, when taken in connection with passages setting forth the deity and personality of the Holy Spirit, passages supporting the doctrine of the Trinity.

But what needs to be observed now is that although by far the larger part of the Biblical teaching about the Trinity is given in that incidental and partial way -- presupposing the doctrine rather than formally enunciating it as a whole -- yet there are some passages where the doctrine is definitely presented by the mention, together, of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The most famous of such passages, I suppose, is found in the great commission, given by the risen Lord to His disciples according to the twenty-eighth chapter of Matthew. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." There we have a mention of all three persons of the Trinity in the most complete co-ordination and equality-- yet all three persons are plainly not three Gods but one. Here, in this

solemn commission by our Lord, the God of all true Christians is forever designated as a triune God.

We think also, for example, of the apostolic benediction at the end of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all." Here the terminology is a little different from that in the great commission. Paul speaks of the Son as "the Lord." But the word "Lord" in the Pauline Epistles is plainly a designation of deity, like the other Greek word which is translated into English by the word "God." It is the Greek word used to translate the holy name of God, "Jehovah," in the Greek translation of the Old Testament which Paul used, and Paul does not hesitate to apply to Christ Old Testament passages which speak of Jehovah.

That brings us to something supremely important in the teaching of the whole New Testament about the Trinity. It is this -- that the New Testament writers, in presenting God as triune, are never for one moment conscious of saying anything that could by any possibility be regarded as contradicting the Old Testament teaching that there is but one God. That teaching is at the very heart and core of the Old Testament. It is every whit as much at the heart and core of the New Testament. The New Testament is just as much opposed as the Old Testament is to the thought that there are more Gods than one. Yet the New Testament with equal clearness teaches that the Father is God and the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God, and that these three are not three aspects of the same person but three persons standing in a truly personal relationship to one another. There we have the great doctrine of the three persons but one God.

That doctrine is a mystery. No human mind can fathom it. Yet what a blessed mystery it is! The Christian's heart melts within him in

gratitude and joy when he thinks of the divine love and condescension that has thus lifted the veil and allowed us sinful creatures a look into the very depths of the being of God.

I ask you now to consider one great central part of the doctrine, the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. When the Bible says that Christ is God, it does not ask us to forget a single thing that it has said about the stupendous majesty of God. No, it asks us to remember every one of those things in order that we may apply them all to Jesus Christ.

The Bible tells us in the first verse that God in the beginning created the heaven and the earth. Does it ask us to forget that when it tells us that Jesus Christ is God? No, it asks us to remember that. It says of Jesus Christ: "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made."

The Bible tells us that God is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable. Does it ask us to forget that when it tells us that Christ is God? No, it tells us to remember that. "I am Alpha and Omega," says Christ, "the beginning and the end, the first and the last." "Before Abraham was, I am." "In the beginning was the Word." "He is before all things, and by him all things consist."

The Bible tells us that God is holy. Does it ask us to forget that when it tells us that Christ is God? Let the whole New Testament give the answer.

The Bible tells us that God is mysterious. Does it ask us to forget that when it tells us that Christ is God? No, it tells us that there are mysteries in Christ which only God can know. No one knoweth the Son but the Father, says Jesus, as no one knoweth the Father but the Son.

The Bible tells us that God is the final judge. Does it ask us to forget that when it tells us that Jesus is God? No, Jesus Himself said in the Sermon on the Mount that He would sit upon the judgment throne to judge all the earth.

Everywhere it is the same. The Bible from Genesis to Revelation presents a stupendous view of God, and then it tells us that Jesus Christ is all that God is.

# The Knowledge of God

*Herman Bavinck*

God is the highest good of man-that is the testimony of the whole Scriptures. The Bible begins with the account that God created man after His own image and likeness, in order that he should know God his Creator aright, should love Him with all his heart, and should live with Him in eternal blessedness. And the Bible ends with the description of the new Jerusalem, whose inhabitants shall see God face to face and shall have His name upon their foreheads.

Between these two moments lies the revelation of God in all its length and breadth. As its content this revelation has the one, great, comprehensive promise of the covenant of grace: I will be a God unto thee, and ye shall be my people. And as its mid-point and its high-point this revelation has its Immanuel, God-with-us. For the promise and its fulfillment go hand in hand. The word of God is the beginning, the principle, the seed, and it is in the act that the seed comes into its full realization. Just as at the beginning God called things into being by His word, so by His word He will in the course of the ages bring into being the new heaven and the new earth, in which the tabernacle of God shall be among men.

That is why Christ, in whom the Word became flesh, is said to be full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

He is the Word which in the beginning was with God and Himself was God, and as such He was the life and the light of men. Because

the Father shares His life with Christ and gives expression to His thought in Christ, therefore the full being of God is revealed in Him. He not only declares the Father to us and discloses His name to us, but in Himself He shows us and gives us the Father. Christ is God expressed and God given. He is God revealing Himself and God sharing Himself, and therefore He is full of truth and also full of grace. The word of the promise, I will be a God unto thee, included within itself from the very moment in which it was uttered, the fulfillment, I am thy God. God gives Himself to His people in order that His people should give themselves to Him.

In the Scriptures we find God constantly repeating His declaration: I am thy God. From the mother-promise of Genesis 3 :15 on, this rich testimony, comprehending all blessedness and all salvation whatsoever, is repeated again and again, be it in the lives of the patriarchs, in the history of the people of Israel, or in that of the church of the New Testament. And in response the church throughout the ages comes with the endless varieties of its language of faith, speaking in gratitude and praise: Thou art our God, and we are Thy people, and the sheep of Thy pasture.

This declaration of faith on the part of the church is not a scientific doctrine, nor a form of unity that is being repeated, but is rather a confession of a deeply felt reality, and of a conviction of reality that has out of experience in life. The prophets and apostles, and the saints generally who appear before us in the Old and New Testament and later in the church of Christ, did not sit and philosophize about God in abstracted concepts, but rather confessed what God meant to them and what they owed to Him in all the circumstances of life. God was for them not at all a cold concept, which they then proceeded rationally to analyze, but He was a living, personal force, a reality infinitely more real than the world around them. Indeed, He was to



them the one, eternal, worshipful Being. They reckoned with Him in their lives, they lived in His tent, walked as if always before His face, served Him in His courts, and worshiped Him in His sanctuary.

The genuineness and depth of their experience comes to expression in the language they used to express what God meant to them. They did not have to strain for words, for their lips overflowed with what welled up out of their hearts, and the world of man and nature supplied them with figures of speech. God was to them a King, a Lord, a Valiant One, a Leader, a Shepherd, a Savior, a Redeemer, a Helper, a Physician, a Man, and a Father. All their bliss and well-being, their truth and righteousness, their life and mercy, their strength and power, their peace and rest they found in Him. He was a sun and shield to them, a buckler, a light and a fire, a fountain and a well-head, a rock and shelter, a high refuge and a tower, a reward and a shadow, a city and a temple. All that the world has to offer in discrete and sub-divided goods was to them an image and likeness of the unfathomable fullness of the salvation available in God for His people. Hence it is that David in Psalm 16 :2 (according to a telling translation) addresses Jehovah as follows: Thou art my Lord; I have no higher good than Thou. Thus also Asaph sang in Psalm 73: Whom have I in heaven hut Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever. For the saint, heaven in all its blessedness and glory would be void and stale without God; and when he lives in communion with God he cares for nothing on earth, for the love of God far transcends all other goods.

Such is the experience of the children of God. It is an experience which they have felt because God presented Himself to them for their enjoyment in the Son of His love. In this sense Christ said that eternal life, that is, the totality of salvation, consists for man in the

knowledge of the one, true God and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

It was an auspicious moment in which Christ spoke those words. He stood at the point of crossing the brook Kidron in order to enter the garden of Gethsemane and to suffer the last struggle of His soul there. Before He proceeds to that point, however, He prepares Himself as our High Priest for His passion and death, and He prays the Father that the Father may glorify Him in His suffering and after it, so that the Son in turn may glorify the Father in giving out all those blessings which He is now about to achieve by His obedience unto death. And when the Son prays in this way, He knows of nothing to desire except that which is the Father's own will and good pleasure. The Father has given Him power over all flesh in order that the Son should give eternal life to as many as the Father has given Him. Such eternal life consists of nothing other than the knowledge of the one, true God and of Jesus Christ who was sent to reveal Him (John 17:1-3).

*Our Reasonable Faith.* Herman Bavinck. Baker Book House. 1956. Pages 24-26.

## **The Greatness of God**

***Herman Bavinck***

On the very first page of the Bible the absolute transcendence of God above His creatures comes to our attention. Without strain or fatigue He calls the whole world into existence by His word alone. By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by

the breath of His mouth (Ps. 33 :6). He speaks and it is done; He commands and it stands fast (Ps. 33:9). He does according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. And none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, what doest Thou (Dan. 4:35)? The nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, He taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before Him are as nothing, and they are counted to Him as less than nothing, and vanity. To whom then will you liken God? or what likeness will you compare unto Him (Isa. 40:15-18). For who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord (Ps. 89:6). There is no name by which He can truly be named: His name is wonderful.<sup>1</sup> When God speaks to Job out of the thunder and displays the magnitude of His works before him, Job humbly bows his head, and says: Behold, I am vile, What shall I answer Thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth (Job 40:4). God is great, and we know Him not (Job 36:26). Such knowledge is too wonderful for us. It is high. We cannot attain unto it (Ps. 139:6).

Nevertheless, this same sublime and exalted God stands in intimate all His creatures, even the meanest and smallest. What the scriptures give us is not an abstract concept of God, such as the philosopher gives us, but puts the very. living God before us and lets us see Him in the works of His hands. We have hut to lift up our eyes and see who has made all things. All things were made by His hand, brought forth by His will and His deed. And they are all sustained by His strength. Hence everything bears the stamp of His excellences and the mark of His goodness, wisdom, and power. And among creatures only man was created in His image and likeness. Only man is called the offspring of God (Acts 17:28).

Because of this intimate relationship, God can be named in the terms of His creatures, and He can be spoken of anthropomorphically. The same Scripture which speaks in the most exalted way of God's incomparable greatness and majesty, at the same time speaks of Him in figures and images which sparkle with life. It speaks of His eyes and ears, His hands and feet, His mouth and lips, His heart and bowels. It ascribes all kinds of attributes to Him - of wisdom and knowledge, will and power, righteousness and mercy, and it ascribes to Him also such emotions as joy and grief, fear and vexation, zeal and envy, remorse and wrath, hatred and anger. It speaks of His observing and thinking, His hearing and seeing, His remembering and forgetting, smelling and tasting, sitting and rising, visiting and forsaking, blessing and chastising, and the like. It compares Him to a sun and a light, a fountain and a spring, a rock and a shelter, a sword and buckler, a lion and an eagle, a hero and a warrior, an artist and builder, a king and a judge, a husbandman and a shepherd, a man and a father. In short, all that can be found in the whole world in the way of support and shelter and aid is originally and perfectly to be found in overflowing abundance in God. Of Him the whole family in heaven and earth is named (Eph. 3.15). He is the Sun of being and all creatures are His fleeting rays.

It is important, therefore, in this matter of the knowledge of God, for us to keep a firm hold on both of these groups of statements concerning the Divine being and to do justice to each of them. For, if we sacrifice the absolute transcendence of God above all of His creatures, we fall into polytheism (the pagan religion of many gods) or pantheism (the religion in which everything is God), two false religions which, according to the lesson of history, are closely related to each other and easily pass from the one into the other.

And if we sacrifice the close relationship of God to His creatures, we go aground on the reef of deism (belief in God without benefit of revelation) or of atheism (the denial of the existence of God), two religions which, like those others, have numerous characteristics in common with each other.

Scripture clings to both groups of characteristics, and Christian theology has followed in its wake. God actually does not have a name according to which we can truly name Him, and He names Himself and lets us name Him with many, many names. He is the infinitely Exalted One, and at the same time the One who lives along with all His creatures. In a certain sense all of His attributes are such as cannot be shared, and in another sense they are such as can all be shared. We cannot fathom this with our mind. There is no such thing as an adequate concept of God. There is no one who can give a definition, a delimitation, of God that is adequate to His being. The name which fully expresses what He is cannot be found. But the one group of characteristics outlined above does not conflict with the other. Precisely because God is the High and Exalted One, and lives in eternity, He also dwells with those who are of a contrite and humble Spirit (Isa. 57 :15. We know that God did not reveal Himself in order that we should draw up a philosophical concept of God from His revelation, but in order that we should accept Him, the true, living God, as our God, and should acknowledge and confess Him. These things are hidden from the wise and prudent, but they have been revealed to babes (Matt. 11 :25).

The knowledge which we get of God by way of His revelation is therefore a knowledge of faith. It is not adequate, in the sense that it is not equivalent to the being of God, for God is infinitely exalted above all His creatures. Such knowledge is not purely symbolical either that is to say, couched in expressions which we have arbitrarily

formed and which do not correspond to any reality; instead this knowledge is ectypal (ectype: an impression, as in printing) or analogical (analogy: correspondence or similarity in form) because it is based on the likeness and relationship which, notwithstanding God's absolute majesty, nevertheless exists between God and all the works of His hand. The Knowledge which God grants us of Himself in nature and in Scripture is limited, finite, fragmentary, but it is nevertheless true and pure. Such is God as He has revealed Himself in His Word and specifically in and through Christ; and He alone is such as our hearts require.

*Our Reasonable Faith.* Herman Bavinck. Baker Book House. 1956. Pages 132-134.

## **We All Stand Condemned by the Law**

**John Calvin**

But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. - Gal. 3:11-12

We have seen that men must be worse than insane (whatever they say) if they do not come to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. For if they cling to the law, it will only bring damnation, as I have shown; this is borne out sufficiently by our own experience. Indeed, when Paul in his Epistle to the Romans seeks to prove that men are greatly

deceived if they trust in their own merits, he points out that the law can only bring God's wrath and vengeance upon us (Rom. 4:15). For although we already stand condemned (even before God has opened his mouth in judgment against us), our evil is exposed by the law because it is written that if we transgress in just one area, we are God's enemies and have provoked his wrath against us. What can be gained by protesting when the sentence is given from the heavenly throne? There is no room for appeal. Thus, to have a proper understanding of the gospel, we must recognise that we need to lean entirely upon the Lord Jesus Christ and his mercy alone as our only hope of salvation. We all need to examine our own lives, for if we do so honestly and without hypocrisy, our spiritual standing will be abundantly clear. The Papists will not agree that faith alone can render us acceptable to God. This is because they have never been willing to place themselves before the judgment seat of God, but, instead, prefer to dwell in the darkness, as it were. Therefore, it should not surprise us if they grant themselves complete liberty to do as they please. However, the way of true, pure religion is for each of us to scrutinise our own lives. Surely, even if we were carefully to examine just one minute of our lives, we would find ourselves worthy of eternal death. Indeed, each one of us would discover ourselves to be sinners, not in just one area but a hundred thousand; not due to some one fault but to countless millions. Now if even we ourselves acknowledge that we are full of so many blemishes, surely God is aware of many more than we could ever perceive, because he sees more deeply than we can, as John writes in his epistle (1 John 3:20). Thus, the case is settled. The verdict is that no one can be justified by the law; justification is through faith alone.

The apostle continues his discourse by adding another argument, which is this: if we seek our righteousness in the law, it will be clean contrary to the righteousness obtained by the elect children of God

through faith. 'What is justification by the law?', Paul asks. He answers: 'The man that doeth them shall live in them.' In other words, whoever obeys God and keeps his commandments will have salvation as his reward. This is a wonderful promise, but what good will it do us? If we were to try to do perfectly all that God commands, we would find God revealing just what a grievous state of condemnation we are in, by bringing our failure to the forefront. What sort of salvation would it be, if each of us had to achieve it ourselves and deserve it? At first, when we hear that God is willing to reward with the gift of eternal life all who have honoured and served him by keeping his law, it seems like a wonderful prospect (that is, before we ponder its implications!). 'What!', we say, 'Here is God indebted to us, assuring us that we will inherit paradise if only we serve him and do his will.' But if we pause to place our lives alongside his commandments, we will find that although it appears that God is willing to be so kind and indulgent towards us as to reward us if we serve him and keep his law, the purpose of this is to plunge us deeper into the pit in which we already find ourselves by nature. What hope, therefore, can we have? The solution is set forth here by the apostle in the words of Habakkuk: 'The just shall live by faith' (Hab. 2:4). Let us, therefore, turn away from the promise which the law gives us, for it is of no value to us, and accept the free grace of our God, who is stretching out his arms to receive us, that is, if we first rid ourselves of all pride. This is, in effect, what Paul means here.

This argument discloses two opposites. Imagine this: one person claims that fire is a source of heat, and another arrives and rather obstinately argues the opposite. We might say to him, 'Can ice or frost create heat, then? Surely, they are opposite elements, and completely incompatible with one another!' Or imagine a quarrel about whether the heat of the sun is necessary to this life of ours or not. Well, what would happen if there were no sun in the world? We



would all choke on filthy air, which is only purged by the shining of the sun. Therefore, as there are opposing forces in the realm of nature, so the apostle says that we cannot be justified by both the law and the grace of God! If we desire to be in his favour, it can only be through his own goodness and love for us, which he has revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and not through any dignity we possess in and of ourselves. But in order properly to understand this teaching, we need to pay careful attention to Paul's words here. He says that the righteousness of the law is achieved by observing whatever God has commanded us. This proves that keeping the law is quite sufficient to save us, for God has clearly declared, 'This is how you are to live. This is how you are to order your lives', and he has given us the ten commandments contained in the law. This law is an infallible rule for our lives, and we are not to seek for perfect righteousness anywhere else. This is why we are so opposed to the Papists, who think they are serving God so faithfully by devising their own commandments. God demands obedience. Let us be clear that the law contains the perfection of holiness in its teachings; it is not lawful to add anything to it. Man's struggle to introduce devotions which he has conceived in his own imagination is vanity.

However, the fact that the teachings of the law are sufficient to show us the nature of true righteousness, is not the end of the matter. We must move on to the next point, which is, 'Can we do what God has commanded?' We saw this morning that we fall very far short and, thus, the promise for all who keep the law is not applicable to us. The Papists are greatly deceived in this matter: they still hold to the lie that God has not commanded anything that we cannot accomplish ourselves. Yet, Paul says the very opposite. They claim in support of their error that God must, therefore, be cheating us, because he clearly says, 'The man that doeth them shall live in them.' But it is very easy to resolve this objection. Yes, we would, indeed, be most

confused over the meaning of this verse, had not God granted us a remedy to this problem; otherwise, it would mean that no one could live! As I have said, it would seem, superficially, that we have everything to gain, because God tells us that we can be acceptable in his sight by keeping the law, and he promises us a crown of glory; in fact, it would seem that we just cannot lose! But when all is taken into account, we come back to this same conclusion: no man can obtain eternal life in this way, no matter how much he desires it. Why? Because no man observes the law perfectly. It is not written that 'The man who keeps part of the law will live', but all of it. What, then, is justification by the law? A perfect obedience to it which does not fall short in any way. Such obedience cannot be found on earth: it therefore follows that we are all excluded from the promise which is given in the law.

This, however, does not mean that God is cheating us. He makes such a promise because men deceive themselves through pride and boast of their own merits; he therefore wishes to convict us of our guilt and of our inability to fulfil his demands. What would become of us if there were no law, nor such a promise as this? Think of the heathen — they have always sought to be pleasing to God through their own virtuous conduct. Yet, at the same time, they have an awareness of their shortcomings. This is why they retain the use of sacrifices. Of course, they do not understand the true purpose of sacrifice; when the heathen sacrifice something, they confess that they are in debt to God and need to find acceptance with him. Much like the Papists today, they amass many little rituals in their service to help them find reconciliation with God. Pagans throughout the ages have observed the kind of practices that the Papists use today. Whatever they may say, both groups think they can make themselves worthy of God's salvation. Now, here the Lord is saying that we are wrong if we think he will not reward us, for out of his free goodness

he promises to count us righteous if we observe his law. The question is: do we keep it? No; we fall very far short, in fact so short of it that we are made to feel desperate. God has good reason for making such a promise, even though it cannot be realised in our lives. Its intention is to correct the pride which fills us to the point of bursting, and which requires a drastic remedy. And what is this remedy? Well, God knows that we begin to murmur if he does not treat us according to our desires, and therefore he is willing to pour out his grace and blessings upon us in this world, in this passing life. Furthermore, he says he is willing to reserve an immortal inheritance for us, upon condition that we serve him. If we submit to him and keep a good account with him, he says he will reward us both in this life and the next. In saying all these things, he intends that all flesh should remain silent before him, confessing that if God were to punish them, or send them many afflictions and trials, they would be well deserved. For those of us who have properly examined their lives will confess without hypocrisy that we are not even worthy to eat the bread that sustains our physical lives on this earth. How, then, could we possibly merit paradise and the glory that belongs to God alone? How could we reach this by our own virtues? Thus, men's boasting tongues are silenced, even through this most generous and bountiful promise of the Lord.

At this point, we ought to note that this same promise is free in and of itself, but that we fall so far short of its standards that it will do us no good whatsoever until we relinquish our claim upon it. This would seem rather unclear to us, if I did not expound it in more detail. The heathen, as I mentioned earlier, think that God will reward them if they live honest and blameless lives in the sight of men. But this is foolishness, even madness, for how could God possibly be indebted to us? (This is made clear in the seventeenth chapter of Luke — Luke 17:10.) Even if we could do better than the

angels in heaven, would it mean that God would be bound to repay us? Not at all! For we belong to him; we are his possession. Our Lord Jesus Christ uses the picture of a servant; not speaking of a servant as we know it today, but, rather of a slave like the ones they used to have in those days. Even if a servant were killed a hundred times over for his master, as it were, living or dying, he is at his master's disposal. Our Lord Jesus Christ is saying to us, 'You are no more than poor mortal creatures yourselves, yet if any of you has a slave, he treats him like an ass or an ox. After working and labouring hard all day long, he returns home in the evening, but the master will not even let him sit down at his table! Even so, a servant has only done his duty and only that which he was hired to do.' Has God less authority than mortals? Even though you may be his, and are seeking to walk in obedience to his will, it can never be said that he is in any sense beholden to you. Thus (as I have already proved), although the Lord declared in the law, 'The man that doeth them shall live in them', it is important to consider what moved him to make such a bountiful promise of eternal life. It was not because he was indebted to us! If we kill ourselves, as it were, a hundred times in his service, this cannot make him obliged to pay us any wages whatever. But, in his mercy, he draws near and says, 'Although I owe you nothing, and although you can bring me nothing worthy of a reward (for you are bound to me in all points and in every respect), yet I desire to recompense you for your labour. Therefore, do your duty, do whatsoever I command and then you will not be disappointed but will receive your reward.' This is what we need to remember, and we will hear more of this shortly.

As for the Papists, they accept part of this, but not all. Most of them (I refer to those who are the Pope's closest allies) know nothing of these principles. Yet there are some who will grant that the divine promise of the law (to give life to all who have served God) does not

teach that the works themselves have any merit in terms of eternal life, but only because of the promise. However, given that God has bound himself in this way, they nevertheless hope to deserve some reward at his hand. Why do they think in this way? Well, they say that, otherwise, his promise ('The man that doeth them shall live in them') was made in vain. However, these wretches do not understand what I have been expounding, namely, that God's promise does not mean that men can merit salvation by their own works, but was rather intended to convict their souls and to lead them to true humility. This they shun, through their own foolish pride and ambition.

Now we can see the purpose behind Paul's words — if we claim to be justified through the law or through our own works, we must not fail in the least duty or omit to do anything, however small. For it is written, 'The man that doeth them shall live in them'. Now, what man is so proud that he would dare boast he has fully discharged his duty towards God? None but a hypocrite who has been overtaken by devilish pride, or a profane person who despises God and who has never truly repented, whose conscience is either asleep or bewitched. Only such a person can deceive himself into thinking he deserves anything. Thus, since the righteousness of the law is unattainable, and is something from which we are utterly barred, we need to find another righteousness. Put another way, we need God to accept us through his free grace. Instead of God receiving anything from us, we need the obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ to be imputed to us, though we do not deserve it. Thus, we are delivered by God from our state of condemnation by nature through the abolition of all our offences and iniquities. In effect, this is what is meant in another passage, where Paul argues so admirably about this very doctrine (Rom. 3:19). In this place, too, the point at issue is the righteousness of the law. It is a wonder to me that the Papists have gone so far

astray as to ignore such a clear warning as Paul makes in the latter text. They still protest thus: 'What!', they say, 'You are making a mockery of God! He has promised a reward for good works. Since he has promised on so many occasions to recompense us, how can he not carry it out? Otherwise, men might accuse him of lying.' But Paul answers them thus: 'My friends, if we think God will accept us because we deserve his favour, let us examine the promise he made us. If an argument breaks out between two men over buying or selling or some such thing, they will say, "Let us examine the contract and what is contained within it." As soon as the document has been read, the case will become plain. One of them will say, "This article belongs to you, upon condition that you pay for it. If you do not pay, you can lay no claim to it." In the same way, with reference to the way of salvation, we must come to the original and chief contract that God made with us. Now, that contract is the law. Therefore, if men are seeking to be paid according to their service, they will find that this will banish them from everlasting life rather than enable them to obtain it. For God has declared that they have to perform all that he has commanded them, before they can inherit the salvation he has in store.' All that remains is to find out whether or not it is possible for any man to perform these commandments perfectly.

Well, as we have already discovered, no one fulfils these requirements satisfactorily; thus, the promise cannot apply to us in our natural state. However, this is not what the Papists believe. They hear the words, 'The man that doeth them shall live in them' and think the most important thing is to observe the law. It is enough for them that God has given his Word to reward them. Whilst it is true that God has indeed said this, he requires that we actually fulfil his demands. The Papists will then use the following passage, where Paul says, 'For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the

doers of the law shall be justified' (Rom. 2:13). They will use such quotations, but are clearly blind to their meaning, for Paul is saying that we can only be justified if we obey all that is commanded. The Jews used to glory in the law that had been given to them, saying, 'The law tells us that we are the people of God.' But there was a condition attached to this. And who has fulfilled that condition? Have you? Not in the least! Thus, we cannot be justified by hearing the law, as Paul says. How foolish if each of us simply came to church to hear the message that was being declared here, and then went away again, gratifying our own lusts. Paul says we must observe what God commands us, yet, since no one can do this properly, we all stand condemned.

The Papists, however, fail to reach the same conclusion because they only cling to half the text: 'But the doers of the law shall be justified.' Yes, this is so if a person has kept the law, but first show me such a man. In the same Epistle to the Romans, Paul later declares that God's promise of eternal life to all who keep his law is of no value to us because we can never perform it adequately (Rom. 8:3). In fact, by nature we are completely hostile to God's righteous standards. Now that he has regenerated us by his Holy Spirit, we are entirely indebted to him; every good thing we possess we have received from his hand, and he simply rewards his own gifts in us. Can we, therefore, speak of merit? No. Indeed, we must go further and say that even though our Lord deigns to crown our works when they are good in his sight, they can only be partly good, for there will always be enough sin mixed in with them to condemn us. Thus, we are stripped of all confidence in our own righteousness, because our works have insufficient worth in the eyes of God. If we were being judged by the text, 'The man that doeth them shall live in them', our works would be shown to be totally offensive to God. He would say, as it were, 'You are all dead, damned and lost. Why? Because none of

you have done the things I asked you to do, whereas it was your duty to do so.’ This is why we need to consider the second aspect to the solution I mentioned, which is ‘living by faith’.

Paul, in the passage I referred to earlier (Rom. 3:21-22), does not quote the words of Habakkuk as he does in Romans chapter one and the seventeenth verse. But he says that the law points to the righteousness which is by faith. The righteousness of the law (that is, the God-given rule in the law which justifies us) is that we must obey and observe all his commandments. But the righteousness of faith speaks another language. It says that it is not for man to seek to win God’s favour through the way he lives his life, and thus earn his reward or crown; rather, it is for man to rest entirely upon God’s Word, allowing it to dwell in his heart and upon his lips. For if we believe in our hearts that the Lord Jesus Christ has died, and confess with our lips that he has risen again, we shall be counted righteous in God’s sight (Rom. 10:9). Notice that Paul explains his meaning at some length here for us to comprehend why he separates the righteousness of the law and the righteousness of faith, showing us that they are incompatible and can no more be mixed together than fire and water. Not that there is any contradiction between the law and the gospel (as I have already made clear), for we know that they both proceed from the same God. But we must remember God’s purposes, as we have said all along. By giving us the righteousness of the law, he intended to humble us. Next, we will come before him realising we are condemned; this we would never have done if he had not revealed to us our own poverty. When we read that God promises justification if we serve him aright, he is saying in effect, ‘Poor creatures, what worth or value do you have in and of yourselves? Weigh up my commandments and consider what they involve, and then reflect upon how each of you have lived. This will make you feel as if you could drown in self-despair.’ Yet, though God speaks in this



vein, he also grants a remedy — ‘Come’, he says, ‘to the teachings of the gospel’. And what are they? Paul quotes the expression of Habakkuk, from chapter two and the fourth verse: ‘The just shall live by his faith’. And in this passage he explains it more clearly, as we have seen, stating that we need to resort wholly to the Lord Jesus Christ. For the ‘Word’ that should be in our hearts and upon our lips, bringing us to God, and opening the kingdom of heaven to us, is not a Word that makes us cleave to this world below. Nor does it lead us to believe that God will praise us for our merits, allowing us to be puffed up with pride. Not at all; rather, it makes us cling to the Lord Jesus Christ. The righteousness of faith that God grants us involves the following: understanding that our sins are blotted out through the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ; understanding also that through his resurrection we have obtained righteousness, and are now heirs of his heavenly kingdom (whereas before we were condemned to the pit of hell, which is the heritage that belongs to us and of which we are worthy by nature). We must also realise that in Jesus Christ, all that we lost in Adam is restored to us. The curse which covered us is removed when God sets us free. This is the righteousness of faith, and indeed, when we examine the context of the verse Paul quotes from the prophet Habakkuk, we will see that it is to this very doctrine that the Holy Spirit is pointing.

Now, the prophet had spoken about the chastisements and judgments that God would send on the people; therefore, having examined the situation, we might well have concluded that all was lost. Then he says that the pride of the wicked will swell and increase, but that their feet are in a slippery place and they will stumble in the way. The more they seek to exalt themselves, the more grievous will be their fall. This is what the prophet pronounces upon the wicked. On the other hand, he says of the just that they shall ‘live by faith’. Notice he says that the just shall live, implying that God’s children

will not find life here below. Even if they were to travel all over the world, and search high and low, they would soon realise that there is death and decay everywhere and in everything. However, though they do not enjoy this 'life' at the present time, they look forward to a life to come, and cherish it in their hearts and minds by faith. The prophet is seeking to draw the minds of God's elect away from both the world and themselves, so that they may cleave entirely to God, finding his grace alone sufficient for their salvation. Yet, Paul puts the case more briefly in our passage, because he was fully persuaded of the things I have expounded, and had already written of them — he always taught that faith leads us to find salvation in God alone. The law, though it may appear to be teaching something very different, actually shows us that there is no life in us at all, if we understand it aright. The law says, 'Work hard and do what you can to obtain paradise.' Why does it say this? Not to feed man's vain confidence in his own merits — certainly not! Rather, to prepare us to receive the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ in humility. For (as I have said), although we are far away from God, we all like to think we are worthy of his acceptance. But our Lord will be avenged on such presumptuousness. He says to us, 'Let me see what you have done, draw near and we will begin the reckoning. Whichever of us owes anything to the other will have to pay it. I will not disappoint you; I have the reward in my hand. It is all ready. If you have done what I have commanded you, do not worry, you will be well paid for your labour. Therefore, set to work and let me observe how you will serve me.' In saying this, our Lord, as I have said, prepares and disposes us to know what we are by nature. When we have acknowledged our poverty, then we will come to him to supply what we lack. Thus, the law leads to faith, albeit by a surprising route!

Whatever we may think, there will always be the paradox of which Paul speaks here. That is to say, that a person cannot be justified by

faith unless he has first recognised and acknowledged in complete sincerity that he is lost. For salvation must be based upon the knowledge that we deserve damnation. It might seem as if Paul has taken the prophet's words too far, if Habakkuk was simply speaking of the afflictions of this transitory life. The just 'shall live' could mean 'shall survive', even though God may afflict and torment him. He will not fall if he rests upon the promises of God. Paul, however, is not dealing with the question of God comforting us and delivering us from the calamities to which we are subject in this world; he is concerned with the question of our eternal salvation, which is of far greater importance than anything else in this fleeting life. It might appear, therefore, as if he has misapplied the words of the prophet. But let us remember that the words themselves would have been uttered in vain if the thoughts of the prophet had gone no further than this world, for afflictions come upon all, upon good and bad alike. How, then, can we speak of living by faith, if we are constantly falling into the same trials that God has already delivered us from once, twice or three times before? If God has comforted me today in some affliction or other, and shown me his grace, tomorrow he may afflict me with another trial. What would my life be like if I had but this world alone to trust in? Therefore, to sum up, the prophet was saying that although believers may be miserable and may languish in this life, nevertheless, God blesses them in this world, and, furthermore, all the evil they endure here below shall turn to felicity. Why? Because they trust in their God. We ought to be aware, therefore, that there is a better inheritance than this, and we need to seek true, everlasting happiness — the kind that endures.

We must be careful to comment on the word 'just' here. For if Habakkuk had said, 'Wretched sinners shall live by faith', we would perhaps have imagined that his words were addressed to just a handful of people. Most will freely accept that poor sinners need to

flee to God for refuge, but as for those of nobler virtues, surely they are exempt from what applies to the common people, God having exalted them to a higher degree? Surely it is their prerogative to be justified? Even today, though the Popish clergy (as they call them), with all their ceremonies, are filthy in God's sight, and ought to be abhorred by both God and man, yet they presume, because of their monkish habit and all the rest of their nonsense, that God is greatly in their debt! These bigots, having done all their babbling, and trotting up and down from altar to altar, and from chapel to chapel on various pilgrimages, hope that God will remember all their works. They hope that all of this will be put towards the payment of their account, with a hundred thousand other things that they plan to present to God! This is why the Lord Jesus Christ said that poor wretched sinners, even harlots, would enter the kingdom of heaven sooner than all these foul toads who are puffed up with pride in their own merits (Matt. 21:31)! Although their lives are full of wicked abominations, yet in their hypocrisy they suppose that God is bound to reward them.

Now, to eliminate all opportunity of entertaining such thoughts, the prophet expressly says, 'The just shall live by his faith.' At first, the meaning of this verse might be obscure to us. Does it mean that in order to have righteousness we must first live by faith? If this is the case, those who do not live by faith cannot be righteous. But what is the justification spoken of in the gospel? It is this — God freely granting us the means by which we may have access to him. We can be acceptable to him in the Lord Jesus Christ alone, for we cannot obtain righteousness through the law. Thus, although a man may live by faith, he is not righteous in and of himself. The prophet, therefore, means that the just are saved by the free grace of God alone. It is as if he were saying, 'Perhaps God will grant you grace to serve him acceptably, impressing upon your heart by his Holy Spirit true fear

and a zeal to glorify him as he deserves. He may well enable you to struggle against the lusts of the flesh to a great extent, striving with the sin which is part of your nature. Yet for all this, you must still turn your back upon all that you have done if you are seeking to please God.' Indeed, we must rest upon the Lord Jesus Christ alone. If even those who are righteous can only be justified through faith, who is there who will dare to seek to be justified through merit? Only devils, wicked men and the enemies of God.

Thus, when the Papists boast today (as they do) about the purity of their works and meritorious deeds, they only prove that they do not know the meaning of true righteousness. They are flying in the face of both God and nature. They say they want to be righteous — what do they mean? They mean in themselves, through works of merit. But what does the prophet say? He does not say that the just shall live by their works, but that they will be saved by the grace of God alone. If the just renounce, as they ought, all trust in their own merit, it follows that those who think they can come before God in the strength of their own deeds and that he will be bound to reward them, are striking themselves off the register of the righteous. Thus, according to the statement uttered here by the prophet, the Papists are rejected by God if they continue in their errors. Paul quotes the words of David: 'Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.' He teaches us that the righteous are those who condemn themselves, feeling in the very depths of despair, until God, in his goodness, rescues them (Rom. 4:8; Psalms 32:1ff). When David said, 'Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin', he was not, at this stage of his life, a wicked or dissolute man, nor one who despised God or who had never examined his conscience to expose his sin! On the contrary, God had chosen him; he had anointed him through Samuel; he had made him one of the foremost prophets. His kingdom prefigured that of the Lord Jesus Christ. In short, God had

so transformed him that he was now like an angel living amongst men. Yet, he confessed and acknowledged his sins, sorrowing and mourning over them, and was in a state of torment like that of hell itself. He remained thus tortured until God came and displayed his mercy, knowing no joy or peace until God granted him forgiveness. We, too, can only be happy if God overlooks all our deeds and blots out all our sins. This joy is ours if God is gracious to us, no longer considering what we are by nature — poor, condemned sinners — and accepting us, not as we are in our own persons, but for the sake of his only Son. Indeed, David reiterates this teaching in another place (Psa. 143:2): ‘Enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.’

Let us, therefore, learn the following lesson: the more a man fears God, the more he will be ashamed of his sin. Consciousness of sin is not something that should last for a mere three or four months — we ought to detest our sins for the rest of our lives. After all, let us remember that the mouth of hell is open, ready to swallow us up unless God supplies the grace we need so desperately and plucks us out of the pit of death. This is why it is written that ‘the just shall live by faith’ — not as a doctrine that applies for three or four months only; nor is it written for those whose lives are less holy than others. God addresses these words even to the very noblest amongst us.

Now before we end, we need to comment upon the word ‘live’. It does not refer to a fixed length of time, say a day or three months. It speaks, instead, of a life lived by God’s grace every moment, in which we seek his presence and grace day by day to the end of our earthly lives. Although our lives are hidden in this world, as Paul says (Col. 3:3), and we see nothing but death in front of us, we need to rest entirely upon the promise of God. He has assured us of eternal life and this life is his to give — he will reserve it for us! He has pledged it

to us by sending the Lord Jesus Christ, who died and rose again for our sakes. Now we no longer need ask, 'Who will go up for us to heaven?'. Or, 'Who will descend into the depths?' Or, 'Who will go over the sea for us?'. 'The Word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart' (Deut. 30:12; Rom. 10:6-8). We know that our Lord Jesus Christ descended into the deep; that is, he became a curse for us (as we shall see, God willing, in the next sermon — let this suffice us for now). Also he ascended into heaven and opened the door for us, since he entered on our behalf. Let us find great assurance in these truths and allow ourselves to be like poor, dead men in this world while we await the revelation of the life which has been promised us. There is no doubt but that God will reveal and manifest it to us in his time, and we will fully rejoice in that 'life' which his holy gospel has so long proclaimed.

Now let us fall before the majesty of our great God, acknowledging our sins, and praying that he would make us increasingly conscious of them. May we be so affected by them that we cast ourselves down before him, trembling and groaning under the burden of the weaknesses and sins which beset us, until he has fully purged us. Let us also pray that, during this mortal life, he would bear us up until he has utterly delivered us from slavery to sin and bondage to Satan; until, I say, he has granted us complete liberty. May he not only grant this grace to us, but to all peoples, etc.

## **THE HOLINESS OF GOD**

## A.W. Pink

"Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy" (Rev. 15:4). He only is independently, infinitely, immutably holy. In Scripture He is frequently styled "The Holy One": He is so because the sum of all moral excellency is found in Him. He is absolute Purity, unsullied even by the shadow of sin. "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). Holiness is the very excellency of the Divine nature: the great God is "glorious in holiness" (Ex. 15:11). Therefore do we read, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity" (Hab. 1:13). As God's power is the opposite of the native weakness of the creature, as His wisdom is in complete contrast from the least defect of understanding or folly, so His holiness is the very antithesis of all moral blemish or defilement. Of old God appointed singers in Israel "that they should praise for the beauty of holiness" (2 Chron. 20:21). "Power is God's hand or arm, omniscience His eye, mercy His bowels, eternity His duration, but holiness is His beauty" (S. Charnock). It is this, supremely, which renders Him lovely to those who are delivered from sin's dominion.

A chief emphasis is placed upon this perfection of God: God is oftener styled Holy than almighty, and set forth by this part of His dignity more than by any other. This is more fixed on as an epithet to His name than any other. You never find it expressed 'His mighty name' or 'His wise name,' but His *great* name, and most of all, His *holy* name. This is the greatest title of honour; in this latter doth the majesty and venerableness of His name appear (S. Charnock).

This perfection, as none other, is solemnly celebrated before the Throne of Heaven, the seraphim crying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord



of hosts" (Isa. 6:3). God Himself singles out this perfection, "Once have I sworn by Thy holiness" (Ps. 89:35). God swears by His holiness because that is a *fuller* expression of Himself than anything else. Therefore are we exhorted, "Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness" (Ps. 30:4). "This may be said to be a transcendental attribute, that, as it were, runs through the rest, and casts luster upon them. It is an attribute of attributes" (J. Howe, 1670). Thus we read of "the *beauty* of the Lord" (Ps. 27:4), which is none other than "the beauty of holiness" (Ps. 110:3).

As it seems to challenge an excellency above all His other perfections, so it is the glory of all the rest; as it is the glory of the Godhead, so it is the glory of every perfection in the Godhead; as His power is the strength of them, so His holiness is the beauty of them; as all would be weak without almightiness to back them, so all would be uncomely without holiness to adorn them. Should this be sullied, all the rest would lose their honour; as at the same instant the sun should lose its light, it would lose its heat, its strength, its generative and quickening virtue. As sincerity is the luster of every grace in a Christian, so is purity the splendor of every attribute in the Godhead. His justice is a holy justice, His wisdom a holy wisdom, His arm of power a "holy arm" (Ps. 98:1), His truth or promise a "holy promise" (Ps. 105:42). His name, which signifies all His attributes in conjunction, "is holy," Psalm 103:1 (S. Charnock).

God's holiness is manifested in His *works*. "The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works" (Ps. 145:17). Nothing but that which is excellent can proceed from Him. Holiness is the rule of all His actions. At the beginning He pronounced all that He made "very good" (Gen. 1:31), which He could not have done had there been

anything imperfect or unholy in them. Man was made "upright" (Eccl. 7:29), in the image and likeness of his Creator. The angels that fell were created holy, for we are told that they "kept not their first habitation" (Jude 6). Of Satan it is written, "Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee" (Ezek. 28:15).

God's holiness is manifested in His *law*. That law forbids sin in *all* of its modifications: in its most refined as well as its grossest forms, the intent of the mind as well as the pollution of the body, the secret desire as well as the overt act. Therefore do we read, The law is holy, and "the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Rom. 7:12). Yes, "the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether" (Ps. 19:8, 9).

God's holiness is manifested *at the Cross*. Wondrously and yet most solemnly does the Atonement display God's infinite holiness and abhorrence of sin. How hateful must sin be to God for Him to punish it to its utmost deserts when it was imputed to His Son!

Not all the vials of judgment that have or shall be poured out upon the wicked world, nor the flaming furnace of a sinner's conscience, nor the irreversible sentence pronounced against the rebellious demons, nor the groans of the damned creatures, give such a demonstration of God's hatred of sin, as the wrath of God let loose upon His Son. Never did Divine holiness appear more beautiful and lovely than at the time our Saviour's countenance was most marred in the midst of His dying groans. This Himself acknowledges in Psa. 22. When God had turned His smiling face from Him, and thrust His sharp knife into His heart, which forced that terrible cry from Him, "My God, My God, why hast

Thou forsaken Me?" He adores this perfection—"Thou art holy," v. 3 (S. Charnock).

Because God is holy He *hates all sin*. He loves everything which is in conformity to His laws, and loathes everything which is contrary to it. His Word plainly declares, "The froward is an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. 3:32). And again, "The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. 15:26). It follows, therefore, that He must necessarily punish sin. Sin can no more exist without demanding His punishment than without requiring His hatred of it. God has often forgiven sinners, but He never forgives sin; and the sinner is only forgiven on the ground of Another having borne his punishment; for "without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. 9:22). Therefore we are told, "The Lord will, take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserveth Wrath for His enemies" (Nahum 1:2). For one sin God banished our first parents from Eden. For one sin all the posterity of Ham fell under a curse which remains over them to this day (Gen. 9:21). For one sin Moses was excluded from Canaan, Elisha's servant smitten with leprosy, Ananias and Sapphira cut off out of the land of the living.

Herein we find proof for the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures. The unregenerate do not really believe in the holiness of God. Their conception of His character is altogether one-sided. They fondly hope that His mercy will override everything else. "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether as thyself" (Ps. 50:21) is God's charge against them. They think only of a "god" patterned after their own evil hearts. Hence their continuance in a course of mad folly. Such is the holiness ascribed to the Divine nature and character in Scripture that it clearly demonstrates their superhuman origin. The character attributed to the "gods" of the ancients and of modern heathendom are the very reverse of that immaculate purity which pertains to the

true God. An ineffably holy God, who has the utmost abhorrence of all sin, was never invented by any of Adam's fallen descendants! The fact is that nothing makes more manifest the terrible depravity of man's heart and his enmity against the living God than to have set before him One who is infinitely and immutably holy. His own idea of *sin* is practically limited to what the world calls "crime." Anything short of that, man palliates as "defects," "mistakes," "infirmities," etc. And even where sin is owned at all, excuses and extenuations are made for it.

The "god" which the vast majority of professing Christians "love," is looked upon very much like an indulgent old man, who himself has no relish for folly, but leniently winks at the "indiscretions" of youth. But the Word says, "Thou hatest all workers of iniquity" (Ps. 5:5). And again, "God is angry with the wicked every day" (Ps. 7:11). But men refuse to believe in *this* God, and gnash their teeth when His hatred of sin is faithfully pressed upon their attention. No, sinful man was no more likely to devise a holy God than to create the Lake of fire in which he will be tormented for ever and ever.

Because God is holy, acceptance with Him on the ground of creature doings is utterly impossible. A fallen creature could sooner create a world than produce that which would meet the approval of infinite Purity. Can darkness dwell with Light? Can the Immaculate One take pleasure in "filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6)? The best that sinful man brings forth is defiled. A corrupt tree cannot bear good fruit. God would deny Himself, vilify His perfections, were He to account as righteous and holy that which is not so in itself; and nothing is so which has the least stain upon it contrary to the nature of God. But blessed be His name, that which His holiness demanded His grace has provided in Christ Jesus our Lord. Every poor sinner who has fled to Him for refuge stands "accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:6). Hallelujah!

Because God is holy the utmost reverence becomes our approaches unto Him. "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all about Him" (Ps. 89:7). Then "Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at His footstool; He is holy" (Ps. 99:5). Yes, "at His *footstool*," in the lowest posture of humility, prostrate before Him. When Moses would approach unto the burning bush, God said, "put off thy shoes from off thy feet" (Ex. 3:5). He is to be served "with fear" (Ps. 2:11). Of Israel His demand was, "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh Me, and before all the people I will be glorified" (Lev. 10:3). The more our hearts are awed by His ineffable holiness, the more acceptable will be our approaches unto Him.

Because God is holy we should desire to be conformed to Him. His command is, "Be ye holy, for I am holy" (1 Pet. 1:16). We are not bidden to be omnipotent or omniscient as God is, but we are to be holy, and that "in *all* manner of deportment" (1 Pet. 1:15).

This is the prime way of honoring God. We do not so glorify God by elevated admiration, or eloquent expressions, or pompous services of Him, as when we aspire to a conversing with Him with unstained spirits, and live to Him in living like Him (S. Charnock).

Then as God alone is the Source and Fount of holiness, let us earnestly seek holiness from Him; let our daily prayer be that He may "sanctify us *wholly*; and our whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:23).

# **THE BIBLE**

## **The Authority and Inspiration of the Scriptures**

**Benjamin B. Warfield**

Warfield (1851-1921) was Professor of Didactic and Polemic Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary.

Christianity is often called a book-religion. It would be more exact to say that it is a religion which has a book. Its foundations are laid in apostles and prophets, upon which its courses are built up in the sanctified lives of men; but Christ Jesus alone is its chief cornerstone. He is its only basis; he, its only head; and He alone has authority in his Church. But he has chosen to found his Church not directly by his own hands, speaking the word of God, say for instance, in thunder-tones from heaven; but through the instrumentality of a body of apostles, chosen and trained by himself, endowed with gifts and graces from the Holy Spirit, and sent forth into the world as his authoritative agents for proclaiming a gospel which he placed within their lips and which is none the less his authoritative word that it is through them that he speaks it. It is because the apostles were Christ's representatives, that what they did and said and wrote as such, comes to us with divine authority. The authority of the Scriptures thus rests on the simple fact that God's authoritative agents in founding the Church gave them as authoritative to the Church which they founded. All the authority of the apostles stands behind the Scriptures, and all the authority of Christ behind the apostles. The Scriptures are simply the law-code which the law-givers of the Church gave it.

If, then, the apostles were appointed by Christ to act for him and in his name and authority in founding the Church -- and this no one can doubt; and if the apostles gave the Scriptures to the Church in prosecution of this commission -- and this admits of as little doubt; the whole question of the authority of the Scriptures is determined. It will be observed that their authority does not rest exactly on apostolic authorship. The point is not that the apostles wrote these books (though most of the New Testament books were written by apostles), but that they imposed them on the Church as authoritative expositions of its divinely appointed faith and practice. Still less does the authority of the Scriptures rest on the authority of the Church. The Church may bear witness to what she received from the apostles as law, but this is not giving authority to that law but humbly recognizing the authority which rightfully belongs to it whether the Church recognizes it or not. The puzzle which some people fall into here is something like mistaking the relative "authority" of the guide-post and the road; the guide-post may point us to the right road but it does not give its rightness to the road. It has not "determined" the road -- it is the road that has "determined" the guide-post; and unless the road goes of itself to its destination the guide-post has no power to determine its direction. So the Church does not "determine" the Scriptures, but the Scriptures the Church. Nor does it avail to say in opposition that the Church existed before the Scriptures and therefore cannot depend on them. The point is, whether the Scriptures are a product of the Church, or rather of the authority which founded the Church. The Church certainly did not exist before the authority which Christ gave the apostles to found it, in virtue of which they have imposed the Scriptures on it as law.

Apostolicity thus determines the authority of Scripture; and any book or body of books which were given to the Church by the apostles as law must always remain of divine authority in the

Church. That the apostles thus gave the Church the whole Old Testament, which they had themselves received from their fathers as God's word written, admits of no doubt, and is not doubted. That they gradually added to this body of old law an additional body of new law is equally patent. In part this is determined directly by their own extant testimony. Thus Peter places Paul's Epistles beside the Scriptures of the Old Testament as equally with them law to Christians (II Peter 3:16); and thus Paul places Luke's Gospel alongside of Deuteronomy (I Timothy 5:18). Thus, too, all write with authority (I Corinthians 14:37; II Corinthians 10:8; II Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6-14) -- with an authority which is above that of angels (Galatians 1:7-8), and the immediate recognition of which is the test of the possession of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 14:37; II Thessalonians 3:6-14). In part it is left to be determined indirectly from the testimony of the early Church; it being no far cry from the undoubting universal acceptance of a book as authoritative by the Church of the apostolic age, to the apostolic gift of it as authoritative to that Church. But by one way or another it is easily shown that all the books which now constitute our Bible, and which Christians, from that day to this, have loyally treated as their divinely prescribed book of law, no more and no fewer, were thus imposed on the Church as its divinely authoritative rule of faith and practice.

Now it goes, of course, without saying, that the apostles were not given this supreme authority as legislators to the Church without preparation for their high functions, without previous instruction in the mind of Christ, without safeguards thrown about them in the prosecution of their task, without the accompanying guidance of the Holy Spirit. And nothing is more noticeable in the writings which they have given the Church than the claim which they pervasively make that in giving them they are acting only as the agents of Christ, and that those who wrote them wrote in the Spirit of Christ. What



Paul writes he represents to be "the commandments of the Lord" (I Corinthians 14:37), which he therefore transmits in the name of the Lord (II Thessalonians 3:6); and the gospel that Peter preached was proclaimed in the Holy Spirit (I Peter 1:12). Every Scripture of the Old Testament is inspired by God (II Timothy 3:16), and the New Testament is equally Scripture with the Old (I Timothy 5:18); all prophecy of Scripture came from men who spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit (II Peter 1:20) and Paul's Epistles differ from these older writings only in being "other"; that is, newer Scriptures of like kind (II Peter 3:16). When we consider the promises of supernatural guidance which Christ made to his apostles (Matthew 10:19-20; Mark 13:11; Luke 21:4; John 14 and 16), in connection with their claim to speak with divine authority even when writing (I Corinthians 14:37; II Thessalonians 3:6), and their conjunction of their writings with the Old Testament Scriptures as equally divine with them, we cannot fail to perceive that the apostles claim to be attended in their work of giving law to God's Church by prevailing superintending grace from the Holy Spirit. This is what is called inspiration. It does not set aside the human authorship of the books. But it puts behind the human also a divine authorship. It ascribes to the authors such an attending influence of the Spirit in the process of writing, that the words they set down become also the words of God; and the resultant writing is made not merely the expression of Paul's or John's or Peter's will for the churches, but the expression of God's will. In receiving these books from the apostles as law, therefore, the Church has always received them not only as books given by God's agents, but as books so given by God through those agents that every word of them is God's word.

Let it be observed that the proof of the authority of the Scriptures does not rest on a previous proof of their inspiration. Even an uninspired law is law. But when inspiration has once been shown to

be fact, it comes mightily to the reinforcement of their authority. God speaks to us now, in Scripture, not only mediately through his representatives, but directly through the Scriptures themselves as his inspired word. The Scriptures thus become the crystallization of God's authoritative will. We will not say that Christianity might not have been founded and propagated and preserved without inspired writings or even without any written embodiment of the authoritative apostolic teaching. Wherever Christ is known through whatever means, there is Christianity, and men may hear and believe and be saved. But God has caused his grace to abound to us in that he not only published redemption through Christ in the world, but gave this preachment authoritative expression through the apostles, and fixed it with infallible trustworthiness in his inspired word. Thus in every age God speaks directly to every Christian heart, and gives us abounding safety to our feet and divine security to our souls. And thus, instead of a mere record of a revelation given in the past, we have the ever-living word of God; instead of a mere tradition however guarded, we have what we have all learned to call in a unique sense "the Scriptures."

## **The Inspiration of the Scriptures**

**John Macleod**

John Macleod (1872-1948) was Principal of the Free Church of Scotland College, Edinburgh. This address was published in *The Evangelical Quarterly* (1935).

When we speak of the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures we are dealing with one of the doctrines of the Christian faith. It is from the Scriptures themselves alone that we can learn at first hand what the claims are that they make in regard to their own origin and authority. It holds of any of the doctrines of the faith that if we would know it we are called upon to learn it on proper authority. That is to say it rests on the statements made in the Bible in regard to it by Prophets and Apostles. It may pass into acceptance in the Church in currently professed form as a creed, and as such men may know what it is and discuss it as the recognized teaching of the Church. But the formulation which it receives in this shape is not the ultimate basis on which Christian truth rests. It may come to be as familiar in Christian circles as is the doctrine of the Trinity, and it may be looked upon as the authentic statement of what the Church holds. There is, however, something that lies deeper than ecclesiastical formulation and profession and recognition. To these things no higher authority than that of the Church attaches. What really matters is that what the Church teaches should be a true exhibition and representation of what is taught in the Scriptures. The authority that belongs to the teaching of Scripture rests in turn on the fact that the supreme author of Scripture is none other than God Himself. In other words it is because it has been breathed by God and so given by Him that it is possessed of its rightful infallible and final authority.

Now, in respect to the distinctive quality of Holy Writ as the Word of God we can learn, as we have said, what it is only from its own statements. There is no serious question as to the attitude adopted toward the Old Testament by our Lord and His Apostles. What that was we learn from the New Testament as an authentic witness to their teaching. The Christian response to this is one of acceptance. It is because they recognize that our Lord spoke with authority that Christians are entitled to be called Christians. They acknowledge

Him to be the Christ and as such they accord to Him the submission of their intellect as well as of their heart. Their acquaintance with Him and His teaching is derived from the witness of the New Testament Scriptures. These they proceed upon as trustworthy documents and as they acquaint themselves with their teaching they subject heart and conscience and understanding to the truth that they open up. So in regard to what their Lord taught about the Scriptures of which Israel were the custodians they accept His words as regulative for their thought as surely as for their faith. This determines the outlook on the Old Testament Scriptures that is characteristic of historical Christianity.

From these same Scriptures of the New Testament which tell them what Christ taught they learn on an authority which they recognize as sufficient what the endowment was which He bestowed upon His chosen representatives as well as the claims that He put forth on behalf of His own authority. It is as a matter of fact the Christ Who makes these claims that historical Christendom recognizes as the supreme authority in the department of Faith and Life; and recognizing Him to be the Christ, the Great Prophet of the Church, Christians are willing to learn what He had to teach. So they submit themselves to the authority of the Gospels and as they find in those documents the message that He delivered they receive it as they receive Him Who delivered it.

Thus they learn not only what our Lord had to say in respect of Moses and the Prophets, but also what was peculiar to His own teaching as an opening up of what had found place in the Old Testament only in cryptic or initial form. The advance of revelation was like the path of the just which shines more and more unto the perfect day. The bud hides in its bosom what the warmth of the summer sun brings to light. The full flower shows more than did the

bud. Yet all the beauty of the full-blown rose was hid in the bosom of the rosebud. So the early revelation was brought to maturity in the ministry of our Lord. He brought out to its full development what the former revelation held only in seed or in germ. The first grey streak that tells of the dawn and that heralds the day is followed by increasing light until the sun rises and the day has come. So was it with the progress of gracious revelation. It was given by steps and stages. But no new step that was taken set aside what had been already given. The first promise was followed by many more. The Books of the Law were followed by the Prophets and the Psalms, so that when our Lord came Israel had in their hands the whole canon of Old Testament Scripture. What that embodied by way of prophecy and promise found its fulfillment in His person and coming and work. He opened up the true sense, so that what many prophets and righteous men desired to hear and heard not was made known to the generation of Israel which had the benefit and privilege of His ministry.

Now the writers of the Gospels set down as witnesses credible and trustworthy the teaching that He delivered. God who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke unto the fathers through the prophets spoke in the fullness of time through His Son. The message which He proclaimed His disciples received and the record of that message we have in the four Gospels which proceeded from the circle that had heard for themselves and had seen for themselves what the Son of God did and taught. If from the Gospels we see what the character of our Lord's ministry of teaching and working was we learn from them too what His followers experienced by way of training and equipment for the work that they were to do. They were to be His witnesses and that this might be the case they must be in a position to tell what they heard and saw for themselves. During His earthly ministry they were learners in their Lord's School. But they were

learners who had very much to unlearn and in the account that they give of the process of their education they are wonderfully candid as they let us see their own mistakes and how backward they were in taking in the real meaning of their Lord's mission and work.

A competent witness, it has been said, needs three things, capacity, opportunity, and veracity. All these three met in the witnesses that our Lord chose to testify in regard to Himself. In respect of their capacity they were plain men of common sense who would never be challenged as witnesses in any case or court on the ground that they were deficient in ordinary understanding. The fact that they were so long in their Lord's company gave them the opportunity that was needed to fit them to be His witnesses. For in the years of their fellowship with Him as disciples they had every chance of seeing and of hearing for themselves. This fitted them to tell, as witnesses, of the facts about His works and His teaching both. The third requisite condition for a competent witness is to be found also in their case. They were men of character and on the score of veracity we cannot name any others whose word we should sooner take in regard to what had come within the sphere of their own cognisance.

With these three conditions meeting in them we should at once acknowledge how fit they were to fulfill the function of bearing witness to their Lord. When further we take note of the risk that they ran in bearing their witness and the many inducements that they had to be silent and not to provoke the anger of the men in power and yet they were not silent, this consideration shows how free they were from self-seeking in taking the course that they did. All ordinary prudential motives would tell in the direction of bidding them study their selfish interests and their ease. But in spite of this they could not hold their peace. In the face of persecution and danger and death they bore their witness. The facts that they attested we find on record

and we may come in touch through the record of those facts in the Gospels with the Lord whom they learned to know, to follow and to serve.

The disciples who were thus meant to be witnesses and were trained for that work were meant also to be teachers. Now for their two-fold office of witnesses and teachers their Lord promised them that they should have special equipment. In the matter of the witness that they should bear to His Word He gave them the express promise that when they should receive the gift of the Holy Ghost He would bring all things to their remembrance whatsoever He had said unto them and they should bear witness because they had been with Him from the beginning. Witness given under such special conditions should be the witness not only of the ordinary powers of human memory but also the witness of memory divinely reinforced. In that case their witness should be a positively trustworthy source of information in regard to what their Lord had done and taught. And such was the witness that was borne by the Apostles from the time that they received the endowment of Pentecost; and what held of their spoken word holds good of the permanent record of their ministry of witness as we have it in the four Gospels.

During the course of their Lord's ministry on earth His disciples made it quite obvious that they had much yet to learn that they might understand the teaching which they heard from Him. It was only by slow degrees that they were set free from the mistaken ideas that they had learned, from their childhood, to cherish in regard to the work of the Christ for whose coming their fathers had looked and in whose coming they themselves as disciples had learned to rejoice. So long as they were held in the grip of such prejudice they neither entered into their Lord's teaching as they should, nor were they in a position to teach their fellows the full truth that had fallen upon their

ears. They were meant, however, to be teachers, and authoritative teachers, of the full Word of divine revelation. For this end they needed to have their understanding enlightened and their judgment cleared. Otherwise they could not be the authoritative expositors and preachers of a message which was to be proclaimed with great plainness of speech. If their hearers were to acquaint themselves with the fullness of Gospel truth it was plain that they as its teachers must know it for themselves. They must then be delivered from their mistaken thoughts of the truth made known by their Lord. They knew it as yet not as a whole but in parts. This knowledge was not enough to furnish them with equipment for their office. So their Lord's promise was given them that when the Spirit of truth that He promised them should come He would lead them into all the truth. So much they knew already. So much more they failed to do justice to, and so much also was not as yet disclosed to them. The full discovery had not been given them for they were not ripe yet for it. So their Lord told them that He had many things to say unto them which they could not yet bear. These things they were to come to know when they should be led into the full truth. Once this should happen they were no longer to be mere babes in this knowledge. They were to be led into it and when this should come about they would know it in its true setting and they would know its parts in their true relations to one another and in their proper proportions. Thus their judgment should be matured.

But our Lord's promises to the apostles went further. In them the Spirit of their Father was to speak even when they were only called upon to open their mouths in their own self-defence. If this was so might it not be reasoned a fortiori that the provision which should equip them for self-defence would assuredly be theirs when they spoke as the responsible and authoritative representatives of their Lord? We are not left to inference here or to our own reasonings



from the fitness of things. So close was their relation to their Lord as His Apostles that those who should hear them should hear Him, and those who rejected them rejected Him. And again when we see the claims that an Apostle could make we learn what the endowment was that his brethren and he enjoyed for the discharge of the ministry of witness and teaching to which they were called.

In this connection it is of interest to take note of what the Apostle Paul has to say of himself and of his fellows. They spoke not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth but which the Holy Ghost teacheth. Not only did they receive the Spirit who is from God that they might know the things which are freely given us from God. They were to speak these things in Spirit-given words. Thus he claimed that not only the substance of their teaching was of authority but also its form. In this we read the recognized fulfillment in the Apostles of the promise that had been given to them. Their hearers who heard to profit received from them the word of God, and in so doing treated it not as the word of man but as it was in truth the Word of God which worketh effectually in them that believe. And when Paul used his authority as an Apostle in laying down the law for those in the Church of Corinth who were prophets or spiritual he made it plain that they were called upon to recognize that the things which he wrote to them were indeed the commandments of the Lord.

What Paul thus claimed for his written word held good of the word of his brother Apostles. Thus also we find John saying: "He that is of God heareth us", while "he that is not of God heareth not us". And it was thus that men were to know the Spirit of truth from the spirit of error. The very touchstone that told the difference lay in this fact, that the final authority of the Apostles should be recognized.

Such is the position that historical believing Christianity takes up. It accords to the Apostles what they claim as their own; and it recognizes in their writings the permanent and final form of the revelation that the Son of God came to make. He gave so much of it in the course of His ministry on earth and this we have in abiding shape in the four Gospels. These are the records of what Jesus began both to do and to teach until the day in which He was taken up. With this record in our hands we may see what the Apostles saw and we may hear what they heard. We are as it were looking through their eyes and we are listening as it were with their ears. They have left us the record of what they heard and saw to serve as the ground of Faith. They thought their witness worthy of credit and that it was a sufficient basis for a faith to build upon which receives their Lord as the Christ, the Son of God. When they indicate the end for which they wrote they but put on record what their Lord meant them to do. He also meant that their word of witness should be enough for the faith of His people in all ages to build upon. Their ministry was derived from Him. He called them; He trained them; He sent them. The equipment that He promised them He bestowed upon them. Thus it came about that after He was taken up He fulfilled to them His promise and in their witness and in their teaching He Himself continued to bear witness and to teach. What He did in His earthly ministry He continued in His heavenly. As the result of this continued ministry He enabled His Apostles to fulfill their oral and their active ministry on earth and to leave an abiding heritage to those who should believe in Him through their word. This was nothing less than the prolongation of their ministry of witness and of teaching. Its concrete embodied form is the Scriptures of the New Testament.

We may be tempted to wish that we had lived in the days in which our Lord was to be seen and heard, or His Apostles bore first-hand

witness in regard to Him. These were days which many prophets and righteous men desired to see yet saw not. They were great days indeed. We should not, however, forget that the word of the Apostles preserves to us their witness, and though curiosity might be gratified if we could be transported back to the time and land of the New Testament facts yet we should see nothing but what the Apostles tell us and we should hear from their living voice no other message than we have in their written word. We need not then envy them the privilege that was theirs. The same Jesus of Whom they speak and Whom they knew is before us that we may believe in Him and know Him as our own. The greatest good that the Apostles themselves got of the Gospel is the good that is common to all the children of the new birth. They knew their Lord, and that is the very life of the soul and it is our life that we should know Him. And we are not to give place to the thought that He has withheld from us the means of truly acquainting ourselves with Him. Such is the privilege that the New Testament Church enjoys to the ends of the earth and to the end of time, when she has those Scriptures which enshrine the ministry of our Lord, as a personal and direct ministry on earth, and as a real and abiding and authoritative ministry which is His as the risen and exalted Christ. He continued to work and to teach through His Apostles and the record of it all is ours that we may acquaint ourselves with Him, and through a living faith get the good of the Gospel of His Grace.

Now this record is as authoritative as the spoken word of the Twelve. It shares with their oral witness and teaching in the quality of final authority. This was theirs because their Lord spoke through them. They spoke in the words that the Holy Ghost enabled them to employ. They were inspired men and their message was an inspired message. God breathed on them and He breathed through them so that their word was His Word in very deed. They were equally

inspired when they wrote as when they spoke, and the same theopneust character that attached to their spoken word belongs to their written word also. Such is the claim that they made for themselves; and that is the claim which their writings still make.

Their word as His Apostles was their Lord's word, and this is what is meant by the inspiration of the New Testament. From its pages we learn that our Lord and His Apostles too regarded the sacred deposit which was in the hands of Israel and which the New Testament Church as the legitimate successor to the Church of the Old Testament still holds in her hands as the Word of God given of old by Moses and the Prophets. It was not the word only of Moses or the word of Isaiah, or the word of David. It was their word indeed, for they spoke it and they wrote it. But the word of Moses was the Word of God. The word of Isaiah was the word of God. The word of David was the Word of God. So in the New Testament we have the Word of Paul and the Word of John and the Word of Luke. It was not only their Word, it was the Word of God. Now this brings before us the mysterious character of Holy Writ.

The written and the Incarnate Word are so alike the one to the other. The Incarnate Word was very God and very Man, and He was the sinless One. So too the written word is the very word of those who wrote it, and at the same time the very word of God Who made use of them. They were the penmen of scripture. They themselves were, to quote the word of Dr. John Duncan, the "men-pens" of the Holy Ghost. In the fullness of their individuality with all their gifts of style and expression He made use of them. There is mystery here without a doubt. It is not, however, a mystery that is unparalleled or unexampled. We have an illustration of it in the working of the efficacious grace in which we believe. The Lord, the Holy Ghost, works in the regenerate the faith of the Gospel and the repentance

that is unto life. It is not the Spirit that believes or repents. It is the believer or the penitent. They exercise faith. It is the Spirit that works it. They exercise godly sorrow. It is the Spirit who is its author. He works all and they are the agents in it all. It is of His inworking and enabling that they repent and believe. But the faith that they exercise and the repentance by which they turn from sin to God are both the personal activity of the new-born soul. He worketh all their works in them and to Him belongs the undivided glory of them. Yet the works are theirs. His working does not overwhelm or obliterate their personality. It quickens the soul when dead in sin and it upholds the soul that it has brought alive. In the free exercise of a will that His grace has renewed they yield themselves in obedience of faith.

Now to those who hold with us this, the faith of the Reformed Churches, it sounds simply absurd to hear men describe the doctrine of inspiration as though it were an impossible thing for a transcendent sovereign God so to use a man in the full and free exercise of his faculties as an instrument of His own hand for making known His mind and will. Why, men who play well on an instrument may harp well or pipe well. The music of the pipe and of the harp may be in perfect harmony yet the hearer can tell the one from the other. They are both the music of the players who are pleased to make the one of them the pipe and the other of them the harp his instrument of music. A man's writing varies with the pen that he employs. That pen may be hard or soft. It may be broad or fine and according to its make will the script be that it is employed to produce. Yet you find men object to the doctrine of inspiration that there can be nothing in it because we can tell the style or expression of John or Paul or Isaiah.

It is of the essence of stupidity not to see that God Almighty is not confined to a dead level of monotony when He is pleased to speak to

His creatures in His written word. To say that inspiration of necessity suppresses the distinctive features of human expression when men are under its influence is to refuse to acknowledge that God is able to use men in the full and free exercise of their distinct individuality. It sets unwarrantable bounds to the power of Almighty God. Yet men maintain that the doctrine of inspiration which teaches that there is the concursus of the Divine and the human is an impossibility. They hold that if the written word is wholly of God it can be only by His express dictation that this can be secured, or that He brings it about by making the writers so many machines. They denounce it as mechanical inspiration. They evidently think that they can tell what God can and what He cannot do in these things. So they take upon themselves to say that in the case when the written product is wholly divine it must be the effect of mere mechanical activity of the human writer.

Now in these things it becomes men to be modest and not to claim to know more than they know indeed. We who hold to the pervasive Divine character of Holy Writ are not bound to say how otherwise than by mechanical control such a result is brought about. The mode of the divine activity may, nay must, be to us an inscrutable mystery. We are not to outstep our bounds and to lay limits on the free Sovereignty of the Lord God and say - "Thou must do this and Thou must not do that". It is the bloated pride of an unhumiliated heart that will utter words of such a kind. He gives no account of many of his matters and we dare not summon Him to our bar before whose bar we must ourselves stand. Men may press us to define what the inspiration is which brings it about that the words of men are at the same time, and fully, the words of God. We might answer that we are not minded to pry into the mysterious mode of the Divine co-agency and controlling agency in producing the Holy Scriptures: That operation of Divine power is one that results in a Book which on the

one side is altogether the Word of the men who spoke and wrote it, while on the other side it is wholly the Word of the Living God Who made use of the writers as His instruments.

We like to consider inspiration as that exercise and just that exercise of divine controlling and determining power which secures that those who are its instruments wrote the very Word of God. Men have spoken of guidance and control and direction and superintendence and suggestion as modes of inspiration. It may quite possibly be that these words may be competently applied to the character of its work. But when we go into these things we are going beyond our depth. We who cannot tell how soul and body co-exist and go to make up our full person are overstepping the bounds of our province when we speculate as to how God is working in bringing such a product as Holy Writ into being. Let it be enough for us to recognize what it is and what it claims to be and leave it with Him to bring His counsel to pass as seems best to His unsearchable wisdom.

A full inspiration extends not only to the substance but to the form, not only to the thought but to the expression of Holy Scripture. In other words the inspiration that is responsible for producing the written Word of God is at once full and verbal. In the Downgrade controversy in which Mr. Spurgeon took part in his later years, he said that the attacks that were then so common on verbal inspiration were but the verbal form of the attack on inspiration. In saying so he hit the nail on the head. Those who are content to learn their doctrine of inspiration from the statements, teaching, and phenomena of Scripture itself will not be slow to acknowledge that the very words, which are but the vesture of the thought, are God's chosen Words. Thought and expression are interlinked and when Paul laid stress on the word "Seed" in his Epistle to the Galatians, or when our Lord quoted Psalm 110 to ask how Messiah could be

David's son when David in the Spirit spoke of Him as his Lord, or when he answered the Sadducees by referring them to the words spoken from the Burning Bush we are confronted with Scripture's own use of Scripture. And this teaches us the stress which it lays upon the very words that it employs.

Again when men refer to Scripture quotations as not verbally accurate they forget that the Supreme Author of Scripture is surely free to express Himself as He pleases. He knows His own thought and how to utter it. May He alone not vary the expression of His thought, the thought remaining the same, as He sees right?

When we are told that our doctrine of inspiration can hold good only of the autographs of Holy Writ we might answer that it is the whole aim and endeavour of a reverent criticism, that is, of the study of Scriptures by believers, to attain to certainty as to the precise text and the exact meaning of the Word of God as it was at first given. And the more real our conviction of the truth of Divine Inspiration the more should be our zeal and diligence in this study.

It is boldly affirmed at other times that if it was the original text that was inspired we are not entitled to speak of any translation of Scripture, even the very best, as being the Word of God. The niggling spirit that carps at the acknowledgment of a good translation as the Word of God in another language comes in conflict with an obvious feature of Scripture usage; for we find that the New Testament makes use of a translation of the Old Testament. In this usage the translation is freely employed and no exception is taken to it as though the quality of Divine authorship and authority had evaporated in the process of translation.

When again the objection is raised that we are face to face with a large variety of readings in our oldest manuscripts and that it is inept



for us to hold the inspiration of Scripture seeing that we cannot be sure as to the exact reading at some points of the original text. Men forget that by the time when our Lord was upon earth there is no doubt but there were already in existence a multitude of various readings in the Hebrew Text and the Greek translation of the Old Testament. There were undoubtedly various exhibitions of Scripture in the instances in which that translation diverged from a literal representation of the Hebrew Text of the Old Testament. Now of these things our Lord takes no notice. So also His apostles. The cardinal controlling consideration that the Scriptures as the people had them in their hands or had access to them, were the Word of God is what He and they lay stress upon. And this is ample warrant for us to follow in their steps.

But how often do we hear men daring to say that when our Lord emptied Himself in His humiliation He consented to such an abridgment of His knowledge as that He shared in the limitations and prejudices of His Galilean environment, and so took Old Testament Scripture at its current valuation? When they say this they think that they have got rid of His witness to the word which Israel had in their hands. They imagine that they have put Him out of action as an authoritative teacher in regard to such matters of criticism and that they have left the ground clear for exercising the utmost freedom in their handling of the Old Testament. Well, what have they succeeded in doing? For themselves they have got rid of the note of authority which sounds through His teaching and they have taken up the position that the Incarnate Son of God was the victim of nescience, ignorance and local and provincial prejudice. Would it not be more in keeping with the attitude that they have resolved to adopt that they should at once deny the truth of His Incarnation? Their profession of it when they strip His words of final

authority is like the kiss of Judas when his Lord was to be taken and slain.

But how does the case stand in regard to the words that our Lord spoke? Let us but listen to what He has Himself to say. "I have not spoken from Myself but the Father which sent Me; He gave me a commandment what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His Commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak, therefore, even as the Father said unto Me so I speak." The quarrel then of those who will not hear and rest in His words as final is with the Father, who, as He dwelt in His Son and did the works, gave to His Son in Whom He dwelt the words that He should speak. We should bear in mind that when the Son came as His Father's Servant to do His will He was sent and thus had at once a mission and a commission. Within the bounds of that commission He kept Himself. When He was tempted by Satan to turn the stones into bread the tempter aimed at inducing Him to lay aside that form of a servant in which He had come. This the faithful Servant would not do. Throughout His ministry He kept a servant's place and the Will of the Father was the rule of His service. This held in regard to the very words that He spoke. When then He spoke of the word which had already been given as a Scripture that could not be broken the witness which He bore to it is the very word which His Father gave Him to speak. So all who have recognized Him as a Son sent as a servant receive His word as final and rest in it.

Whatever endeavours the adversaries by their excursions in the department of criticism have made to set aside the authority and finality of His witness come to naught when we are face to face with the claim that He makes to speak the Father's words. Let this claim be set aside and He is set aside. When this claim is acknowledged Christian Faith rests with security in the words that He has spoken.

It is the very Son of the Father that has spoken the very words which the Father gave Him to speak. And it is in keeping with the fitness of things in this situation that when the words of the Father are to be spoken they should be spoken by His everlasting Word. We see then how vain the attempt is to shake the authority of our Lord's witness to Old Testament Scripture and at the same time we see how the truth that He spoke only the words which the Father gave Him to speak stamps His every Word with absolute authority. The promises that He gave to His Apostles were among those words. Those promises we recognize to have been fulfilled in the subsequent ministry of the Apostles and so the revelation given once for all in the fullness of the times is preserved in its written form for all time and is still and will be to the end the abiding possession of all to whom the New Testament Scriptures have come.

Modern Sadduceism in all its forms has a quarrel with the Divine authority of the written word. This is so because its animating principle is not the faith which takes its seat at the footstool of the Son of God, but the unbelief which carps and cavils at His message. It has made the most of its parade of objections and difficulties yet Christian believers who have heard the voice of the Son of God as He still speaks the words of everlasting life have not been greatly moved. Those of them who have enquired into these matters have learned to wait for further light to clear up the difficulties that are to be met with and they do this with all the more confidence and composure of mind because so many of the difficulties that were the stock in trade of unbelievers in former days have been already cleared up; and they cherish the confidence that there is still in store for the Church of God an experience of clearing up in regard to those difficulties on which unbelief still lays stress.

In this connection some writers on the subject of the Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures have put the cart before the horse. In seeking to state the doctrine of inspiration they begin at the wrong end. They start with the difficulties and having come to their conclusions in regard to these they employ those conclusions to modify and determine the sense in which the clear evidence of the statements of the Bible itself should be taken. This is not the course that men would take to arrive at the teaching of Scripture in regard to any other subject, say, sin or salvation. What is obviously the right course to take is that we should first see what the witness of the sacred Writings is and when we have taken a conjoint view of that witness as exhibited in various statements of the Word, then we should put objections and difficulties into their own subordinate place and not suffer the impression that they make upon us to override the plain statements on which the body of our doctrine rests.

As we indicated at the outset it is only when we are agreed as to the fact that Christian Truth is indeed a Divine Revelation that we come logically to discuss the doctrine of what Inspiration is. When we recognize the authentic character of our Scripture documents as an exhibition of the truth which our Lord and His Apostles proclaimed we are warranted in going further than stating that these documents are in a general sense authentic and trustworthy; we are warranted too, in holding that they are what they claim to be, not only a written embodiment of a real Divine Revelation, but a divinely given record of that Revelation, so that it is indeed God's own Word which He has been pleased to commit to writing. In the everyday working of Christian Faith this is proceeded upon. And when questions are raised about it and we look into them we find that the working understanding of Christian Faith can be set aside only by refusing to accept the substantial truth of the claims that our Lord made for Himself and that His Apostles on His behalf continue to make. For

they continue to make the same claims as He did and these we have in the Word that enshrines their ministry of teaching and witness. To refuse then to accept the teaching of Scripture in regard to the claims that it makes to be the Word of God is to meet its claims not with a loyalty of a Christian Faith, but with the unbelief that has not yet learned to bow to the authority of Christ, the Son of God.

## **Revelation**

**J.I. Packer**

Scripture is the Word of God  
The tablets were the work of God;  
the writing was the writing of God,  
engraved on the tablets. EXODUS 32:16

Christianity is the true worship and service of the true God, humankind's Creator and Redeemer. It is a religion that rests on revelation: nobody would know the truth about God, or be able to relate to him in a personal way, had not God first acted to make himself known. But God has so acted, and the sixty-six books of the Bible, thirty-nine written before Christ came and twenty-seven after, are together the record, interpretation, expression, and embodiment of his self-disclosure. God and godliness are the Bible's uniting themes.

From one standpoint, the Scriptures (Scriptures means "writings") are the faithful testimony of the godly to the God whom they loved and served; from another standpoint, through a unique exercise of divine overruling in their composition, they are God's own testimony

and teaching in human form. The church calls these writings the Word of God because their authorship and contents are both divine.

Decisive assurance that Scripture is from God and consists entirely of his wisdom and truth comes from Jesus Christ and his apostles, who taught in his name. Jesus, God incarnate, viewed his Bible (our Old Testament) as his heavenly Father's written instruction, which he no less than others must obey (Matt. 4:4, 7,10; 5:19-20; 19:4-6; 26:31, 52-54; Luke 4:16-21; 16:17; 18:31-33; 22:37; 24:25-27, 45-47; John 10:35), and which he had come to fulfill (Matt. 5:17-18; 26:24; John 5:46). Paul described the Old Testament as entirely "God-breathed"--that is, a product of God's Spirit ("breath") just as the cosmos is (Ps. 33:6; Gen. 1:2)--and written to teach Christianity (2 Tim. 3:15-17; Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11). Peter affirms the divine origin of biblical teaching in 2 Peter 1:21 and 1 Peter 1:10-12, and so also by his manner of quoting does the writer to the Hebrews (Heb. 1:5-13; 3:7; 4:3; 10:5-7, 15-17; cf. Acts 4:25; 28:25-27).

Since the apostles' teaching about Christ is itself revealed truth in God-taught words (1 Cor. 2:12-13), the church rightly regards authentic apostolic writings as completing the Scriptures. Already Peter refers to Paul's letters as Scripture (2 Pet. 3:15-16), and Paul is apparently calling Luke's gospel Scripture in 1 Timothy 5:18, where he quotes the words of Luke 10:7.

The idea of written directives from God himself as a basis for godly living goes back to God's act of inscribing the Decalogue on stone tablets and then prompting Moses to write his laws and the history of his dealings with his people (Exod. 32:15-16; 34:1, 27-28; Num. 33:2; Deut. 31:9). Digesting and living by this material was always central to true devotion in Israel for both leaders and ordinary people (Josh. 1:7-8; 2 Kings 17:13; 22:8-13; 1 Chron. 22:12-13; Neh. 8; Ps. 119). The

principle that all must be governed by the Scriptures, that is, by the Old and New Testaments taken together, is equally basic to Christianity.

What Scripture says, God says; for, in a manner comparable only to the deeper mystery of the Incarnation, the Bible is both fully human and fully divine. So all its manifold contents--histories, prophecies, poems, songs, wisdom writings, sermons, statistics, letters, and whatever else--should be received as from God, and all that Bible writers teach should be revered as God's authoritative instruction. Christians should be grateful to God for the gift of his written Word, and conscientious in basing their faith and life entirely and exclusively upon it. Otherwise, we cannot ever honor or please him as he calls us to do.

Concise Theology. J.I. Packer. Tyndale House Pub., Inc. Wheaton, IL. 1993. Revelation. Pages 3-5.

Man was created by an immediate act of God and is thus not the result of evolutionary processes. God created man in His own image and, therefore, gave to man a transcendent value and worth. We believe that man was given a will and placed under a covenant of works and that he chose to rebel against his Creator he sinned, and thus was plunged into spiritual death, whereby the image of God was marred and man's will was left in the thrall of sin [enslaved to sin]. Through the covenant of grace by the work of the Mediator and the Holy Spirit, man may be regenerated, that he may believe the gospel, become a new creature in Christ, and the image of God may be restored in him.- **R. Scott Clark**

The concept of man as the *image* or *likeness* of God tells us that man as he was created was to *mirror* [i.e. to make visible the Invisible] and to *represent* God [i.e. to act as God, under God and for God's creation]. - **Anthony A. Hoekema** Created in God's Image, pg. 67

We must learn to know what the image of God is by looking at Jesus Christ. What must therefore be at the center of the image of God is not characteristics like the ability to reason or the ability to make decisions...but rather that which was central in the life of Christ: love for God and love for man. -**Anthony A. Hoekema** Created in God's Image, pg. 22

## HUMANITY AND SIN

### The Greatness and Miserableness of Man

***Herman Bavinck***

The conclusion, therefore, is that of Augustine, who said that the heart of man was created for God and that it cannot find rest until it rests in his Father's heart. Hence all men are really seeking after God, as Augustine also declared, but they do not all seek Him in the right way, nor at the right place. They seek Him down below, and He is up above. They seek Him on the earth, and He is in heaven. They seek Him afar, and He is nearby. They seek Him in money, in property, in fame, in power, and in passion; and He is to be found in the high and the holy places, and with him that is of a contrite and



humble spirit (Isa. 57:15). But they do seek Him, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him (Acts 17:27). They seek Him and at the same time they flee Him. They have no interest in a knowledge of His ways, and yet they cannot do without Him. They feel themselves attracted to God and at the same time repelled by Him.

In this, as Pascal so profoundly pointed out, consists the greatness and the miserableness of man. He longs for truth and is false by nature. He yearns for rest and throws himself from one diversion upon another. He pants for a permanent and eternal bliss and seizes on the pleasures of a moment. He seeks for God and loses himself in the creature. He is a born son of the house and he feeds on the husks of the swine in a strange land. He forsakes the fountain of living waters and hews out broken cisterns that can hold no water (Jer. 2:13). He is as a hungry man who dreams that he is eating, and when he awakes finds that his soul is empty; and he is like a thirsty man who dreams that he is drinking, and when he awakes finds that he is faint and that his soul has appetite (Isa. 29:8).

Science cannot explain this contradiction in man. It reckons only with his greatness and not with his misery, or only with his misery and not with his greatness. It exalts him too high, or it depresses him too far, for science does not know of his Divine origin, nor of his profound fall. But the Scriptures know of both, and they shed their light over man and over mankind; and the contradictions are reconciled, the mists are cleared, and the hidden things are revealed. Man is an enigma whose solution can be found only in God.

*Our Reasonable Faith.* Herman Bavinck. Baker Book House. 1956. Pages 22-23.

## **The Present State of the World**

## ***Herman Bavinck***

When the first man and woman have transgressed the commandment of God in Paradise, their punishment does not follow immediately nor in full force. They do not die on the self-same day they have sinned, but remain alive; they are not sent into hell, but instead find themselves entrusted with a task on earth; their line does not perish: they receive the promise of the seed of the woman. In short, a condition now sets in which God had known and which God had established, but which man had not been able to anticipate. It is a condition which has a very special character. It is one in which wrath and grace, punishment and blessing, judgment and long-suffering are mingled with each other. It is the condition which still exists in nature and among men and one which comprehends the sharpest of contrasts within itself.

We live in a strange world, a world which presents us with tremendous contrasts. The high and the low, the great and the small, the sublime and the ridiculous, the beautiful and the ugly, the tragic and the comic, the good and the evil, the truth and the lie, these all are heaped up in unfathomable interrelationship. The gravity and the vanity of life seize on us in turn. Now we are prompted to optimism, then to pessimism. Man weeping is constantly giving way to man laughing. The whole world stands in the sign of humor, which has been well described as a laugh in a tear.

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The deepest cause of this present state of the world is this: because of the sin of man, God is continually manifesting His wrath and yet, by reason of His own good pleasure, is always again revealing His grace also. We are consumed by His anger and yet in the morning we are satisfied by His mercy (Ps. 90:7, 14). His anger endures but a

moment, in His favor is life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning (Ps. 30:6). Curse and blessing are so singularly interdependent that the one sometimes seems to become the other. Work in the sweat of the brow is curse and blessing at once. Both point to the cross which at one and the same time is the highest judgment and the richest grace. And that is why the cross is the mid-point of history and the reconciliation of all antitheses.

*Our Reasonable Faith.* Herman Bavinck. Baker Book House. 1956. Pages 44-45.

## **God's Testimony Concerning Man**

***Horatius Bonar***

GOD knows us. He knows what we are; He knows also what He meant us to be; and, upon the difference between these two states, He founds His testimony concerning us.

He is too loving to say anything needlessly severe; too true to say anything untrue; nor can He have any motive to misrepresent us; for He loves to tell of the good, not of the evil, that may be found in any of the works of His hands. He declared them good, "very good", at first; and if He does not do so now, it is not because He would not, but because He cannot; for "all flesh has corrupted its way upon the earth" (Gen. 6:12).

The divine testimony concerning man is, that he is a sinner. God bears witness against him, not for him; and testifies that "there is none righteous, no, not one"; that there is "none that doeth good";

none "that understandeth"; none that even seeks after God, and, still more, none that loves Him (Psa. 14:1-3; Rom. 3: 10-12). God speaks of man kindly. but severely; as one yearning over a lost child, yet as one who will make no terms with sin, and will "by no means clear the guilty". He declares man to be a lost one, a stray one. a rebel, a "hater of God" (Rom. 1: 30); not a sinner occasionally, but a sinner always; not a sinner in part, with many good things about him; but wholly a sinner, with no compensating goodness; evil in heart as well as life, "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1); an evil doer, and therefore under condemnation; an enemy of God, and therefore "under wrath"; a breaker of the righteous law, and therefore under "the curse of the law" (Gal. 3:10).

Man has fallen! Not this man nor that man, but the whole race. In Adam all have sinned; in Adam all have died. It is not that a few leaves have faded or been shaken down, but the tree has become corrupt, root and branch. The "flesh", or "old man"-that is. each man as he is born into the world, a son of man, a fragment of humanity, a unit in Adam's fallen body-is "corrupt". The sinner not merely brings forth sin, but he carries it about with him, as his second self; he is a "body" or mass of sin (Rom. 6: 6), a "body of death" (Rom. 7: 24), subject not to the law of God, but to "the law of sin" (Rom. 7:23). The Jew, educated under the most perfect of laws. and in the most favourable circumstances, was the best type of humanity; of civilised, polished, educated humanity; the best specimen of Adam's sons; yet God's testimony concerning him is that he is "under sin", that he has gone astray, and that he has "come short of the glory of God".

The outer life of a man is not the man, just as the paint on a piece of timber is not the timber, and as the green moss upon the hard rock is not the rock itself. The picture of a man is not the man; it is but a skilful arrangement of colours which look like the man. So it is the

bearing of the soul toward God that is the true state of the man. The man that loves God with all his heart is in a right state; the man that does not love Him thus is in a wrong one. He is a sinner, because his heart is not right with God. He may think his life a good one, and others may think the same; but God counts him guilty, worthy of death and hell. The outward good cannot make up for the inward evil. The good deeds done to his fellow-men cannot be set off against his bad thoughts of God. And he must be full of these bad thoughts, so long as he does not love this infinitely lovable and infinitely glorious Being with all his strength.

God's testimony then concerning man is, that he does not love God with all his heart; indeed, that he does not love Him at all. Not to love our neighbour is sin; not to love a parent is greater sin; but not to love God is greater sin still.

Man need not try to say a word for himself, or to plead "not guilty". unless he can shew that he loves, and has always loved, God with his whole heart and soul. If he can truly say this, he is all right, he is not a sinner. and does not need pardon. He will find his way to the kingdom without the cross and without a Saviour. But, if he cannot say this, "his mouth is stopped", and he is "guilty before God". However favourably a good outward life may dispose him and others to look upon his case just now, the verdict will go against him hereafter. This is man's day. when man's judgments prevail; but God's day is coming, when the case shall be tried upon its real merits. Then the Judge of all the earth shall do right, and the sinner be put to shame.

There is another and yet worse charge against him. He does not believe on the name of the Son of God, nor love the Christ of God. This is his sin of sins. That his heart is not right with God is the first

charge against him. That his heart is not right with the Son of God is the second. And it is this second that is the crowning, crushing sin, carrying with it more terrible damnation than all other sins together. "He that believeth not is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18). "He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record which God gave of his Son" (1 John 5:10). "He that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16: 16). And hence it is that the first sin which the Holy Spirit brings home to a man is unbelief; "when he (the Holy Spirit) is come he will reprove the world of sin because they believe not on me" (John 16: 8-9),

Such is God's condemnation of man. Of this the whole Bible is full. That great love of God, which His Word reveals, is based on this condemnation. It is love to the condemned. God's testimony to His own grace has no meaning, save as resting on, or taking for granted His testimony to man's guilt and ruin. Nor is it against man as merely a being morally diseased or sadly unfortunate that He testifies, but as guilty of death, under wrath, sentenced to the eternal curse, for that crime of crimes, a heart not right with God, and not true to His incarnate Son.

This is a divine verdict, not a human one. It is God, not man, who condemns, and God is not a man that He should lie. This is God's testimony concerning man, and we know that this witness is true. It concerns us much to receive it as such, and to act upon it.

*God's Way Of Peace.* Horatius Bonar. Evangelical Press. 12 Wooler Street, Darlington, Co. Durham, DL1 1Rq, England. 1968. Pages 11-14.

# **The Fall of Man**

## **J. Gresham Machen**

Machen (1881-1937) was Professor of New Testament, first at Princeton Theological Seminary, and afterwards at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia. Excerpts from *The Christian View of Man* (1937).

What is sin? It is a question that we cannot ignore. From false answers to it have come untold disaster to mankind and to the church, and in the right answer to it is to be found the beginning of the pathway of salvation.

How shall we obtain the answer to that momentous question? I think we can make a very good beginning by just examining the Biblical account of the way in which sin entered into the world. That account is given in the Book of Genesis in a very wonderful manner. The language is very simple; the story is told almost in words of one syllable. Yet how profound is the insight which it affords into the depths of the human soul!

"And the Lord God," says the Bible, "commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:16-17). It

has been observed that no reason is said to have been given to Adam to tell him why he should not eat of that tree, and it has been said that that fact is perhaps significant. Eating of the tree was not in itself obviously wrong; the command not to eat of it was not reinforced by any instinct in man's nature. It appeared therefore all the more clearly as a sheer test of obedience. Would man obey God's commands knowing simply that they were God's commands, knowing that because He gave them they had some quite sufficient reason and were holy and just and good? How clearly and simply that is brought out in the narrative in the Book of Genesis!

An equal simplicity and an equal profundity characterize the following narrative -- the narrative of the temptation and the fall. Adam and Eve were in the garden. The serpent said to the woman, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (Genesis 3:1)

I think we can detect even there the beginnings of the temptation. The woman is asked to eye the things that God has forbidden as though they were desirable things. It is hinted that the commands are hard commands; it is hinted that possibly they might even have involved the prohibition to eat of any of the trees of the garden.

Perhaps an attempt is made to cast doubt upon the very fact of the command. "Hath God said?" says the tempter. The woman is asked to envisage God's command as a barrier which it would be desirable to surmount. Is there no loophole? Has God really commanded this and that? Did He really mean to prohibit the eating of the trees of the garden?

The woman's reply states the fact -- certainly in the main. God's command did not prohibit the eating of all the trees in the garden, but only of one tree. "And the woman said unto the serpent, We may



eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die" (Genesis 3:2-3).

Then at last there comes a direct attack upon the truthfulness of God. "Thou shalt surely die," said God: "Ye shall not surely die," said the tempter. At last the battle is directly joined. God, said the tempter, has lied, and He has lied for the purpose of keeping something good from man. "Ye shall not surely die," said the tempter: "for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:4-5).

At that point the question arises in our minds what the element of truth was in those words of the tempter. Those words were a lie, but the truly devilish lies are those that contain an element of truth, or, rather, they are those lies that twist the truth so that the resulting lie looks as though it itself were true.

Certainly it was true that by eating the forbidden fruit Adam attained a knowledge that he did not possess before. That seems to be indicated in verse 22 of the same chapter of the Book of Genesis, where we read: "And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil" (Genesis 3:22). Yes, it does seem to have been true that when he ate of the forbidden fruit man came to know something that he had not known before.

He had not known sin before; now he knew it. He had known only good before; now he knew good and evil. But what a curse that new knowledge was, and what an immense loss of knowledge as well as loss of everything else that new knowledge brought in its train! He now knew good and evil; but, alas, he knew good now only in memory, so far as his own experience was concerned; and the evil

that he knew he knew to his eternal loss. Innocence, in other words, was gone.

What would have been the advance which resistance to that first temptation would have brought to Adam and Eve? It would have meant that the possibility of sinning would have been over. The probation would successfully have been sustained; man would have entered into a blessedness from which all jeopardy would have been removed.

The advance which a successful resistance to the temptation would have brought would also have been an advance in knowledge. That tree was called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Well, there is perhaps a real sense in which it would have been to man a tree of the knowledge of good and evil even if he had not eaten of the fruit of it. If he had resisted the temptation to eat of the fruit of that tree, he would have come to know evil in addition to the knowledge that he already had of good. He would not have known it because he had fallen into it in his own life, but he would have known it because in his resistance to it he would have known it because in his resistance to it he would have put it sharply in contrast with good and would deliberately have rejected it. A state of innocence, in other words, where good was practiced without any conflict with evil, would have given place to a state of assured goodness which evil would have been shown to have no power to disturb.

Such was the blessed state into which God was asking man to come. It was a state which included what I think we can call a knowledge of good and evil. Certainly it was a state in which the difference between good and evil would have been clearly discerned. There was a right way and a wrong way of seeking to attain discernment. The

right way was the way of resistance to evil; the wrong way was the way of yielding to it.

The ancient lie is put into men's hearts again and again and again that the only way to attain a state higher than innocence is to have experience of sin in order to see what sin is like. Sowing wild oats is thought to be rather a good way of transcending childish innocence and of attaining strong and mature manhood.

Do you know how that lie can best be shown to be the lie that it is? Well, my friends, I think it is by the example of Jesus Christ. Do you despise innocence? Do you think that it is weak and childish not to have personal experience of evil? Do you think that if you do not obtain such experience of evil you must forever be a child?

If you have any such feeling, I just bid you contemplate Jesus of Nazareth. Does He make upon you any impression of immaturity or childishness? Was He lacking in some experience that is necessary to the highest manhood? Can you patronize Him as though He were but a child, whereas you with your boasted experience of evil are a full-grown man?

If that is the way you think of Jesus, even unbelievers, if they are at all thoughtful, will correct you. No, Jesus makes upon all thoughtful persons the impression of complete maturity and tremendous strength. With unblinking eyes He contemplates the evil of the human heart. "He knew what was in man" (John 2:25), says the Gospel according to John. Yet He never had those experiences of sin which fools think to be necessary if innocence is to be transcended and the highest manhood to be attained. From His spotless purity and His all-conquering strength, that ancient lie that experience of evil is necessary if man is to attain the highest good recoils naked and ashamed.

That was the lie that the tempter brought to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. Man was told to seek discernment in Satan's way and not in God's. Had man resisted the temptation what heights of knowledge and strength would have been his! But he yielded, and what was the result? He sought to attain knowledge, and lost the knowledge of good; he sought to attain power, and lost his own soul; he sought to become as God, and when God came to him in the garden he hid himself in shameful fear.

It is a sad story indeed. But it is the beginning and not the end of the Bible. The first chapters of the Bible tell us of the sin of man. The guilt of that sin has rested upon every single one of us, its guilt and its terrible results; but that is not the last word of the Bible. The Bible tells us not only of man's sin; it also tells us of something greater still; it tells us of the grace of the offended God.

## **Sin's Wages and God's Gift**

**J. Gresham Machen**

*Machen (1881-1937) was Professor of New Testament, first at Princeton Theological Seminary, and afterwards at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia. Published in God Transcendent (1949).*

"For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

Some time ago I heard a sermon on this text by a preacher who has now retired. The sermon was not one that I agreed with altogether, but the beginning of it, I thought, was interesting. The preacher said that during the preceding summer he had met in a chance sort of way, on one of the steamers of the Great Lakes, a gentleman who turned out to be a man of large affairs, but a man who had little to do with the church. Incidentally the conversation turned to religious matters, and the man of business gave to the preacher the benefit of a little criticism. The criticism was perhaps not unworthy of attention. "You preachers," the outsider said, "don't preach hell enough."

Usually the criticism which is leveled at the church by men who know nothing about it is as valueless as ignorant criticism is in other spheres. But in this case I am inclined to think that the critic was right. We preachers do not preach hell enough, and we do not say enough about sin. We talk about the gospel and wonder why people are not interested in what we say. Of course they are not interested. No man is interested in a piece of good news unless he has the consciousness of needing it; no man is interested in an offer of salvation unless he knows that there is something from which he needs to be saved. It is quite useless to ask a man to adopt the Christian view of the gospel unless he first has the Christian view of sin.

But a man will never adopt the Christian view of sin if he considers merely the sin of the world or the sins of other people. Consideration of the sins of other people is the deadliest of moral anodynes; it relieves the pain of conscience but it also destroys moral life. Many

persons gloat over denunciations of that to which they are not tempted; or they even gloat over denunciations, in the case of other people, of sins which are also really theirs. King David was very severe when the prophet Nathan narrated to him his sordid tale of greed. "As the Lord liveth," said David, "the man that hath done this thing shall surely die." But Nathan was a disconcerting prophet. "And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man." (II Samuel 12:5, 7) That was for David the beginning of a real sense of his sin. So it will also be with us.

Of course it seems quite preposterous that we should be sinners. It was preposterous also for King David seated on his throne in the majesty of his royal robes. It was preposterous, but it was true. So also it is preposterous for us. It seems to be a strange notion to treat respectable people as sinners. In the case of college men, it seems particularly absurd. College men look so pleasant; it seems preposterous to connect them with the dreadful fact of sin. Some time ago I was reading, I think in a journal published in London, a review of a book that dealt with religious conditions among university men or young people. The author of the book spoke of the moral ideals of the young men of the present day as being summed up in the notion of being a good sport. The young men of the present day, it was said in effect, may not use the old terminology of guilt and retribution, but they dislike the man who does not know how to play fairly a match of lawn tennis and does not know how to take defeat like a gentleman. The remark of the reviewer, I thought, was eminently just. Surely, he said, with regard to this very common lawn tennis view of sin -- surely, he said, among university men "there are grimmer facts than these." He was right, and we know he was right. He was right about university men in England; he was right about college men in America; and he was right about the rest of us as well. There are grimmer facts than poor lawn tennis and poor sport,

regrettable though that no doubt is. There is, in general, in a thousand ugly forms, the grim fact of sin.

So when I speak of sin I am not talking to you about the sin of other people, but I am talking to you about your sin, and I am talking to myself about my sin. I am talking about that particular battle ground where you come to grips with the power of evil and where you meet your God.

Suppose that on that battle ground we have met defeat. What is the result? The answer of the text and the answer of the whole Bible is short and plain. "The wages of sin," says the Bible, "is death" (Romans 6:23). I shall not pause just now to consider in detail what Paul means by "death" -- except just to point out this interesting fact that if you want to find the most terrible descriptions of this eternal death you will find them not in Paul but in Jesus. It is the custom nowadays to appeal from the supposedly gloomy theology of Paul to the supposedly sunny philosophy of Jesus; but the strange thing is that it is Jesus, not Paul, who speaks of the outer darkness and the everlasting fire and of the sin that shall not be forgiven either in this world or in that which is to come. Paul is content in his Epistles to treat of the punishment of sin with some reserve -- a reserve very impressive and very terrifying, it is true -- but Jesus is more explicit. Jesus makes abundantly plain that the offender against God's law is facing something far more dreadful, to say the least, than mere annihilation would be. The teaching of Jesus has at the very center of it the fear of God and the fear of hell. No human law without sanction is complete; a law without a penalty is an altogether worthless and pitiful thing. Are God's laws of this pitiful kind?

There are some people who seem to think that they are. But as a matter of fact God's laws have attached to them sanctions compared

with which all human penalties are as nothing.

The fact appears even in the course of this world. There is a deadly inexorableness about the laws of nature. Offend against the laws of health, and the result follows with a terrible certainty; no excuses will avail; crying and tears will count nothing; the retribution, however deferred, is sure. In the sphere of the physical life, it is certainly clear that the wages of sin is death. But many people think that the paymaster can be cheated, that after a life of sin we can present ourselves hopefully at the cashier's window and be paid in some different coin from that which we have earned. Do you really agree with them? Do you really think that in this accounting you can cheat? Do you really think that by care in the physical sphere you can avoid the consequences of sin? There is something within us that tells us that such is not the case; there is something within us that reveals the abyss over which we are standing, that brushes aside our petty excuses, that reveals in the inner, moral sphere, as in the physical realm, the same terrible inexorableness of law. God grant that we may not deceive ourselves! God grant that we may not hope to cheat! God grant that we may learn in time that the wages of sin is death!

There is a definiteness and certainty about wages. Wages are different from a spontaneous gift; wages, unlike a gift, are fixed. A man has done his week's work; he presents himself at the paymaster's desk, and is paid off; the matter is not discussed; the employee does not try then to strike a bargain with the cashier. The amount of the payment has been determined beforehand, and the payment itself is a purely formal, impersonal affair. So it is, somewhat, with the wages of sin. The wages have been fixed already. I do not mean that all sins are punished alike; no doubt at God's judgment seat there is a delicacy of discrimination quite impossible under human laws. And I do not mean that the penalty of sin follows



merely by a natural law that is independent of God. But however the law has been established, it is, when once established, inexorable. It is quite useless for a man to argue about the penalty of his sin; it is useless in the physical sphere of the laws of health, and it will be useless when we appear at last before Him who knows the secrets of the heart. Let us not deceive ourselves, my friends. The moral constitution of the universe is a very terrible thing. Let us not think that we can trifle with it. The world is governed by inexorable law. And that law establishes by an immutable decree the dreadful consequences of sin. The wages of sin is death.

At that point some preachers stop. Here stopped, for example, the noted preacher whose sermon gave us our text and our subject today. The terribleness of sin and the inexorableness of law -- it is writ large in the physical organism of man and in the whole course of nature. It is also writ large in the Bible. But the Bible, unlike nature, does not stop here. "The wages of sin is death" -- it is a great truth, but it is not the end of our text. The wages of sin is death -- that is the law. But the Bible contains more than the law; it contains also the gospel. "The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

The free gift is contrasted with wages. Yet men persist in dragging it down to the wage level; they persist in trying to make the gift of God a product of some law. They persist in regarding salvation as proceeding by some natural process from faith or from some other quality of men. They regard Christianity as founded upon permanent principles of religion instead of being founded upon an unexpected piece of news. When will the vain effort be abandoned? Salvation is nothing, or it is a free gift; it is not a principle that has been discovered but an event that has happened.

The trouble is that we are unwilling to take God at His word. We persist in endeavoring to save ourselves. If we have learned to any degree that lesson of the law, if we have come to have a horror of sin, we persist in thinking that it depends upon us to get rid of it. We try to make use of our own moral resources in this struggle, and we fall yet deeper and deeper into the mire. When shall we take God at His word? When shall we simply accept, in faith, the gift of salvation which He has offered?

It is certainly worth accepting. It consists in "eternal life." We need not now ask in detail what that means. But certainly it is as glorious as the "death" with which it is contrasted is terrible. It is certainly happiness as contrasted with woe, but it is far more than happiness. It involves service, and it involves the presence of God.

The free gift of God is an absolutely unaccountable event in the life of every man who accepts it. It is not the natural working out of a principle, but it is a thing that happens. But that happening in the soul is the result of a happening in the sphere of external history. The free gift of God is eternal life *in Christ Jesus our Lord*. There we have the central characteristic of our religion; the central characteristic of Christianity is that it is not founded merely upon what always was true but primarily upon something that happened -- something that took place near Jerusalem at a definite time in the world's history. In other words, it is founded not merely upon permanent truths of religion, but upon a "gospel," a piece of news.

The Christian preacher, be he ever so humble, is entrusted with that gospel. We could not hope to be listened to if we had merely our own thoughts; there are so many others in the world wiser and more learned than we. But in a time of peril in a beleaguered city the humblest of day-laborers is more worth listening to than the greatest

of orators, if he has news. So it is with the Christian preacher in this deadly peril of the soul. The wages of sin is death -- that is the law. But at the decisive point Christ has taken the wages upon Himself -- that is the gospel. Inexorable is the moral law of God. But God's mercy has used, and triumphed over, His law. We deserved eternal death; but Christ died instead of us on the cross. Shall we accept the gift? The result will be a fresh start in God's favor and then a winning battle against sin. "The wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

## **What Is Sin?**

### **J. Gresham Machen**

*Machen (1881-1937) was Professor of New Testament, first at Princeton Theological Seminary, and afterwards at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia. Excerpts from The Christian View of Man (1937).*

We come now to ask what sin at bottom is. Widely different answers have been given to this question, and with these different answers have gone different views of the world and of God and of human life. The true answer is to be obtained very clearly in the Bible; but before I present that true answer to you, I want to speak to you about one or two wrong answers, in order that by contrast with them the true answer may be the more clearly understood.

In the first place, many men have notions of sin which really deprive sin of all its distinctiveness, or, rather, many men simply deny the existence of anything that can properly be called sin at all. According to a very widespread way of thinking in the unbelief of the present day, what we popularly call morality is simply the accumulated experience of the race as to the kind of conduct that leads to racial preservation and well-being. Tribes in which every man sought his own pleasure without regard to the welfare of his neighbors failed, it is said, in the struggle for existence, whereas those tribes that restrained the impulses of their members for the good of the whole prospered and multiplied. By a process of natural selection, therefore, according to this theory, it came more and more to be true that among the races of mankind those that cultivated solidarity were the ones that survived.

In the course of time -- so the theory runs -- the lowly origin of these social restraints was altogether lost from view, and they were felt to be rooted in something distinctive that came to be called morality or virtue. It is only in modern times that we have got behind the scenes and have discovered the ultimate identity between what we call "morality" and the self-interest of society. Such is a very widespread theory. According to that theory "sin" is only another name -- and a very unsatisfactory name too -- for anti-social conduct.

What shall we say of that notion of sin from the Christian point of view? The answer is surely quite plain. We must reject it very emphatically. "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned," says the Psalmist (Psalm 51:4). That is at the very heart of the Bible from beginning to end. Sin, according to the Bible, is not just conduct that is contrary to the accumulated experience of the race; it is not just anti-social conduct: but it is an offence primarily against God.

Equally destructive of any true idea of sin is the error of those who say that the end of all human conduct is, or (as some of them say) ought to be, pleasure. Sometimes the pleasure which is regarded as the goal to be set before men is the pleasure of the individual -- refined and thoroughly respectable pleasure no doubt, but still pleasure. Such a view has sometimes produced lives superficially decent. But even such superficial decency is not apt to be very lasting, and the degrading character of the philosophy underlying it is certain to make itself felt even on the surface sooner or later. Certainly that philosophy can never have a place for any notion that with any propriety at all could be called a true notion of sin.

Sometimes, it is true, the pleasure which is made the goal of human conduct is thought of as the pleasure, or (to use a more high-sounding word) the happiness, not of the individual but of the race. According to that view, altruism -- namely, regard for the greatest happiness of the greatest number -- is thought to be the sum-total of morality.

Thus we have seen in the newspapers recently a good deal of discussion about "mercy-killing" or "euthanasia". Certain physicians say very frankly that they think hopeless invalids, who never by any chance can be of use either to themselves or to anyone else, ought to be put painlessly out of the way. The modern advocates of euthanasia are arguing the thing out on an entirely different basis from the basis on which the Christian argues it. They are arguing the question on the basis of what is useful -- what produces happiness and avoids pain for the human race. The Christian argues it on the basis of a definite divine command. "Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13) settles the matter for the Christian. From the Christian point of view the physician who engages in a mercy-killing is just a murderer. It may also turn out that his mercy-killing is not really merciful in the long

run. But that is not the point. The real point is that be it never so merciful, it is murder, and murder is sin.

The views of sin that we have considered so far are obviously opposed to Christianity. No Christian can hold that morality is just the accumulated self-interest of the race, and that sin is merely conduct opposed to such self-interest. The Christian obviously must hold that righteousness is something quite distinct from happiness and that sin is something quite distinct from folly.

What, then, is sin? We have said what it is not. Now we ought to say what it is. Fortunately we do not have to search very long in the Bible to find the answer to that question. The Bible gives the answer right at the beginning in the account that it gives of the very first sin of man. What was that first sin of man, according to the Bible? Is not the answer perfectly clear? Why, it was disobedience to a command of God. God said, "Ye shall not eat of the fruit of the tree"; man ate of the fruit of the tree: and that was sin. There we have our definition of sin at last.

"Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God." Those are the words of the Shorter Catechism, not of the Bible; but they are true to what the Bible teaches from Genesis to Revelation. The most elementary thing about sin is that it is that which is contrary to God's law. You cannot believe in the existence of sin unless you believe in the existence of the law of God. The idea of sin and the idea of law go together.

That being so, I ask you just to run through the Bible in your mind and consider how very pervasive in the Bible is the Bible's teaching about the law of God. We have already observed how clear that teaching is in the account which the Bible gives of the first sin of man. God said, "Ye shall not eat of the fruit of the tree". That was

God's law; it was a definite command. Man disobeyed that command; man did what God told him not to do: and that was sin. But the law of God runs all through the Bible. It is not found just in this passage or that, but it is the background of everything that the Bible says regarding the relations between God and man.

Consider for a moment how large a part of the Old Testament is occupied with the law of God -- the law as it was given through Moses. Do you think that came by chance? Not at all. It came because the law is truly fundamental in what the Bible has to say. All through the Old Testament there is held up a great central thought -- God the lawgiver, man owing obedience to Him. How it is, then, with the New Testament? Does the New Testament obscure that thought; does the New Testament depreciate in any way the law of God? "Think not," said Jesus, "that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17).

Consider for a moment, my friends, the majesty of the law of God as the Bible sets it forth. One law over all -- valid for Christians, valid for non-Christians, valid now and valid to all eternity. How grandly that law is promulgated amid the thunderings of Sinai! How much more grandly still and much more terribly it is set forth in the teaching of Jesus -- in His teaching and in His example! With what terror we are fain to say, with Peter, in the presence of that dazzling purity: "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8) Nowhere in the Bible, in the teaching of Jesus our Savior, do we escape from the awful majesty of the law of God -- written in the constitution of the universe, searching the innermost recesses of the soul, embracing every idle word and every action and every secret thought of the heart, inescapable, all-inclusive, holy, terrible. God the lawgiver, man the subject; God the ruler, man the ruled! The service of God is a service that is perfect freedom, a duty that is the highest

of all joys; yet it is a service still. Let us never forget that. God was always and is forever the sovereign King; the whole universe is beneath His holy law.

This law is grounded in the infinite perfection of the being of God Himself. "Be ye therefore perfect," said Jesus, "even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). That is the standard. It is a holy law, as God Himself is holy. If that be the law of God, how awful a thing is sin! Not an offence against some rule proceeding from temporal authority or enforced by temporal penalties, but an offence against the infinite and eternal God!

I know that some of my hearers regard what I have been saying as being no more worthy of consideration than the hobgoblins and bogies with which nurses used to frighten naughty children. An outstanding characteristic of the age in which we are living is a disbelief in anything that can be called a law of God and in particular a disbelief in anything that can properly be called sin. The plain fact is that the men of our day are living for the most part in an entirely different world of thought and feeling and life from the world in which the Christian lives. The difference does not just concern this detail or that: it concerns the entire basis of life; it concerns the entire atmosphere in which men live and move and have their being. At the heart of everything that the Bible says are two great truths, which belong inseparably together -- the majesty of the law of God, and sin as an offence against that law. Both these basic truths are denied in modern society, and in the denial of them is found the central characteristic of the age in which we are living.

Well, what sort of age is that; what sort of age is this in which the law of God is regarded as obsolete and in which there is no consciousness of sin? I will tell you. It is an age in which the disintegration of



society is proceeding on a gigantic scale. Look about you, and what do you see? Everywhere the throwing off of restraint, the abandonment of standards.

The consciousness of sin alone leads men to turn to the Savior from sin, and the consciousness of sin comes only when men are brought face to face with the law of God. But men have no consciousness of sin today, and what are we going to do? I remember that that problem was presented very poignantly in my hearing some time ago by a preacher who was sadly puzzled. Here we are, said he. We are living in the twentieth century. We have to take things as we find them; and as a matter of fact, whether we like it or not, if we talk to the young people of the present day about sin and guilt they will not know what we are talking about; they will simply turn away from us in utter boredom, and they will turn from the Christ whom we preach. Is not that really too bad? he continued. Is it not really too bad for them to miss the blessing that Christ has for them if only they would come to Him? If, therefore, they will not come to Christ in our way, ought we not to invite them to come in their way? If they will not come to Christ through the consciousness of sin induced by the terror of the law of God, may we not get them to come through the attraction of the amiable ethics of Jesus and the usefulness of His teaching in solving the problems of society?

I am afraid that in response to such questions we shall just have to answer, "No." I am afraid we shall just have to say that being a Christian is a much more tragic thing than these people suppose. I am afraid we shall just have to tell them that they cannot clamber over the wall into the Christian way. I am afraid we shall just have to point them to the little wicket gate, and tell them to seek their Savior while yet He may be found, in order that He may rescue them from the day of wrath.

But is that not utterly hopeless? Is it not utterly hopeless to try to get the people of the twentieth century to take the law of God with any seriousness or to be the slightest bit frightened about their sins? I answer, Certainly it is hopeless. Absolutely hopeless. As hopeless as it is for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. But, you see, there is One who can do hopeless things. That is, the Spirit of the living God.

The Spirit of God has not lost His power. In His own good time, He will send His messengers even to a wicked and adulterous and careless generation. He will convict men of sin; He will break down men's pride; He will melt their stony hearts. Then He will lead them to the Savior of their souls.

## **Is Mankind Lost in Sin?**

**J. Gresham Machen**

*Machen (1881-1937) was Professor of New Testament, first at Princeton Theological Seminary, and afterwards at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia. Excerpts from The Christian View of Man (1937).*

We have spoken of the first sin of man, and we have spoken of the question, "What is sin?" The question now arises what consequences that first sin of man has had for us and for all men. Some people think it had very slight consequences -- if indeed these people think

that there ever was a first sin of man at all, in the sense in which it is described in the third chapter of Genesis.

I remember that some years ago, when I was driving home in my car after a summer vacation, I stayed over Sunday in a certain city without any particular reason except that I do not like to travel on that day. Being without any acquaintance with the city, I dropped into what seemed perhaps to be the leading church in the central part of the town.

What I heard in that church was typical of what one hears in a great many churches today. It was the Sunday on which new teachers were being inducted into office. The pastor preached a sermon appropriate to the occasion. There are two notions about the teaching of children in the Church, he said. According to one notion, the children are to be told that they are sinners and need a Savior. That is the old notion, he said; it has been abandoned in the modern Church. According to the other notion, he said, which is of course the notion that we moderns hold, the business of the teacher is to nurture the tender plant of the religious nature of the child in order that it may bear fruit in a normal and healthy religious life.

Was that preacher right, or was what he designated as the old notion right? Are children born good, or are they born bad? Do they need, in order that they may grow up into Christian manhood, merely the use of the resources planted in them at birth, or do they need a new birth and a divine Savior?

That is certainly a momentous question. We may answer the question in this way or in that, but about the importance of the question I do not see how there can well be any doubt. That preacher, in the church of which I have spoken, recognized the importance of the question. He answered the question that he raised

quite wrongly, but at least he was right in looking the question fairly in the face. I propose that we should imitate that preacher in facing the question fairly, even though our conclusion may turn out to be different from his. Is each man the captain of his own soul, and a pretty capable captain too, or is all mankind lost in sin? Does the Bible teach that children are born into the world good (or at least evenly balanced between badness and goodness), or does it teach that all save one child are born in sin?

When we approach the Bible with that question in our minds, one thing is at once perfectly clear. It is that the Bible from Genesis to Revelation teaches that all men (with the one exception of Jesus Christ) are as a matter of fact sinners in the sight of God. In one great passage, particularly, that truth, that all men are sinners, is made the subject of definite exposition and proof. That passage is found in Romans 1:18 - 3:20. There the Apostle Paul, before he goes on to set forth the gospel, sets forth the universal need of the gospel. All have need of the gospel, he says, because all without exception are sinners. The Gentiles are sinners. They have disobeyed God's law, even though they have not that law in the particularly clear form in which it was presented to God's chosen people through Moses. Because they have disobeyed God's law, and as a punishment for their disobedience of it, they have sunk deeper and deeper into the mire of sin. The Jews also, says Paul, are sinners. They have great advantages; they have a special revelation from God; in particular they have a supernatural revelation of God's law. But it is not the hearing of the law that causes a man to be righteous but the doing of it; and the Jews, alas, though they have heard it, have not done it. They too are transgressors.

So all have sinned, according to Paul. He drives that truth home by a series of Old Testament Scripture quotations beginning with the

words: "There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." (Romans 3:10-12)

I think it is hardly too much to say that if this Pauline teaching about the universal sinfulness of mankind is untrue, the whole of the rest of that glorious Epistle, the Epistle to the Romans, falls to the ground. Imagine Paul as admitting that a single mere man since the fall ever was righteous in the sight of God, not needing, therefore, redemption through the precious blood of Christ; and you see at once that such a Paul would be a totally different Paul from the one who speaks in every page of the Epistle to the Romans and in every one of the other Pauline Epistles that the New Testament contains. The light of the gospel, in the teaching of Paul, stands out always against the dark background of a race universally lost in sin.

Is the case any different in the rest of the Bible? I care not at this point whether you turn to the Old Testament or to the New Testament. Everywhere there is the same terrible diagnosis of the ill of mankind.

"Two men," said Jesus, "went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." (Luk 18:10-13)

Which of these two men received a blessing from God when he prayed there in the temple -- the man who thought he was an

exception to God's call to repentance or the one who beat upon his breast and confessed himself a sinner? Jesus tells us very plainly. The publican went down to his house justified rather than the other. Ah, my friends, how terrible is the rebuke of Jesus again and again and again for those who think that they form exceptions to the universal sinfulness of mankind!

A rich young ruler came running to Jesus one day, and asked him, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Jesus repeated to him a number of the commandments. The man said, "All these have I observed from my youth." Jesus said, "One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor." The young man went away sorrowful. (Mark 10:17-22) He lacked something; he was not good as God regards goodness. The point is that every man always lacks something. No man comes up to God's standard; no man can inherit the kingdom of God if he stands upon his own obedience to God's law.

Did you ever observe what incident comes just before this incident of the rich young ruler in all three of the Synoptic Gospels -- in Matthew and in Mark and in Luke? It is the incident of the bringing of little children to Jesus, when Jesus said to the disciples, as reported in Mark and similarly in Luke: "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein" (Mark 10:15). There is a profound connection between these two incidents, as there is also a connection of both of them with the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican which in Luke immediately precedes.

Some years ago I heard a sermon on the incident of the Rich Young Ruler. What are the sermons that we are apt to remember? I think they are the sermons where the preacher does not preach himself but

where he truly unfolds the meaning of some great passage of the Word of God.

The sermon of which I am now thinking is one which was preached some time ago in a Philadelphia church by my colleague, Professor R. B. Kuiper. He took the incident of the Rich Young Ruler together with the incident of the bringing of the little children to Jesus, and he showed how both incidents teach the same great lesson -- the lesson of the utter helplessness of man the sinner and the absolute necessity of the free grace of God. You cannot depend for your entrance into the kingdom of God upon anything that you have or anything that you are. You must be as helpless as a little child. Your reliance cannot be on your own goodness, for you have none. It can only be upon the grace of God.

God has told us that we are sinners; He has told us in His own holy Word from beginning to end. Well may the Apostle John say, in view of the whole of the Bible: "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar" (I John 1:10). God is not a liar, my friends. This world is lost in sin.

## **The Consequences of the Fall of Man**

**J. Gresham Machen**

*Machen (1881-1937) was Professor of New Testament, first at Princeton Theological Seminary, and afterwards at Westminster*

*Theological Seminary, Philadelphia. Excerpts from The Christian View of Man (1937).*

Man, as created, was good. God created man in His own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. Well, then, if God created man good, how comes it that all men now are bad? How did sin pass into all mankind? What caused this stupendous change from good to bad?

Sin came into the world through the sin of Adam. Adam's descendants do not begin life sinless as he began it. They begin it tainted in some way or other with the sin that Adam committed. If Adam transgressed, he was to die. Death was to be the punishment of disobedience. Well, he did transgress. What then happened? Was Adam the only one who died? Did his descendants begin where he began? Did they have placed before them all over again that same alternative between death and life that was placed before Adam? The Book of Genesis indicates the contrary very clearly. No, the descendants of Adam already, before they individually made any choices at all, had that penalty of death resting upon them.

What, then, does that mean? Adam was the divinely appointed representative of the race. If he obeyed the commandments of God, the whole race of his descendants would have life; if he disobeyed, the whole race would have death. I do not see how the narrative in the Book of Genesis, when you take it as a whole, can mean anything else.

That view of the matter becomes more explicit in certain important passages of the New Testament. In the latter part of the fifth chapter of Romans, in particular, the Apostle Paul makes it plain. "Through one trespass," he there says, "the judgment came unto all men to condemnation" (Romans 5:18). "Through the one man's



disobedience," he says in the next verse, "the many were made sinners." In these words and all through this passage we have the great doctrine that when Adam sinned he sinned as the representative of the race, so that it is quite correct to say that all mankind sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression. There is a profound connection between Adam and the whole race of his descendants.

God said to Adam that if he disobeyed he would die. What is the meaning of that death? Well, it includes physical death; there is no question about that. But, alas, it also includes far more than physical death. It includes spiritual death; it includes the death of the soul unto things that are good; it includes the death of the soul unto God. The dreadful penalty of that sin of Adam was that Adam and his descendants became dead in trespasses and sins. As a just penalty of Adam's sin, God withdrew his favor, and the souls of all mankind became spiritually dead. The soul that is spiritually dead, the soul that is corrupt, is guilty not only because of Adam's guilt but also because of its own sin. It deserves eternal punishment.

The doctrine of the wrath of God is not a popular doctrine, but there is no doctrine that is more utterly pervasive in the Bible. Paul devotes to it a large part of three chapters out of the eight chapters in his great Epistle to the Romans which he devotes to the exposition of his message of salvation, and he is at particular pains to show that the wrath of God rests upon all men except those who have been saved by God's grace. But there is nothing peculiar in that great passage in the first three chapters of Romans. That passage only puts in a comprehensive way what is presupposed from Genesis to Revelation and becomes explicit in passages almost beyond number.

Does the teaching of Jesus form any exception to the otherwise pervasive presentation of the wrath of God in the Bible? Well, you might think so if you listened only to what modern sentimentality says about Jesus of Nazareth. The men of the world, who have never been born again, who have never come under the conviction of sin, have reconstructed a Jesus to suit themselves, a feeble sentimentalist who preached only the love of God and had nothing to say about God's wrath. But very different was the real Jesus, the Jesus who is presented to us in our sources of historical information. The real Jesus certainly proclaimed a God who, as the Old Testament which he revered as God's Word says, is a "consuming fire" (Deuteronomy 4:24; compare Hebrews 12:29). Very terrible was Jesus' own anger as the Gospels describe it, a profound burning indignation against sin; and very terrible is the anger of the God whom He proclaimed as the Ruler of heaven and earth. No, you certainly cannot escape from the teaching of the Bible about the wrath of God by appealing to Jesus of Nazareth. The most terrible even among the Biblical presentations of God's wrath are those that are found in our blessed Savior's words.

Where do you find the most terrible descriptions of hell in the whole of the Bible? It is Jesus who speaks of the sin that shall not be forgiven either in this world or that which is to come; it is Jesus who speaks of the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched (Mark 9:48); it is Jesus who has given us the story of the rich man and Lazarus and of the great gulf between them (Luke 16:19-31); it is Jesus who says that it is profitable for a man to enter into life having one eye rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire (Matthew 18:9). It appears in the Sermon on the Mount; it appears of course in the great judgment chapter, the twenty-fifth of Matthew; it appears in passages too numerous to mention. It is not somewhere on the circumference of his teaching, but is at the very heart and core of it.

I do not believe we always understand quite clearly enough how great is the divergence at this point between the teaching of Jesus and current preaching. Men are interested today in this world. They have lost the consciousness of sin, and having lost the consciousness of sin they have lost the fear of hell. They have tried to make Christianity a religion of this world. They have come to regard Christianity just as a program for setting up the conditions of the kingdom of God upon this earth, and they are tremendously impatient when anyone looks upon it as a means of entering into heaven and escaping hell.

I have mentioned the Biblical teaching about hell simply because it is necessary in order that you may understand the Biblical teaching about sin. The awfulness of the punishment of sin shows as nothing else could well do how heinous a thing sin really is in the sight of God.

I have tried to present to you in outline something like the whole picture -- man guilty with the imputed guilt of Adam's first sin, man suffering therefore the death that is the penalty of that sin, not only physical death but also that spiritual death that consists in the corruption of man's whole nature and in his total inability to please God, man bringing forth out of his corrupt heart individual acts of transgression without number, man facing eternal punishment in hell. That is the picture that runs all through the Bible. Mankind, according to the Bible, is a race lost in sin; and sin is not just a misfortune, but is something that calls forth the white heat of the divine indignation. Before the awful justice of God no unclean thing can stand; and man is unclean, transgressor against God's holy law, subject justly to its awful penalty.

As I try to present that picture to you, I think you as well as I are impressed with the fact that the men of the present day for the most

part will have none of it. They will not admit at all that mankind is lost in sin. I remember a service that I attended some years ago in a little church in a pretty village. The preacher was distinctly above the average in culture and in moral fervor. I do not remember his sermon (except that it was a glorification of man); but I do remember something that he said in his prayer. He quoted that verse from Jeremiah to the effect that the heart of man is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9), and then he said in his prayer, as nearly as I can remember his words: "O Lord, thou knowest that we no longer accept this interpretation, but now think that man does what is right if only he knows the way." Well, that was at least being frank about the matter. We have a good opinion of ourselves these days, and if so, why should we not let the Lord in on our secret? Why should we go on quoting with a sanctimonious air confessions of sin from the Bible if we really do not believe a word of them? I think the prayer of that village preacher was bad -- very bad -- but I also think that perhaps it was not so bad perhaps as the prayers of those preachers who have really rejected the central message of the Bible just as completely as he had and yet conceal the fact by the use of traditional language. At least that prayer raised the issue clearly between the Biblical view of sin and the paganism of the modern creed, "I believe in man."

At the very foundation of all that the Bible says is this sad truth -- that mankind is lost in sin. The Bible teaches, we have observed, that every man comes into the world a sinner. It is against that doctrine that the chief attack has been made; and I want to say a few words to you about the attack in order that the Bible doctrine which is attacked may become the more clear. The attack has come to be connected with the name of a British monk who lived in the latter part of the fourth and the early part of the fifth century after Christ. His name was Pelagius. In contravention of the Biblical doctrine,

Pelagius said that every man, far from being born with a corrupt nature, begins life practically where Adam began it, being perfectly able to choose either good or evil.

The Bible plainly teaches that sinful actions come from a corrupt nature of the man who commits them, that individual wrong choices come from the underlying state of the person who engages in them. A man is morally responsible for wrong choices springing out of his evil nature, and he is responsible for the evil nature out of which those wrong choices spring. Sin is not just a matter of individual actions. Both the bad actions and also the bad state from which the bad actions come are sin.

I am going to quote one passage from the teaching of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels and then I am going to ask you whether that one passage does not sum up the teaching of the whole Bible on this point. "Either make the tree good, and his fruit good: or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." (Matthew 12:33-35) In the light of these words of Jesus, so simple and so profound, how utterly shallow the whole Pelagian view of sin is seen to be! According to Jesus, evil actions come from an evil heart, and both the actions and the heart from which they come are sinful.

That view is the view of the whole Bible. There is in the Bible from beginning to end no shadow of comfort for the shallow notion that sin is a matter only of individual choices and that a bad man can, without being changed within, suddenly bring forth good actions.

No, the Bible everywhere finds the root of evil in the heart, and by the heart it does not mean just the feelings but the whole inner life of man. The heart of man, it tells us, is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, and because of that, man is a sinner in the sight of God. An evil man inevitably performs evil actions; the thing is as certain as that a corrupt tree will bring forth corrupt fruit: but the evil man performs those evil actions because he wants to perform them; they are his own free personal acts and he is responsible for them in the sight of God.

The Bible from beginning to end plainly teaches that individual sins come from a sinful nature, and that the nature of all men is sinful from their birth. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" -- these words of the Fifty-first Psalm summarize, in the cry of a penitent sinner, a doctrine of sin that runs through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Upon that Biblical view of sin depends also the Biblical view of salvation. Does the Bible teach that all Christ did for us is to set us a good example which we are perfectly able to follow without a change of our hearts? The man who thinks so is a man who has not come even to the threshold of the great central truth which the Scriptures contain. "Ye must be born again," said Jesus Christ (John 3:7). There is no hope whatever for us until we are born again by an act that is not our own; there is no hope that we shall really choose the right until we are made alive by the Spirit of the living God.

Nothing that fallen and unregenerate men can do is really well-pleasing to God. Many things that they do are able to please us, with our imperfect standards, but nothing that they do is able to please God; nothing that they do can stand in the white light of His judgment throne. Some of their actions may be relatively good, but

none of them are really good. All of them are affected by the deep depravity of the fallen human nature from which they come.

That brings us to another aspect of the great Biblical doctrine of depravity. It is found in the complete inability of fallen man to lift himself out of his fallen condition. Fallen man, according to the Bible, is unable to contribute the smallest part of the great change by which he is made to be alive from the dead. Men who are dead in trespasses and sins are utterly unable to have saving faith, just as completely unable as a dead man lying in a tomb is unable to contribute the slightest bit to his resurrection. When a man is born again, the Holy Spirit works faith in him, and the man contributes nothing whatever to that blessed result. After he has been born again, he does cooperate with the Spirit of God in the daily battle against sin; after he has been made alive by God, he proceeds to show that he is alive by bringing forth good works: but until he is made alive he can do nothing that is really good; and the act of the Spirit of God by which he is made alive is a resistless and sovereign act.

Man, according to the Bible, is not merely sick in trespasses and sins; he is not merely in a weakened condition so that he needs divine help: but he is dead in trespasses and sins. He can do absolutely nothing to save himself, and God saves him by the gracious, sovereign act of the new birth. The Bible is a tremendously uncompromising book in this matter of the sin of man and the grace of God.

The Biblical doctrine of the grace of God does not mean, as caricatures of it sometimes represent it as meaning, that a man is saved against his will. No, it means that a man's will itself is renewed. His act of faith is his own act. He performs that act gladly, and is sure

that he never was so free as when he performs it. Yet he is enabled to perform it simply by the gracious, sovereign act of the Spirit of God.

Ah, my friends, how precious is that doctrine of the grace of God! It is not in accordance with human pride. It is not a doctrine that we should ever have evolved. But when it is revealed in God's Word, the hearts of the redeemed cry, Amen. Sinners saved by grace love to ascribe not some but all of the praise to God.

## **Man's Own Character No Ground Of Peace**

***Horatius Bonar***

IF God testifies against us, who can testify for us? If God's opinion of man's sinfulness, His judgment of man's guilt, and His declaration of sin's evil, be so very decided, there can be no hope of acquittal for us, on the ground of personal character or goodness, either of heart or life. That which God sees in us furnishes only matter for condemnation, not for pardon.

It is vain to struggle or murmur against God's judgment. He is the Judge of all the earth; and He is right as well as sovereign in His judgment. He must be obeyed; His law is inexorable; it cannot be broken without making the breaker of it (even in one jot or tittle) worthy of death.



When the Holy Spirit opens the eyes of the soul, it sees this. Conviction of sin is just the sinner seeing himself as he is, and as God has all along seen him. Then every fond idea of self-goodness, either in whole or in part, vanishes away. The things in him that once seemed good appear so bad, and the bad things so very bad, that every self-prop falls from beneath him, and all hope of being saved, in consequence of something in his own character, is then taken away. He sees that he cannot save himself; nor help God to save him. He is lost, and he is helpless. Doings, feelings, strivings, prayings, givings, abstainings, and the like, are found to be no relief from a sense of guilt, and, therefore, no resting place for a troubled heart. If sin were but a disease or a misfortune, these apparent good things might relieve him, as being favourable symptoms of returning health; but when sin is guilt even more than disease; and when the sinner is not merely sick, but condemned by the righteous Judge, then none of these goodnesses, whether inner or outer, can reach his case, for they cannot assure him of a complete and righteous pardon, and, therefore, cannot pacify his roused and wounded conscience. He sees God's unchangeable hatred of sin, and the coming revelation of His wrath against the sinner; and he cannot but tremble.

The question, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?" is not one which can be decided by an appeal to personal character or goodness of life, or prayers, or performances of religion. The way of approach is not for us to settle. God has settled it; and it only remains for us to avail ourselves of it. He has fixed it on grounds altogether irrespective of our character, or rather on grounds which take for granted simply that we are sinners, and that therefore the element of goodness in us, as a title, or warrant, or recommendation, is altogether inadmissible, either in whole or in part.

Man is bankrupt; totally so; his credit in the market is gone. If, then, he is to carry on his trade, he cannot do it in his own name. He must have a better name than that, a name of note and weight, for his security. For the transactions of the heavenly market there is but one name given under heaven, the Name of names.

To say, as some do at the outset of their anxiety. "I will set myself to pray, and after I have prayed a sufficient length of time, and with tolerable earnestness, I may approach and count upon acceptance", is not only to build upon the quality and quantity of our prayers, but it is to overlook the real question before the sinner, "How am I to approach God in order to pray?" All prayers are approaches to God, and the sinner's anxious question is, "How may I approach God?" God's explicit testimony to man is, "You are unfit to approach me , and it is a denial of the testimony to say. "I will pray myself out of this unfitness into fitness; I will work myself into a right state of mind and character for drawing near to God".

Were you from this moment to cease from sin, and do nothing but good all the rest of your life, it would be of no avail. Were you to begin praying now, and do nothing else but pray all your days, it would not do. Your own character cannot be your way of approach, nor your ground of confidence toward God. No amount of praying, or working, or feeling, can satisfy the righteous law, or pacify a guilty conscience, or quench the flaming sword that guards the access into the presence of the infinitely Holy One.

That which makes it safe for you to draw near to God, and right for God to receive you, must be something altogether away from and independent of yourself; for, yourself, and everything pertaining to yourself, God has already condemned; and no condemned thing can give you any warrant for going to Him, or hoping for acceptance.

Your liberty of entrance must come from something which He has accepted; not from something which He has condemned.

I knew an awakened soul who, in the bitterness of his spirit, thus set himself to work and pray, in order to get peace". He doubled the amount of his devotions, saying to himself, "surely God will give me peace. But the peace did not come. He set up family worship, saying, "surely God will give me peace". Again the peace did not come. At last he thought of having a prayer meeting in his house, as a certain remedy; he fixed the night, called his neighbours, and prepared himself for conducting the meeting by writing a prayer and learning it by heart. As he finished the operation of learning it, preparatory to the meeting, he threw it down on the table saying, "surely that will do; God will give me peace now". In that moment a still small voice seemed to speak in his ear, saying, "No, that will not do; but Christ will do". Straightaway the scales fell from his eyes, and the burden from his shoulders. Peace poured in like a river. "Christ will do," was his watchword ever after.

Very clear is God's testimony against man, and man's doings, in this great matter of approach and acceptance. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done," says Paul in one place (Titus 3: 5); "to him that worketh not," says he in a second (Rom. 4: 5); "not justified by the works of the law," says he in a third (Gal. 2:16).

The sinner's peace with God is not to come from his own character. No grounds of peace or elements of reconciliation can he extracted from himself, either directly or indirectly. His one qualification for peace is, that he needs it. It is not what he has, but what he lacks, of good that draws him to God; and it is the consciousness of this lack that bids him look elsewhere, for something both to invite and

embolden him to approach. It is our sickness, not our health, that fits us for the physician, and casts us upon his skill.

No guilty conscience can be pacified with anything short of that which will make pardon a present, a sure, and a righteous thing. Can our best doings, our best feelings, our best prayers, our best sacrifices, as far off and uncertain as before; and that all his earnestness cannot persuade God to admit him to favour, or bribe his own conscience into true quiet even for an hour.

In all false religion, the worshipper rests his hope of divine favour upon something in his own character, or life, or religious duties. The Pharisee did this when he came into the temple, "thanking God that he was not as other men" (Luke 18:12). So do those in our day who expect to get peace by doing, feeling, and praying more than others, or than they themselves have done in time past; and who refuse to take the peace of the free gospel, till they have amassed such an amount of doing and feeling as will ease their consciences, and make them conclude that it would not be fair in God to reject the application of men so earnest and devoted as they.

The Galatians did this also when they insisted on adding the law of Moses to the gospel of Christ, as the ground of confidence toward God. Thus do many act among ourselves. They will not take confidence from God's character or Christ's work, but from their own character and work; though in reference to all this it is written, "The Lord hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them" (Jer. 2: 37). They object to a present confidence, for that assumes that a sinners resting-place is wholly outside himself; ready-made, as it were, by God. They would have this confidence to be a very gradual thing, in order that they may gain time, and, by a little diligence in religious observances, so add to their stock of duties,

prayers, experiences, devotions, that they may, with some "humble hope"-as they call it-claim acceptance from God. By this course of devout living they think they have made themselves more acceptable to God than they were before they began this religious process, and much more entitled to expect the divine favour than those who have not so qualified themselves.

In all this, the attempted resting-place is self; that self which God has condemned. They would not rest upon unpraying, or unworking, or undevout self; but they think it right and safe to rest upon praying, and working, and devout self-and they call this humility! The happy confidence of the simple believer who takes God's Word at once, and rests on it, they call presumption or fanaticism; their own miserable uncertainty, extracted from the doings of self, they speak of as a humble hope.

The sinner's own character, in any form, and under any process of improvement, cannot furnish reasons for trusting God. However amended, it cannot speak peace to his conscience, nor afford him any warrant for reckoning on God's favour; nor can it help to heal the breach between him and God. For God can accept nothing but perfection in such a case, and the sinner has nothing but imperfection to present, imperfect duties and devotions cannot persuade God to forgive.

Besides, be it remembered, that, the person of the worshipper must be accepted before his services can be acceptable; so that nothing can be of any use to the sinner, save that which provides for personal acceptance completely, and at the outset. The sinner must go to God as he is, or not at all. To try to pray himself into something better than a condemned sinner, in order to win God's favour, is to make prayer an instrument of self-righteousness; so that, instead of its

being the act of an accepted man, it is the price of acceptance, the money which we pay to God for favouring us, and the bribe with which we persuade conscience no longer to trouble us with its terrors.

No knowledge of self, nor consciousness of improvement of self, can soothe the alarms of an awakened conscience, or be any ground for expecting the friendship of God. To take comfort from our good doings, or good feelings, or good intentions, or good prayers, or good experiences, is to delude ourselves, and to say peace when there is no peace. No man can find rest from his own character, however good; or from his own acts, however religious. Even were he perfect, what enjoyment could there be in thinking about his own perfection? What profit, then, or what peace, can there be in thinking about his own imperfection?

Even were there many good things about him, they could not speak peace; for the good things which might speak peace, could not make up for the evil things which speak trouble; and what a poor, self-made peace would that be which arose from his thinking as much good and as little evil of himself as possible! And what a temptation, besides, would this furnish, to extenuate the evil and exaggerate the good about ourselves; in other words, to deceive our own hearts. Self-

deception must always, more or less, be the result of such estimates of our own experiences. Laid open, as we are, in such a case, to all manner of self-blinding influences, it is impossible that we can be impartial judges, as in the case of those who are freely and at once forgiven.

One man might say, my sins are not very great or many; surely I may have peace. Another might say, I have made up for my sins by my

good deeds, I may have peace. Another might say I have a very deep sense of sin, I may have peace. Another might say, I have repented of my sin, I may have peace. Another might say I pray much, I work much, I love much, I give much, I may have peace. What temptation in all this to take the most favourable view of self and its doings! But, after all, it would be vain. There could be no real peace; for the foundation would be sand, not rock. The peace and confidence which come from summing up the good points of our character, or thinking of our good feelings and doings, or setting a certain valuation upon our faith, and love, and repentance, must be made up of pride. Its basis is self-righteousness, or, at least, self-approbation.

It does not mend the matter to say that we look at these good feelings in us as the Spirit's work, not our own. In one aspect this takes away boasting, but in another it does not. It still makes our peace to turn upon what is in ourselves, and not on what is in God. In fact, it makes use of the Holy Spirit for purposes of self-righteousness. It says that the Spirit works the change in us, in order that He may thereby furnish us with a ground of peace within ourselves.

No doubt the Spirit's work in us must be accompanied with peace; but not because He has given us something in ourselves from which to draw our peace. It is that kind of peace which arises unconsciously from the restoration of spiritual health; but not that which Scripture calls "peace with God". It does not arise from thinking about the change wrought in us, but unconsciously and involuntarily from the change itself. If a broken limb be made whole, we get relief straight away; not by thinking about the healed member, but simply in the bodily ease and comfort which the cure has given. So there is a peace arising out of the change of nature and character wrought by the Spirit; but this is not reconciliation with God. This is not the peace which the knowledge of forgiveness brings. It accompanies it, and

flows from it, but the two kinds of peace are quite distinct from each other. Nor does even the peace which attends the restoration of spiritual health come at second-hand, from thinking about our change; but directly from the change itself. That change is the soul's new health, and this health is in itself a continual gladness.

It remains true, then, that in ourselves we have no resting place. It is the quality of the work without, not the quality of that within, which satisfies us. "No confidence in the flesh" must be our motto, as it is the foundation of God's gospel.

*God's Way of Peace.* Horatius Bonar. Evangelical Press. 1973. Pages 15-22.

## **Knowing Ourselves**

**by Nathan Pitchford**

*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? – Jeremiah 17:9*

### **Introduction**

When Plato expressed the ultimate purpose and great imperative of philosophy with this command, "know yourself," he had struck upon a valuable insight. If we would know our purpose in life, how we should relate to the world and to others around us, what our goals



and dreams and desires should consist of, how we should spend our time, then we must know who we are. We must know how we were made and for what purpose, and we must know whether or not we are fulfilling that purpose, and if not, how we might do so. If we desire to order our lives according to wise and reasonable principles, then first a thoroughgoing self-knowledge is indispensable.

However, this command is not so easy to put into practice. Who really knows what he is like, deep down inside? Who can say from what mysterious inner workings of our minds come bizarre dreams, unexpected, random thoughts that defy all reason, moments of insight and creativity, moments of foolishness and lapses of judgment? Do we really know how our minds function? Do we really know what we actually want or need? If so, then why is it that, when we have finally accomplished or acquired something that we thought we wanted, we suddenly feel so empty and let down? Who has not felt the deep and inexplicable yearning for something more, and not knowing quite what it was or how to pursue it, tried to bury the yearning in a busy pursuit of professional advancement or entertainment or any of those other things that have always let us down before? If we are ever to rise above this condition, we must know who we are, what we were made to do and enjoy, why we are not doing and enjoying what we were made for, and how to pursue a soul-deep change.

But even here we must take another step back: for we cannot know ourselves until we know the One who made us. We cannot find out about our purpose or that in which lies our highest and eternal joy, unless we hear it from the very lips of our Creator. We cannot understand the miserable extent to which we have failed, unless we measure ourselves against his perfection. And neither can we encounter the only hope of a lasting solution, unless we measure our

failure against his proffered grace. In our last study, "Knowing Our God," we spent some time examining who the Trinitarian God is, and how he has revealed his character to mankind. Now, we are ready to take up this daunting question, "Who are we?". But since our hearts are "desperately wicked and deceitful above all things," we stand in dire need of grace, as we search the scriptures in pursuit of an answer to this perplexing question. Spirit of God, uncover before us the truths of your word, show us who we were meant to be, and how we can find true joy and fulfillment!

Let us now examine the nature of mankind in four different conditions: *Man Innocent*, the estate into which he was first created; *Man Depraved*, the estate into which he was plunged in consequence of his rebellion against God; *Man Regenerated*, the estate into which God's grace brings him in this life, giving him a new, spiritual nature, co-existent with his old, depraved nature; and *Man Glorified*, the estate into which God's grace will bring him in eternity, causing his new, spiritual nature to triumph and destroying his old, sinful nature forevermore.

### ***Man Innocent***

#### **Image-Bearing**

The nature of man as the image-bearer of God is what sets him apart from the rest of creation, and gives him a unique and dignified role among all God's creatures. It is a difficult task to define concisely what is meant by the "image of God" in man, but it is at least possible to observe several characteristics or predicates of that divine image. For example, man possesses *moral agency*, that is, his decisions and actions are directed to some end, either positively good or negatively evil, and are motivated by a heart attitude that is likewise either good or bad; hence, he is justly responsible for the reward or punishment

due to all of his actions. Man is likewise characterized by *perpetuity*, so that, once created, he will exist in some state forevermore; by *creativity*, so that, just as God brought all things into existence according to the idea of his own mind, so man is able to shape existing material intelligently and artfully according to his fruitful imagination; by *speech-capability*, so that, just as God through his Word brought his intentions into being, so man through his word is able to express his thoughts and ideas; by *rationality*, so that, man's actions are not the mere product of brute instinct, but vested with the qualities of deliberation, desire for the highest good, and wisdom in how to pursue that desire; by *dominion*, so that, just as God rules over all his creation, man rules over all that is under him, subduing all kinds of animals and putting the earth to fruitful use; and by *society*, so that, just as God is in ceaseless and joyful fellowship with the members of the blessed Trinity, so man is ever in society with others of his kind, and is not complete without this fellowship.

### 1. *The Image of God*

Gen 1:26-27; Gen 9:6; 1Cor 11:7; Jam 3:9

### 2. *Moral Agency*

Gen 2:16-17; Gen 4:7; Deu 11:26-28; Deu 30:15-16; Eze 33:14-16; Mat 23:33; Rom 3:5-8; Heb 2:1-3; Heb 10:28-29

### 3. *Perpetuity*

Dan 12:2; Mat 25:46; Luke 20:34-38; John 5:25-29; 1Cor 15:50-55; 2Cor 5:1-4; 2The 1:5-10; Rev 20:11-15

### 4. *Creativity*

Gen 4:20-22; Exo 31:1-6; 2Chr 26:14-15; Ecc 7:29; Amos 6:5

## 5. *Speech-capability*

- Its Origin

Gen 2:19-20

- Its Uses, Good and Bad

Job 16:5; Psa 12:2-4; Psa 141:3; Pro 10:11; Pro 15:26; Pro 15:28; Pro 18:4; Mat 12:34-37; Jam 1:19; Jam 3:1-10

- Its Analogy to the Divine Word

Gen 1:1-3; Psa 29:3-9; Isa 40:5-8; Isa 55:8-11; John 1:1-3; Heb 1:1-3

## 6. *Rationality*

Pro 25:2; Isa 1:18; Isa 43:25-26; Dan 4:36; Acts 17:2-3; 1Pet 3:15

## 7. *Dominion*

Gen 1:26-28; Gen 9:1-2; Psa 8:5-8; Heb 2:6-10

## 8. *Society*

- Its Origin

Gen 2:18-24

- Its Blessedness

Psa 127:3-5; Ecc 9:7-10

- Its Spiritual Aspect

Son 2:1-4 [See the rest of the Song of Solomon as well.];  
John 1:12; Rom 8:14-17; Eph 5:22-32; 1John 3:1-2; Rev  
19:6-9

- Its Analogy to Inter-Triune Relationships

Psa 2:7; John 5:17-23; John 11:27; Rom 1:1-4

## **Good**

Man was originally created good, and not just neutral or morally undetermined. He had a nature that delighted in fellowship with God, and that was drawn to do the very works that God had commanded. He was not finally confirmed in his state of moral uprightness; but he was, nevertheless, positively righteous, and not just a “blank slate,” a being with an unwritten character, whose nature would be determined by his own, self-shaping decisions and actions.

Gen 1:27-31; Gen 3:8a; Gen 5:1-2; Ecc 7:29

## **Susceptible**

Although God created man in his own image, and morally good, he did not give him such a strong character that he could not be tempted to do evil. He was not as the good angels are today, and as glorified man will be in the future, that is, unable even to be tempted with sin. He was good, but he was still susceptible to temptation. While he was in this state, God designed a test to see if he would obey, and thus be confirmed in his state of holiness; and so he placed in the middle of the Garden of Eden the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (that is, a tree designed to show, or give the

knowledge of, whether man would remain good or be plunged into evil); and he commanded Adam not to eat of its fruit.

Ecc 7:29; Gen 2:16-17; Gen 3:1-6; 2Cor 11:3; 1Tim 2:13-14

## **Responsible**

When God created man in his own image, he created him as a being that was ultimately responsible to obey him alone, and in the case of disobedience to undergo the severest penalty of eternal death and punishment away from the presence of his Creator, whose fellowship he had been made to enjoy. Even before the Fall, man was given responsibilities that he was obligated to fulfill, including the exercise of dominion over the earth, the multiplication of the human race, and obedience to God's prohibitions; but there was no curse, no wearisome labor, and no dissatisfaction involved in fulfilling them. God created him to enjoy what he had commanded him to do.

### *1. To his Creator*

Isa 29:16; Isa 45:9-12; Isa 64:8; Mal 2:10; Rom 9:20-21

### *2. To exercise dominion*

- The Source of Dominion

Gen 1:26; Gen 2:19-20; Gen 9:2-3; Psa 8:3-9

- The Responsibility to Rule Well

Exo 23:11-12; Deu 22:6-7; Deu 22:10; Deu 25:4; Pro 12:10;  
Isa 32:20; Jam 3:7

- The Dominion of Man Ultimately Realized in Christ and his Kingdom

Isa 65:25; Heb 2:5-9

### 3. *To multiply*

- The Mandate

Gen 1:27-28; Gen 9:1

- The Realization

Gen 2:21-25; Gen 3:20; Gen 4:1; Gen 5:1-3; Psa 127:3-5

- The Necessity to Do So According to God's Commands

Pro 5:15-21; Mat 19:3-8; Eph 5:22-33

- The Spiritual Aspect of the Command

Rom 4:16-18; Gal 3:7; Philemon 1:10-11; Heb 2:9-13

### 4. *To obey*

- The Threat of Death Contingent Upon Disobedience

Gen 2:15-17; Deu 28:15-16; Deu 28:45-48; Deu 28:58-61;  
Psa 119:21; Psa 119:155

- The Blessings Contingent Upon Obedience

Lev 18:5; Deu 28:1-14; Psa 19:7-11; Psa 119:1-8; Psa 119:97;  
Psa 119:46-48; Psa 119:156-158; Psa 119:176

- The Need for Divine Enablement

Psa 119:10; Psa 119:12

- Perfect Obedience Found Only in Christ

Mat 3:13-17; Mat 4:1-11; Heb 4:14-16; Heb 5:8-10; 1Pet 2:21-25

- Christ's Perfect Obedience Imputed to the Believer

Rom 4:22-25; 1Cor 1:30-31; 2Cor 5:20-21

## **Privileged**

The responsibilities that God enjoined upon innocent man were joined with the greatest of privileges. Man's responsibility to exercise dominion over the earth was characterized by the great privilege of ruling beneath and in analogy to God's own universal rule; his responsibility to multiply and fill the earth held forth the immense privilege and joy of society with others of his own kind, in the likeness of the blessed relationships within the eternal Trinity; his responsibility to obey God was attached to the unspeakable privilege of walking in fellowship with him, and enjoying the good fruits of the Garden that he had placed him in. Man, when he was first created, was the most blessed of all creatures, given great responsibility and filled with unspeakable joys and privileges, all of which derived from his unique relationship to God, as the one being formed in the image of the Divine.

*[See verses under the previous point, "Responsible"]*

*Summative description: Man innocent was able to sin **and** able not to sin.*

## ***Man Depraved***



## The Fall

Although God created man innocent, upright, good, and in his very image, yet man rebelled against the Word of God in the Garden of Eden, and plunged himself and all his race into a state of misery and hopelessness. The effects of this fall were catastrophic and widespread: the image of God in man was marred (but not completely obliterated); man was placed under a curse of immense proportions, changing the delightful responsibilities and privileges that he had enjoyed into a sorrowful and exhausting toil; all of creation was plunged into a curse and made to exist in vanity; mankind came under the sentence of the eternal punishment of death; and all the descendants of that first man and woman were made the heirs of the sinful nature, curse, and punishment into which their first parents had plunged themselves.

### 1. *Its nature*

- Misconception of God

Gen 3:1-3; Psa 10:2-14; Psa 78:19-20; Psa 94:3-11; Mal 1:2-3; Mal 2:17; 1Cor 2:6-10

- Misconception of Self

Gen 3:4-5; 2Chr 26:16; Isa 14:12-17; Eze 28:2-9; Eze 28:12-19; Dan 5:20-21; Rev 18:7-8

- Unbelief

Gen 3:6; 2Ki 7:1-2; Psa 78:21-22; Psa 78:32-33; Rom 14:22-23; Heb 3:7-13; Heb 11:6

- Disobedience

Gen 3:6; Deu 18:18-19; 1Sam 15:22; Ecc 5:1; Jer 7:22-24;  
Amos 5:21-24; John 14:23-24

## 2. *Its effects*

- Curse

Gen 3:9-24; Gen 4:10-12; Gen 9:24-25; Deu 27:26; Deu 30:15-20

- Distortion of all previous responsibilities

### *The Responsibility to Obey*

Gen 4:6-10; Gen 4:23; Gen 6:11-13; Gen 11:1-9; Num 14:21-23

### *The Responsibility to Exercise Dominion*

Gen 6:1-4 [According to one interpretation, this passage is speaking of mighty rulers who perverted their authority, engaged in unbridled polygamy, and bore children who ruled oppressively and unjustly in the earth.]; Exo 5:6-18; Jdg 1:7; Jdg 9:1-6; Jdg 17:6; Isa 10:1-2; Jer 23:1-2; Eze 34:1-10; Eze 45:8-9

### *The Responsibility to Multiply*

Gen 4:19; Gen 6:1-2; Gen 19:4-9; Gen 19:30-38; Gen 38:7-10; Gen 38:13-17; 2Sam 11:1-4; 2Sam 13:1-17; Lev 18:3-25; Rom 1:24-28

- Creation-wide vanity.

Gen 3:17-18; Gen 6:6-7; Gen 6:17; Ecc 1:2-8; Jer 9:10-13;  
Rom 8:19-23

- Death

Gen 2:17; Rom 5:12; 1Cor 15:21-22

*Physical Death*

Gen 4:8; Gen 5:3-8; Eze 18:20; Heb 9:27

*Separation from God (Spiritual Death)*

Gen 3:23-24; Psa 15:1-5; Isa 6:1-5; Hab 1:13; Luke 5:8; John  
3:5-7; Eph 2:1-3; Col 2:13; 2The 1:9

- Inherited Depravity

Psa 51:5; Psa 58:3; Rom 5:18-19

- Distortion of God's Image

Gen 5:1-3; Rom 5:19; 1Cor 15:48-49

## **Man's Depravity**

After Adam's fall, all mankind was plunged into a state of total depravity. Adam gained a sinful nature by his rebellion, so that he was no longer able to do good; and all of his offspring inherited that same evil nature. Even man's best acts, after the catastrophe in the Garden of Eden, are as filthy rags before God, for they are shot through with many imperfect and God-dishonoring motives. Every responsibility that man had in the Garden was perverted and corrupted by fallen humanity, and every individual came under God's death sentence. And man was hopeless to find a remedy: he

was the slave of sin and of the Serpent who had first deceived him, and blinded and unable to understand God, let alone come to him in faith, or follow him. In short, man's fall brought utter catastrophe, and it would take a divine and sovereign act of mercy ever to restore him to his lost estate of righteousness and fellowship with God.

1. *His Corruption*

Gen 6:5; Job 15:14-16; Psa 130:3; Psa 143:2; Pro 20:9; Ecc 7:20; Isa 64:6; Jer 13:23; John 3:19; Rom 3:9-12; Jam 3:8; 1John 1:8

2. *His blindness*

John 3:19-21; Eph 4:17-19; Eph 5:8

3. *His bondage to sin and Satan*

John 8:34; John 8:44; Rom 6:20; 2Tim 2:25-26; Tit 3:3; 1John 5:19

4. *His Evil Nature*

Gen 6:5; Gen 8:21; Job 14:4; Ecc 9:3; Jer 17:9; Mark 7:21-23; Mat 7:16-18; Mat 12:33; Mark 7:21-23; Rom 8:7-8; Jam 1:13-14

5. *His Inability (to believe in God, come to him, seek him, etc.)*

Isa 64:7; John 6:44; John 6:65; John 8:43-45; John 10:26; John 12:37-41; John 14:17; 1Cor 2:14; Rom 3:10-11

## **Man's Reward**

So great a fall brought equally great consequences: God is utterly holy, and the sinful state into which man had plunged himself could not be overlooked by the righteous Judge of all the earth. God had

promised that if Adam disobeyed he would be punished with death: this punishment came, and all men now die physically; but more horrible yet is the fact that all die spiritually, and are no longer able to be found in the presence of the Holy God, the knowledge of whom is eternal life. If no salvation is found from this desperate plight, then Adam's seed is justly doomed to spend eternity in hell, away from the presence of the Lord of Glory. The negative side of baptism is a fitting symbol of this final judgment: when God brought Noah through the waters of judgment in the ark (a type of Christ), the world was destroyed in that baptism; when God delivered his people from Egypt through the Red Sea, Pharaoh was destroyed in that baptism; and when John came proclaiming the baptism of repentance, he told the people that the Messiah would judge the world in a baptism of fire.

### *1. Hardening and Reprobation*

Exo 4:21; Rom 1:18-32; Rom 9:13; Rom 9:17-18; Rom 9:21-22;  
1Pet 2:8

### *2. Punishment*

#### ◦ Examples of God's Wrath

Gen 7:17-24; Gen 11:5-9; Gen 19:14-29; Exo 14:23-31; Jude  
1:4-11

#### ◦ The Baptism of Judgment

Mat 3:7-12; Luke 12:49-51

*[See also the examples of the flood and the destruction of Pharoah in the Red Sea, under “Examples of God's Wrath”]*

- Final Punishment in Hell

Isa 66:24; Mat 10:28; Mat 11:20-24; Mat 23:33-36; Mark 9:42-48; Luke 16:19-31; Rom 2:5-12; 2The 1:6-10; Rev 20:10-15

*Summative description:* Man depraved is not able not to sin.

### ***Man Redeemed***

#### **Loved**

When God purposed to redeem a people from the mass of fallen humanity, the sole and inexhaustible source of this surprising and undeserved grace was God's free, unconditional love. We were not lovable in any way; but God, who is love itself, chose to show his amazing love in the vessels which he had formed to showcase his mercy. God's love for his people is eternal, determined before the foundation of the earth. And it is special and individual. His redemptive love is not given to every person alike, but is prepared only for those whom he has chosen, not for any good in them, but to demonstrate the freeness of his favor.

#### ***1. Eternally***

Jer 31:3; Rom 1:7; Eph 2:4-7; 1The 1:2-5; 2The 2:16-17; 1John 4:7-12; 1John 4:16; 1John 4:19

#### ***2. Specially***

Deu 4:35-38; Deu 7:7-8; Deu 10:14-15; Deu 23:3-6; Deu 33:1-3;  
2Sam 12:24; Psa 78:67-68; Psa 89:20-33; Isa 38:17; Isa 43:3-4;  
Hos 11:1; Mal 1:2-3; John 16:26-27; John 17:22-26; Rom 5:7-8;  
Rom 9:13-15

## **Elected**

God's eternal love for his people flows naturally into his eternal choice to redeem them. This unconditional, sovereign election is the product and proof of his eternal love. Although fallen men like to cling to the idea of some vestige of remaining good in themselves, and are ready to suppose that God saved them, and not others, because they were more willing to believe or more ready to seek, the bible is clear that election is all about God's glory: he saw nothing good in us, not even the slightest modicum of desire to return to him, but he chose us anyway, to glorify the freeness of his mercy and lovingkindness.

### *1. The fact of election*

Exo 6:7; Deu 7:6; Deu 10:14-15; Psa 33:12; Isa 43:20-21; Psa 65:4; Mat 24:24; John 6:37; John 15:16; Acts 13:48; Rom 8:28-30; Rom 9:10-24; Rom 11:5-7; Eph 1:3-6; Eph 1:11-12; 1The 1:4; 1The 5:9; 2The 2:13-14

### *2. The motivation of election*

- His own good pleasure

Eph 1:5; 2Tim 1:9

- The display of his glory

Isa 43:6-7; Rom 9:22-24; Eph 2:4-7; 1Cor 1:27-31

- His special love

Deu 7:6-8; 2The 2:13

[See the previous point, “Loved”]

- His foreknowledge

Rom 8:29; 1Pet 1:1-2

- Which means his relational love or causative purpose

Jer 1:5; Amos 3:2; Mat 7:22-23; 1Cor 8:3; 2Tim 2:19; 1Pet 1:20

- But not any good [nobility, wisdom, power, choice, seeking] he foresees in anyone

Deu 7:7; Rom 9:11-13; Rom 9:16; Rom 10:20; 1Cor 1:27-29; 1Cor 4:7; 2Tim 1:9

## **Called**

In eternity, God loved us and chose to redeem us; and then, in time, he brought that eternal will to fruition, and called us into his kingdom. God calls sinners in two ways: outwardly, he proclaims the truth of his free grace to all alike, through his gospel messengers; free pardon is offered without exception, and all who desire to embrace it are invited to do so. However, no man in his natural, fallen condition is willing to accept so gracious a call, because his deeds are evil. Therefore, in those whom he has chosen, God joins the outward call of the gospel with an inward, effectual call of his



Spirit, who overcomes native resistance, so that the one thus called will respond indeed.

1. *Outwardly*

Isa 55:1-3; Mat 22:2-14; John 3:14-17; John 7:37-38; Rom 10:11-18; Col 1:23; Rev 22:17

2. *Effectually*

Luke 8:52-55; John 6:44-45; John 10:1-5; John 10:16; John 10:25-28; John 11:43-44; Rom 1:5-7; Rom 8:28-30; Rom 9:23-26; 1Cor 1:1-2; 1Cor 1:9; 1Cor 1:23-24; 1Cor 7:20-24; 2Cor 4:4-6; Gal 1:6; Gal 1:15-16; Eph 1:18; 2The 2:13-14; 1Tim 6:12; 2Tim 1:8-9; Heb 9:15; Jam 2:7; 1Pet 2:9; 1Pet 5:10-11; 2Pet 1:3-4; Jude 1:1; Rev 17:14

## **Regenerated**

When God first gave his commandment to man in the Garden, he warned him that disobedience would result in death. That promise in fact came true when Adam disobeyed; and since that first sin, all men have been born into a state of spiritual death. If they would regain what was lost, therefore, their first need is that they be given true life again. This is what regeneration is all about: it is a new birth, God's implantation of a spiritual life into a heart that had been dead, thereby causing it to beat again with love, obedience, faith, and repentance, realities to which it had before been insensible.

1. *Its origin: divine choice*

Eze 37:1-14; John 1:12-13; John 3:7-8

2. *Its result:*

- A new nature

1John 2:29; 1John 3:1-3; 1John 3:9-10; 1John 5:1-4; 1John 5:18

- A new heart

Deu 30:6; Eze 11:19-20; Eze 36:25-27

- Faith

John 3:27; Phi 1:29; 2Pet 1:1; Acts 16:14; Acts 18:27; Eph 2:8-10

- Repentance

Acts 5:31; Acts 11:18; 2Tim 2:25-26; 1Cor 4:7

## **Baptized**

Ever since God established his gracious covenant with mankind, he was pleased to seal and signify his promise of favor with visible signs of confirmation. In the Abrahamic covenant, the sign and seal was circumcision, which looked ahead to when Christ would be cut off for the sins of the people, and signified the removal of the sinful flesh and the new life to which believers in him would be raised. But when Christ came and was actually cut off, the covenant sign changed to baptism, through which a believer symbolically passes through the waters of judgment and is sprinkled clean from all sin, and preserved safe in Christ. The reality to which this sign points is the baptism with the Spirit, by which believers receive true, spiritual life indeed, by means of the Spirit of God poured out upon them.

1. *The significance of circumcision*

Deu 10:16; Deu 30:6; Jer 4:4; Rom 4:11-12

2. *The correlation of circumcision and baptism*

Col 2:11-12

3. *Old Testament examples of baptism*

Gen 7:17-24/1Pet 3:18-21; Exo 14:23-31/1Cor 10:1-2

4. *Baptism with water*

Mat 28:18-20; Acts 2:38; Acts 10:46-48; Acts 22:16; Rom 6:3-5;  
Eph 5:26

5. *Baptism with the Spirit*

Joel 2:28-29; Acts 1:4-5; Acts 2:1-4; Acts 11:15-17; 1Cor 12:13; Tit  
3:4-6

## **Justified**

There is no more precious term in the believer's vocabulary than "justification," nor is there any other single word which conveys more of the truth of the gospel than this. The heart of the gospel is that man's fundamental problem is sin, and if the sickness, death, punishment, wrath, and despair which are its fruits will ever be overcome, then his sin problem must first be taken care of. If man would ever be happy again, ever enjoy the presence of the holy God, ever regain what he lost in the Garden, and so pass into the joy of eternal life, his sin must be traded for a spotless righteousness. Justification is the unalterable verdict of the righteous Judge that

this has indeed happened: the sinner who had been stained by transgression is legally declared to be wholly righteous, by faith alone. Of course, the God who cannot lie would not pass a verdict that is not true; and so the principle by which justification thrives is that of imputation. Jesus was pleased to give (or impute) to me his flawless righteousness, and to take in its place my putrid mass of stinking iniquity. The Father then treated him, on the cross, as justice demanded that I be treated; but when he raised him from the dead, he confirmed before all that his wrath had been satisfied, and that the substitutionary sacrifice of his Son had been acceptable. In this way, God was able to be just in his verdict and still declare me just, although my past had been stained with immense sin, and his court demands impeccable righteousness.

*1. Righteousness imputed*

Jer 23:6; Zec 3:3-5; Rom 9:30-32; Rom 10:3-4; 1Cor 1:30-31; 2Cor 5:21; Phi 3:8-9

*2. Righteousness declared*

Gen 15:6; Psa 32:1-2; Isa 45:21-25; Isa 53:11; Hab 2:4; Rom 1:16-17; Rom 3:20-28; Rom 4:1-13; Rom 4:20-5:2; Rom 5:17-19; Rom 8:29-34; Gal 2:15-16; Gal 3:5-14; Gal 3:21-24; Gal 5:4-6

## **Forgiven**

Our basic problem consists of this, first, that by our sin we have become indebted to the one we have wronged; and second, that since the one we have wronged is our Creator, the Almighty God of the universe, our sin debt is therefore infinite, and can never adequately be repaid. We are as dishonest employees who have embezzled and wasted millions of dollars from our employers; and now, although we

have not the wherewithal to pay them back, we are still under the obligation of justice to do so. Being so helplessly burdened with a debt we could never repay, how sweet must the sound of our Savior's words fall upon our ears, "Your sins are forgiven; go in peace"?

Exo 34:6-7; Lev 4:25-26; Psa 103:12; Psa 130:3-4; Isa 1:18; Jer 31:33-34; Mic 7:18-19; Mat 6:12-15; Mat 9:2-7; Mat 18:21-35; Mat 26:27-28; Mark 11:25; Luke 23:33-34; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 2:37-38; Eph 4:32; Col 3:13; Heb 10:11-18; 1John 1:9

## **Redeemed**

Before we could have been brought back to God, there was a price that had to be paid. The righteous law of God was hanging over our heads, with all its unfulfilled demands and broken regulations; and the payment that it required stood in the way of our pardon. So infinite was our debt and obligation, that the only redemption price that could ever have been valuable enough was the precious blood of Christ, the Lamb without spot and without blemish.

### *1. Types of Redemption*

Exo 13:12-13; Num 3:40-51; Num 18:15-17; Ruth 4:1-10

### *2. The True Redemption of Christ*

Psa 49:7-8, 15; Psa 130:7-8; Isa 35:10; Mark 10:45; Acts 20:28; 1Cor 6:19-20; Gal 3:13-14; Gal 4:1-5; Eph 1:7-8; Tit 2:13-14; Heb 9:11-15; 1Pet 1:17-19; Rev 5:9-10

## **Sanctified**

The work of Christ in overturning the effects of sin and the curse was manifold: through Adam's fall we became legally guilty, and

therefore needed both acquittal and a positive righteousness; this Christ gave us in justification. But we also became impure and defiled, and hence needed washing and sanctification, which he also bestowed upon us. The wound in Christ's side thus flowed with blood, for our absolution from guilt, and water, for our purification from sin – and the purification is just as necessary as the absolution, if we are ever to come before the righteous and holy God. Our sanctification is therefore as necessary as our justification. It is not just a means to an end, but an end in itself. This sanctification may be viewed in different ways: positionally, we have been perfectly and fully sanctified already, and endowed with a perfect holiness; progressively, we are being more sanctified every day – the holiness we have been given is being worked into our lives by the agency of the Triune persons, through the means of the Word of God, by which we are being conformed to the image of Christ; and finally, our practical sanctification will be fully accomplished in glory, when we see the Son of God as he truly is.

### *1. Old Testament Examples*

Exo 13:2/Heb 12:22-23; Exo 19:6/1Pet 2:9; Exo 19:10-11/Rev 19:7-8; Exo 40:9-11; Lev 10:10-11; Lev 21:17-23

### *2. Positionally*

1Cor 1:2; 1Cor 1:30; 1Cor 3:16-17; 1Cor 6:11; Eph 5:25-7; Col 1:21-22; Heb 10:10; 1John 2:29

### *3. Progressively*

Isa 52:11; Rom 6:4-18; Rom 12:1-2; 1The 4:3-5; 2Tim 2:21-22; Tit 2:11-12; Heb 9:13-14; Heb 10:14; 1Pet 1:14-16; 2Pet 3:11-12; 1John 3:3

- By the Father

Exo 31:13; Lev 20:7-8; Eze 37:27-28; 1The 5:23; Heb 12:10

- By the Son

John 17:18-19; Heb 2:10-11; Heb 13:12

- By the Holy Spirit

Rom 15:16; 2The 2:13; 1Pet 1:2

- Through the Word of God

John 17:17; 2Tim 3:14-17; Jam 1:21-25

- Toward the image of Christ

Rom 8:29; 2Cor 3:15-18; Eph 4:20-24; 1John 3:2; 1Cor 15:49

## **Spirit-indwelt**

Of all the promised blessings connected with the coming of the Messiah, some of the greatest involved the pouring out of the Spirit upon all God's people, who would dwell within them, teach them God's law in their inner beings, intercede for them with unspeakable groanings, and guarantee their final salvation. What greater and more astonishing privilege could be imagined than that the very God of creation would dwell in our hearts through faith, in spite of all our remaining corruption?

Eze 36:25-27; Joel 2:28-32; John 14:16-17; Acts 2:14-21; Rom 8:8-9; Eph 3:14-19

1. *Our Guarantee*

Eph 1:13-14; Eph 4:30

2. *Our Teacher*

John 14:25-26; John 15:26; John 16:7-14; 2Cor 3:15-18; 1John 2:20-27

3. *Our Empowerer*

Rom 8:2-6; Rom 8:10-14; 1Cor 12:1-11; Gal 5:16-25

4. *Our Intercessor*

Rom 8:15-17; Rom 8:26-27

## **Reconciled**

The first and great consequence of man's sin was that he was separated from his God; the last and great accomplishment of Jesus' work was to bring us back to God. The final goal of the mighty work of redemption, therefore, is reconciliation, the calling out of a people who would dwell in the very presence of God, with a restored and blessed relationship with him.

Gen 17:1-8; Isa 2:1-3; Isa 7:14; Jer 31:33-34; Mat 1:22-23; Rom 5:10-11; 2Cor 5:18-20; Eph 2:13-18; Col 1:19-23; 1Pet 2:24-25; 1Pet 3:18; Rev 21:1-4

## **Adopted**

The great goal of Christ's work of redemption is our reconciliation to the God from whom our sins had separated us; but we can only glimpse to what unspeakable degree of intimate love and fellowship



with him we have now been brought in the doctrine of adoption. God is not just our God in a distant or unemotional way; he is our Father, and loves us as he loves his own eternal Son, Jesus Christ. The fullness of every blessing we have received flows from this personal relationship into which we have been brought. Oh, what unspeakable love this is, that we, who were alienated sinners, should be called the sons of God! But so we are indeed, thanks to the unfathomable depths of Christ's work of love.

Exo 4:22-23; Isa 43:5-7; Isa 63:16; Hos 1:10; Mat 5:44-45; Mat 6:8-9; John 1:11-13; John 17:20-23; John 20:17; Rom 8:14-17; Rom 8:22-23; Rom 8:29-30; 2Cor 6:17-18; Gal 3:25-26; Gal 4:4-7; Eph 1:2-6; 2The 2:16-17; Heb 2:9-14; Heb 12:5-11; 1John 3:1-2; Rev 21:6-7

## **Saved**

The fact that Christ came to save us implies that we were in some desperate plight, and needed deliverance. Of course this is true: we were in a manifold and inescapable sin-caused calamity, and helpless to rescue ourselves. We needed to be saved first of all from our sins, and from the wrath of God which those sins were about to bring down upon our heads; but even after that, we remain hard-pressed by many ferocious enemies, such as the world system, the devil and his angels, and our own sinful nature; and we need a constant salvation from their snares, as we press on to our eternal reward. Ultimately, our salvation will come when Christ our Lord returns in glory to judge the world and bring us into his eternal kingdom.

John 3:16-17; Acts 2:16-21; Acts 4:11-12; Acts 16:30-31; Rom 10:9-13; 1Cor 1:18; Eph 2:4-9; Tit 3:4-7

### *1. From sin*

Mat 1:20-21; Mat 9:2-7; Luke 7:44-50; 1Cor 15:1-4

2. *From God's wrath*

Psa 85:1-7; Isa 12:1-2; Rom 5:9-10; 1The 1:9-10

3. *From our enemies*

Exo 15:1-19; Psa 27:1-9; Psa 35:1-10; Isa 63:1-9; Luke 1:68-75;  
2Cor 2:14-16; 1Pet 4:16-19; Rev 12:10-11

4. *Unto the eternal kingdom*

Mat 10:21-22; Mat 19:21-26; Rom 8:22-24; 2The 1:5-10; 2Tim  
4:18

*[The work of redemption is spoken of in other terms as well, which have not been included because of space. For example, the sins of redeemed man are atoned for, that is, covered by the blood of Christ; and they are propitiated, that is, God's wrath against them has been appeased.]*

Summative description: man redeemed is able to sin and able not to sin, but with the guarantee of final victory.

***Man Glorified***

**A Glorious Victory**

The future that the hard-pressed and struggling saints have to look forward to is one characterized in every way by victory. On this earth, redeemed man is assaulted on every side: by persecution from without the Church, heresies springing up from within, the temptations and lies of the devil whispered in his ear, the remaining corruption in his own soul ever dragging him down; but at the end of

the race, he will be vindicated against all his enemies; his triumph, through Christ, over sin, the world, the devil, and even death itself will be secured; he will be brought into a final and glorious rest from all his struggles, and will enjoy eternal rewards and unswayed dominion over the earth. Just as Christ suffered in his life on earth, but then ascended in victory to reign over all the universe, so Christians are following in his victory train, partaking of his sufferings now, so that they might be assured a share in his glory later.

1. *Vindication from his Enemies*

Psa 17:1-15; Psa 35:1-9; Psa 35:19-28; Isa 54:15-17; Jer 51:7-10; Rom 12:19; 2Tim 4:14; 2The 1:5-10; Rev 6:9-17; Rev 18:2-6; Rev 19:1-4

2. *Triumph*

Isa 25:8-9; 1Cor 15:55-58; 2Cor 2:14; 1John 5:4-5

3. *Rest*

Gen 2:1-3; Exo 20:8-11; Lev 25:2-13; Isa 66:22-23; Mat 11:28-30; Heb 3:7-4:11; Rev 14:13

4. *Reward*

Isa 40:9-11; Mat 5:3-12; Mat 6:1-6; Mat 6:17-21; Mat 25:14-46; 1Cor 3:8-15; 1Cor 15:58; 2Cor 5:10; 2Tim 4:7-8; Heb 11:6; Heb 11:26; Rev 22:12-14

5. *Reign*

Isa 32:1; Mat 19:27-30; Luke 19:12-27; 2Tim 2:12; 1Pet 2:9; Rev 1:5-6; Rev 5:9-10

## **A Glorious Spirit**

The final goal of redemption is nothing short of a recreation into the very image of Christ, the perfect man. When our redemption is complete, we will partake of Christ's glory, share in his righteousness, partake of his sinlessness, and reflect him perfectly.

### *1. Recreated in the Image of Christ*

Rom 8:28-32; 2Cor 3:17-18; 1Cor 15:49; 2Cor 4:4-11; 2Cor 5:17; Eph 4:20-24; Col 3:9-10; 1John 3:2

### *2. Robed in the Righteousness of Christ*

Psa 132:8-9; Isa 61:10; Zec 3:3-5; Rom 13:13-14; Gal 3:27; Col 3:12-14; Rev 3:5; Rev 6:11; Rev 7:9-10; Rev 19:7-8

### *3. Free from All Sin*

Eph 5:25-27; Heb 12:22-23; 2Pet 1:2-4; Jude 1:24-25; Rev 14:1-5; Rev 21:7-8; Rev 21:27; Rev 22:14-15

## **A Glorious Body**

The effects of redemption do not stop with the immaterial aspect of man. Man was created as a physical being, and the consequences of sin had a devastating effect on his body; but the glorious result of Christ's work will be a new, resurrection body that can never decay or grow old. The firstfruits and guarantee of this glorified body that we will one day possess is Jesus' own resurrection body. Just as God raised Jesus from the dead, so he will one day raise the bodies of all

his saints, and clothe them with incorruptible flesh, that can never be oppressed by sickness or pain. In their glorified state, the saints will be like the angels in this respect, that they will no longer be marrying or reproducing, but will have all their deepest emotional and social needs satisfied by their marriage union with Christ.

Isa 26:19; John 5:25-29; John 11:23-27; Rom 8:23

1. *Like Christ's Resurrection Body*

Job 19:25-26; Psa 16:9-10; Acts 4:1-2; Rom 8:11; 1Cor 6:13-14;  
1Cor 15:12-26; 2Cor 4:13-14; Phi 3:10-12; Col 1:18; 1The 4:13-18

2. *Eternal*

Dan 12:2-3; 2Cor 5:1-4

3. *Incorruptible*

1Cor 15:35-57

4. *Unmarrying*

Mat 22:23-30

## **A Glorious Environment**

When man first sinned, the consequences of his rebellion extended to his environment, and creation itself was put under a terrible curse; but Christ's work of redemption likewise extends to all of creation. Just as man himself will be recreated perfectly, in his spirit and his body, so all of creation will be created anew, and become a fitting environment for glorified mankind to dwell with Immanuel, God in the flesh, our Redeemer Jesus Christ. For all eternity, the saints will

dwell in peace and unity, joyfully working in their perfect environment, feasting together with gladness, never again to experience pain, sickness, sorrow, or the toilsome travail that characterizes this life. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

1. *A New Earth*

Isa 35:1-10; Isa 65:17; Rom 8:18-25; 2Pet 3:5-14; Rev 21:1-2; Rev 21:10-21

2. *Dwelling in the Presence of God*

2Cor 5:6-8; Rev 21:3; Rev 21:22-23; Rev 22:1-5

3. *Living in Peace and Unity*

Isa 2:2-5; Isa 65:25

4. *With no Tears or Sorrow*

Isa 25:7-9; Isa 65:18-20; Rev 21:4-6

5. *Joyfully Feasting*

Isa 25:6; Joel 3:17-18; Mat 8:11; Mat 26:29; Rev 19:6-9

6. *Joyfully Working*

Isa 65:21-22; Rev 21:24-26

Summative Description: *Man Glorified is not able to sin.*

# **Man in His Original State**

**by Louis Berkhof**

From the discussion of the doctrine of God we pass on to that of man, the crown of God's handiwork.

1. The Essential Elements of Human Nature. The usual view is that man consists of two parts, body and soul. This is in harmony with the self-consciousness of man, and is also borne out by a study of Scripture, which speaks of man as consisting of "body and soul," Matt. 6:25; 10:28, or of "body and spirit," Eccl. 12:7; I Cor. 5:3,5. Some are of the opinion that the words 'soul' and 'spirit' denote different elements, and that therefore man consists of three parts, body, soul, and spirit, Cf. I Thess. 5:23. It is evident, however, that the two words 'soul' and 'spirit' are used interchangeably. Death is sometimes described as a giving up of the soul, Gen. 35:18; I Kings 17:21, and sometimes as the giving up of the spirit, Luke 23:46; Acts 7:59. The dead are in some cases named "souls," Rev. 9:6; 20:4, and in others 'spirits,' I Pet 3:19; Heb. 12:23. The two terms denote the spiritual element in man from different points of view. As spirit it is the principle of life and action, which controls the body, and as soul it is the personal subject, which thinks and feels and wills, and in some cases the seat of the affections.

2. The Origin of the Soul in Each Individual. There are three views respecting the origin of the individual souls.

a. Pre-existentialism. Some advocated the idea that the souls of men existed in a previous state, and that something that happened then accounts for their present condition. A few found in this an explanation of the fact that man is born as a sinner. This view finds no favor now.

b. Traducianism. According to this View men derive their souls as well as their bodies from their parents. This is the common view in the Lutheran Church. Support for it is found in the fact that nothing is said about the creation of Eve's soul, and that descendants are said to be in the loins of their Fathers, Gen. 46:26; Heb. 7:9, 10. Furthermore, it seems to be favored by the fact that in the case of animals both body and soul are passed on from the old to the young, by the inheritance of family traits and peculiarities, and by the inheritance of sinful corruption, which is a matter of the soul more than of the body. However, it is burdened with serious difficulties. It either makes the parents creators, or assumes that the soul of man can be divided into various parts. Moreover, it endangers the sinlessness of Jesus.

c. Creationism. This holds that each soul is a direct creation of God, of which the time cannot be precisely determined. The soul is supposed to be created pure, but to become sinful even before birth by entering into that complex of sin by which humanity as a whole is burdened. This view is common in Reformed circles. It is favored by the fact that Scripture represents the body and the soul of man as having different origins, Eccl. 12:7; Isa. 42:5; Zech. 12:1; Heb. 12:9. Moreover, it is more in harmony with the spiritual nature of the soul, and safeguards the sinlessness of Jesus. It is not free from difficulties, however. It does not explain the inheritance of family traits, and may seem to make God the Creator of sinful souls.



3. Man as the Image of God. The Bible teaches that man is created in the image of God. According to Gen. 1:26, God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." The two words 'image' and 'likeness' evidently denote the same thing. The following passages show that they are used interchangeably: Gen. 1:26, 27; 5:1; 9:6; I Cor. 11:7; Col. 3:10; Jas. 3:9. The word 'likeness' probably stresses the fact that the image is most like or very similar. There are different views of the image of God in man:

a. The Roman Catholic view:. Roman Catholics find the image of God in certain natural gifts with which man is endowed, such as the spirituality of the soul, the freedom of the will, and immortality. To these God added a supernatural gift, called original righteousness, to keep the lower nature in check. This is supposed to constitute man's likeness to God.

b. The Lutheran view. The Lutherans are not all agreed on this point, but the prevailing opinion is that the image of God consists only in those spiritual qualities with which man was endowed at creation, namely, true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. These may be designated original righteousness. This view is too restricted.

c. The Reformed view. The Reformed distinguish between the natural and the moral image of God. The former is the broader of the two, and is generally said to consist in man's spiritual, rational, moral, and immortal being. This was obscured but not lost by sin. The latter is the image of God in the more restricted sense, and consists in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. This was lost by sin and is restored in Christ, Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10. Since man retained the image in the broader sense, he can still be called the image or image-bearer of God, Gen. 9:6; I Cor. 11:7; 15:49; Jas 3:9.

4. Man in the Covenant of Works. God at once entered into covenant relationship with man. This original covenant is called the covenant of works.

a. Scripture proof for the covenant of works. (1) Paul draws a parallel between Adam and Christ in Rom. 5:12-21. In Adam all men died, but in Christ all those who are His are made alive. This means that Adam was the representative head of all men, just as Christ is now the representative head of all those who are His. (2) In Hos. 6:7 we read: "But they like Adam have transgressed the covenant" (Am. Rev.). Adam's sin is called a transgression of the covenant.

b. The elements of the covenant of works. (1) The parties. A covenant is always a compact between two parties. In this case they are the triune God, the sovereign Lord of the universe, and Adam as the representative of the human race. Since these parties are very unequal, the covenant naturally partakes of the nature of an arrangement imposed on man. (2) The promise. The promise of the covenant was the promise of life in the highest sense, life raised above the possibility of death. This is what believers now receive through Christ, the last Adam. (3) The condition. The condition was that of absolute obedience. The positive command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was clearly a test of pure obedience. (4) The penalty. The penalty was death in the most inclusive sense of the word, physical, spiritual, and eternal. This consists not only in the separation of body and soul, but more fundamentally in the separation of the soul from God. (5) The sacrament(s). In all probability the tree of life was the only sacrament of this covenant,-- if it was indeed a sacrament. It seems to have been appointed as a symbol and seal of life.

c. The present validity of the covenant of works. Arminians hold that this covenant was wholly set aside. But this is not correct. The demand of perfect obedience still stands for those who do not accept the righteousness of Christ. Lev. 18:5; Gal. 3:12. Though they cannot meet the requirement, the condition stands. It holds no more, however, for those who are in Christ, since He met the demands of the law for them. It ceased to be a way of life, for as such it is powerless after the fall.

To memorize. Passages bearing on:

a. The elements of human nature:

Matt. 10:28. "And be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell."

Rom. 8:10. "And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness."

b. The creation of the soul:

Eccl. 12:7. "And the dust returneth to the earth as it was, and the spirit returneth unto God who gave it."

Heb. 12:9. "Furthermore, we had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live?"

c. Man's creation in the image of God:

Gen. 1:27. "And God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them."

Gen. 9:6. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made He man."

d. Man in general even now the image of God:

Gen. 9:6. Cf. above under c.

Jas. 3:9. "Therewith bless we the Lord and Father; and therewith curse we men, who are made in the likeness of God."

e. The restoration of the image of God in man:

Eph. 4:24. "And put on the new man, that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth."

Col. 3:10. "And have put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of Him that created him."

f. The covenant of works:

Hos. 6:7. "But they like Adam have transgressed the covenant."

I Cor. 15:22. "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive."

For Further Study:

a. How would you explain the passages which seem to imply that man consists of three elements, I Thess. 5:23; Heb. 4:12; compare Matt. 22:37.

b. Does man's dominion over the rest of creation also form part of the image of God? Gen. 1:26, 28; Ps. 8:6-8; Heb. 2:5-9.

c. What indications of a covenant can you find in Gen. 2 and 3?

## Questions for Review

1. What is the usual view of the elements of human nature, and how can this be proved?
2. What other view is there, and what passages seem to support it?
3. What different views are there as to the origin of the soul?
4. What are the arguments for, and the objections to each one of these?
5. Do the words 'image' and likeness denote different things?
6. What is the Roman Catholic, the Lutheran, and the Reformed view of the image of God in man?
7. What distinction do the Reformed make, and why is it, important?
8. What Bible proof have we for the covenant of works?
9. Who are the parties in the covenants?
10. What is the promise, the condition, the penalty, and the sacrament of the covenants?
11. In what sense does this covenant still hold?
12. In what sense is it abolished?

## **Man in the State of Sin**

**by Louis Berkhof**

1. The Origin of Sin. The Bible teaches us that sin entered the world as the result of the transgression of Adam and Eve in paradise. The first sin was occasioned by the temptation of Satan in the form of a serpent, who sowed in man's heart the seeds of distrust and unbelief. Scripture clearly indicates that the serpent, who appears as the tempter in the story of the fall, was but an instrument of Satan, John

8:44; Rom. 16:20; II Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9. The first sin consisted in man's eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This eating was sinful simply because God had forbidden it. It clearly showed that man was not willing to subject his will unconditionally to the will of God, and comprised several elements. In the intellect it revealed itself as unbelief and pride, in the will as the desire to be like God, and in the affections an unholy satisfaction in eating of the forbidden fruit. As a result of it man lost the image of God in the restricted sense, became guilty and utterly corrupt, and fell under the sway of death, Gen. 3:19; Rom. 5:12; 6:23.

2. The Essential Nature of Sin. At present many substitute the word 'evil' for 'sin,' but this is a poor substitute, for the word 'sin' is far more specific. It denotes a kind of evil, namely, a moral evil for which man is responsible and which brings him under a sentence of condemnation. The modern tendency is to regard it merely as a wrong done to one's fellow-beings misses the point entirely, for such a wrong can be called sin only in so far as it is contrary to the will of God. Sin is correctly defined by Scripture as "lawlessness," I John 3:4. It is lack of conformity to the law of God, and as such the opposite of that love which is required by the divine law. The Bible always contemplates it in relation to the law, Rom. 1: 32; 2:12-14; 4:15; 5:13; Jas. 2:9, 10; I John 3:4. It is first of all guilt, making men liable to punishment, Rom. 3:19; 5:18; Eph. 2:8, and then also inherent corruption or moral pollution. All men are guilty in Adam, and are therefore born with a corrupt nature. Job 14:4; Jer. 17:9; Isa. 6:5; Rom. 8:5-8; Eph. 4:17-19. Sin has its seat in the heart of man, and from this center influences the intellect, the will, and the affections, in fact the whole man, and finds expression through the body. Prov. 4:23; Jer. 17:9; Matt. 15:19, 20; Luke 6:45; Heb. 3:12. In distinction from the Roman Catholics we maintain that it does not

consist in outward acts only, but includes evil thoughts, affections, and intents of the heart. Matt. 5:22, 28; Rom. 7:7; Gal. 5:17, 24.

3. Sin in the Life of the Human Race. Three points deserve consideration here:

a. The connection between Adam's sin and that of his descendants. This has been explained in three different ways.

(1) The earliest explanation is called the realistic theory, which is to the effect that God originally created one general human nature, which in course of time divided into as many parts as there are human individuals. Adam possessed the whole of this general human nature; and through his sin it became guilty and polluted. Naturally, every individual part of it shares this guilt and pollution.

(2) In the days of the Reformation the representative theory came to the foreground. According to this view Adam stood in a twofold relation to his descendants: he was their natural head, and he was their representative as the head of the covenant. When he sinned as their representative, this sin was also imputed to them, and as a result they are all born in a corrupt state. This is our Reformed view.

(3) A third theory, not as well known, is that of mediate imputation. It holds that the guilt of Adam's sin is not directly placed to our account. His corruption is passed on to his descendants, and this makes them personally guilty. They are not corrupt because they are guilty in Adam, but guilty because they are corrupt.

b. Original and Actual Sin. We distinguish between original and actual sin. All men are born in a sinful state and condition, which is called original sin, and is the root of all the actual sins that are committed.

(1) Original sin. This includes both guilt and pollution. The guilt of Adam's sin is imputed to us. Because he sinned as our representative, we are guilty in him. Moreover, we also inherit his pollution, and now have a positive disposition toward sin. Man is by nature totally depraved. This does not mean that every man is as bad as he can be, but that sin has corrupted every part of his nature and rendered him unable to do any spiritual good. He may still do many praiseworthy things in relation to his fellow-beings, but even his best works are radically defective, because they are not prompted by love to God nor done in obedience to God. This total depravity and inability is denied by Pelagians, Arminians, and Modernists, but is clearly taught in Scripture, Jer. 17:9; John 5:42; 6:44; 15:4, 5; Rom. 7:18, 23, 24; 8:7, 8; I Cor. 2:14; II Cor. 7:1; Eph. 2:1-3; 4:18; II Tim. 3:2-4; Tit. 1:16; Heb. 11:6.

(2) Actual sin. The term 'actual sin' denotes not only sins consisting in outward acts, but also those conscious thoughts, desires, and decisions that proceed from original sin. They are the sins which the individual performs in distinction from his inherited nature and inclination. While original sin is one, actual sins are manifold. They may be sins of the inner life, such as pride, envy, hatred, sensual lusts, and evil desires; or sins of the outer life, such as deceit, theft, murder, adultery, and so on. Among these there is one unpardonable sin, namely, the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, after which a change of heart is impossible, and for which it is not necessary to pray, Matt, 12:31, 32; Mark 3:28-30; Luke 12:10; Heb. 6:4-6; 10:26, 27; I John 5:16.

c. The Universality of Sin. Scripture and experience both teach us that sin is universal. Even the Pelagians do not deny this, though they ascribe it to external conditions, such as a bad environment, evil examples, and a wrong kind of education. There are passages in



which the Bible directly asserts the universality of sin, such as I Kings 8:46; Ps. 143: 2; Prov. 20:9; Eccl. 7:20; Rom. 3:1-12, 19, 23; Gal 3:22; Jas. 3:2; I John 1:8, 10. Moreover, it teaches that man is sinful from birth, so that this cannot be considered as the result of imitation, Job 14:4; Ps. 51:5; John 3:6. Even infants are considered sinful, for they are subject to death, which is the penalty for sin, Rom. 5:12-14. All men are by nature under condemnation, and therefore need the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Children are never made an exception to this rule. John 3:3, 5; Eph. 2:3; I John 5:12.

To memorize. Passages to prove:

a. That sin is guilt:

Rom. 5:18. "So then as through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation; even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life."

I John 3:4. "Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness."

Eph. 2:3. "Among whom we also all once lived in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest."

b. That sin is pollution:

Jer. 17:9. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly corrupt: who can know it?"

Rom. 7:18, "For I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me, but to do that which is good is not."

Rom. 8:6. "For they that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit."

c. That sin has its seat in the heart:

Jer. 17:9. Cf. above under b.

Matt. 16:19. "For out of the heart come forth evil thoughts murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, railings."

Heb. 3:12. "Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God."

d. That Adam's guilt is imputed to us:

Rom. 5:12. "Through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned." Also verse 19. "For as through one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous."

I Cor. 15:21, 22. "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive."

e. That man is totally depraved:

Jer. 17:9; Rom. 7:18; 8:5. Cf. under b. above.

g. That sin is universal:

I Kings 8:46. "For there is no man that sinneth not."

Ps. 143:2. "And enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight no living man is righteous."

Rom. 3:12. "They have all turned aside, they are become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not so much as one."

I John 1:8. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

For Further Study:

a. Can you give some other scriptural names for sin? Job 15:- 5; 33:9; Ps. 32:1, 2; 55:15; Rom. 1:18; 5:15; I John 3:4.

b. Does the word 'evil' ever mean anything else than sin in Scripture? If so, what? Cf. Ex. 5:19; II Kings 6:33; 22:16; Ps. 41:8; 91:10; Prov. 16:4.

c. Does the Bible explicitly teach that man is a sinner from birth? Ps. 51:5; Isa. 48:8.

Questions for Review

1. What is the biblical view of the origin of sin?
2. What was the first sin, and what elements can be distinguished in it?
3. How would you prove that Satan was the real tempter?
4. What were the results of the first sin?
5. Do the words 'sin' and 'evil' mean the same Thing?
6. Where does sin have its seat in man?
7. Does sin consist only in outward acts?
8. What different views are there respecting the connection between Adam's sin and that of his descendants?
9. What is original sin, and how does actual sin differ from it?
10. How do you conceive of total depravity?
11. What proof is there for the universality of sin?

# Key Excerpt from The Bondage of the Will

*Martin Luther*

PAGES 345-360.

**Sect. CXLV.**—and here is solved that question of the Diatribe so often repeated throughout its book—"if we can do nothing, to what purpose are so many laws, so many precepts, so many threatenings, and so many promises?"—

Paul here gives answer: "By the law is the knowledge of sin." His answer is far different from that which would enter the thoughts of man, or of "Free-will." He does not say, by the law is, proved "Free-will," because it co-operates with it unto righteousness. For righteousness is not by the law, but, "by the law is the knowledge of sin:" seeing that, the effect, the work, and the office of the law, is to be a light to the ignorant and the blind; such a light, as discovers to them disease, sin, evil, death, hell, and the wrath of God; though! it does not deliver from these, but shews them only. And when a man is thus brought to a knowledge of the disease of sin, he is cast down, is afflicted, nay despairs: the law does not help him, much less can he help himself. Another light is necessary, which might discover to him the remedy. This is the voice of the Gospel, revealing Christ as the Deliverer from all these evils. Neither "Free-will" nor reason can discover Him. And how should it discover Him, when it is itself dark and devoid even of the light of the law, which might discover to it its

disease, which disease, in its own light it seeth not, but believes it to be sound health.

So also in Galatians iii., treating on the same point, he saith, “Wherefore then serveth the law ? “To which he answers, not as the Diatribe does, in a way that proves the existence of “Free-will, “ but he saith, “it was added because of transgressions, until the Seed should come, to whom the promise was made.” (Gal. iii. 19). He saith, “because of I transgressions;” not, however, to restrain them, as Jerome dreams; (for Paul shews, that to take away and to restrain sins, by the gift of righteousness, was that which was promised to the Seed to come;) but to cause transgressions to abound, as he saith Rom. v. 20, “The law entered that sin might abound.” Not that sins were not committed and did not abound without the law, but they were not known to be transgressions and sins of such magnitude; for the most and greatest of them, were considered to be righteousnesses. And while sins are thus unknown, there is no place for remedy, or for hope; because, they will not submit to the hand of the healer, considering themselves to be whole, and not to want a physician. Therefore, the law is necessary, which might give the knowledge of sin; in order that, he who is proud and whole in his own eyes, being humbled down into the knowledge of the iniquity and greatness of his sin, might groan and breathe after the grace that is laid up in Christ.

Only observe, therefore, the simplicity of the words—“By the law is the knowledge of sin;” and yet, these alone are of force sufficient to confound and overthrow “Free-will” altogether. For if it be true, that of itself, it knows not what is sin, and what is evil, as the apostle saith here, and Rom. vii. 7-8, “I should not have known that concupiscence was sin, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet,” how can it ever know what is righteousness and good ? And if it know not what

righteousness is, how can it endeavour to attain unto it ? We know not the sin in which we were born, in which we live, in which we move and exist, and which lives, moves, and reigns in us; how then should we know that righteousness which is without us, and which reigns in heaven? These works bring that miserable thing “Free-will” to nothing—nothing at all!

**Sect. CXLVI.**—the state of the case, therefore, being thus, Paul speaks openly with full confidence and authority, saying, “But now the righteousness of God is manifest without the law, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe in Him: (for there is no difference, for all have sinned and are without the glory of God:) being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation for sin, through faith in His blood, &c.” (Rom. iii. 22-26).

Here Paul speaks forth very thunder-bolts against “Free-will.” First, he saith, “The righteousness of God without the law is manifested.” Here he marks the distinction between the righteousness of God, and the righteousness of the law: because, the righteousness of faith comes by grace, without the law. His saying, “without the law,” can mean nothing else, but that Christian righteousness exists, without the works of the law: inasmuch as the works of the law avail nothing, and can do nothing, toward the attainment unto it. As he afterwards saith, “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” (Rom. iii. 28). The same also he had said before, “By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight.” (Rom. iii. 20).

From all which it is most clearly manifest, that the endeavour and desire of "Free-will" are a nothing at all. For if the righteousness of God exist without the law, and without the works of the law, how shall it not much rather exist without "Free-will " especially, since the most devoted effort of "Free-will" is, to exercise itself in moral righteousness, or the works of that law, from which its blindness and impotency derive their 'assistance!' This word "without," therefore abolishes all moral works, abolishes all moral righteousness, abolishes all preparations unto grace. In a word, scrape together every thing you can as that which pertains to the ability of "Free-will," and Paul will still stand invincible saying,—the righteousness of God is "without" it!

But, to grant that "Free-will" can, by its endeavour, move itself in some direction, we, will say, unto good works, or unto the righteousness of the civil or moral law; yet, it is not moved toward the righteousness of God, nor does God in any respect allow its devoted efforts to be worthy unto the attainment of this righteousness: for He saith, that His righteousness availeth without the works of the law. If therefore, it cannot move itself unto the attainment of the righteousness of God, what will it be profited, if it move itself by its own works and endeavours, unto the attainment of (if it were possible) the righteousness of angels! Here, I presume, the words are not 'obscure or ambiguous, nor is any place left for 'tropes' of any kind. Here Paul distinguishes most manifestly the two righteousnesses; assigning the one to the law, the other to grace; and declares that the latter is given without the former, and without its works; and that the former justifies not, nor avails any thing, without the latter. I should like to see, therefore, how "Free-will" can stand, or be defended, against these Scriptures!

**Sect. CXLVII.**—another thunder-bolt It is this —The apostle saith, that the righteousness of God is manifested and avails, "unto all and upon all them that believe" in Christ: and that, "there is no difference." (Rom. iii. 21-22).—

Here again, he divides in the clearest words, the whole race of men into two distinct divisions. To the believing he gives the righteousness of God, but takes it from the unbelieving. Now, no one, I suppose, will be madman enough to doubt, whether or not the power or endeavour of "Free-will" be a something that is not faith in Christ Jesus. Paul then denies that any thing which is not this faith, is righteous before God. And if it be not righteous, before God, it must be sin. For there is with God no medium between righteousness and sin, which can be as it were a neuter—neither righteousness nor sin. Otherwise the whole argument of Paul would amount to nothing: for it proceeds wholly upon this distinct division—that whatever is done and carried on by men, must be in the sight of God, either righteousness or sin: righteousness, if done in faith; sin, if faith be wanting. With men, indeed, things pass thus.—All cases in which men, in their intercourse with each other, neither owe any thing as a due, nor do any thing as a free benefit, are called medium and neuter. But here the ungodly man sins against God, whether he eat, or whether he drink, or whatever he do; because, he abuses the creature of God by his ungodliness and perpetual ingratitude, and does not, at any one moment, give glory to God from his heart.

**Sect. CXLVIII.**—this also, is no powerless thunder-bolt where the apostle says, "All have sinned and are without the glory of God: for there is no difference." (Rom. iii. 23).



What, I pray you, could be spoken more clearly ? Produce one of your "Free-will" workmen, and say to me—does this man, sin in this his endeavour ? If he does not sin, why does not Paul except him ? Why does he include him also without difference ? Surely he that saith "all, " excepts no one in any place, at any time, in any work or endeavour. If therefore you except any man, for any kind of devoted desire or work, you make Paul a liar; because he includes that "Free-will "-workman or striver, among all the rest, and in all that he saith concerning them; whereas, Paul should have had some respect for this person, and not have numbered him among the general herd of sinners!

There is also that part, where he saith, that they are "without the glory of God."

You may understand "the glory of God" here two ways, actively and passively. For Paul writes thus from his frequent use of Hebraisms. "The glory of God, " understood actively, is that glory by which God glories in us; understood passively, it is that glory by which we glory in God. But it seems to me proper, to understand it now, passively. So, "the faith of Christ, " is, according to the Latin, the faith which Christ has; but, according to the Hebrew, "the faith of Christ," is the faith which we have in Christ. So, also, "the righteousness of God, " signifies, according to the Latin, the righteousness which God has; but according to the Hebrews, it signifies the righteousness which we have from God and before God. Thus also "the glory of God," we understand according to the Latin, not according to the Hebrew; and receive it as signifying, the glory which we have from God and before God; which may be called, our glory in God. And that man glories in God who knows, to a certainty, that God has a favour unto him, and deigns to look upon him with kind regard; and that, whatever he

does please God, and what does not please him, is borne with by Him and pardoned.

If therefore, the endeavour or desire of "Free-will" be not sin, but good before God, it can certainly glory; and in that glorying, say with confidence, —This pleases God, God favours this, God looks upon and accepts this, or at least, bears with it and pardons it. For this is the glorying of the faithful in God: and they that have not this, are rather confounded before God. But Paul here denies that these men have this; saying, that they are all entirely without this glory.

This also experience itself proves.—Put the question to all the exercisers of "Free-will" to a man, and see if you can shew me one, who can honestly, and from his heart, say of any one of his devoted efforts and endeavours,—This pleases God!

If you can bring forward a single one, I am ready to acknowledge myself overthrown, and to cede to you the palm. But I know there is not one to be found. And if this glory be wanting, so that the conscience dares not say, to a certainty, and with confidence,— this pleases God, it is certain that it does not please God. For as a man believes, so it is unto him: because, he does not, to a certainty, believe that he pleases God; which, nevertheless, it is necessary to believe; for to doubt of the favour of God, is the very sin itself of unbelief; because, He will have it believed with the most assuring faith that He is favourable. Therefore, I have convinced them upon the testimony of their own conscience, that "Free-will," being "without the glory of God," is, with all its powers, its devoted strivings and endeavours, perpetually under the guilt of the sin of unbelief.

And what will the advocates of "Free-will" say to that which follows, "being justified freely by His grace?" (Rom. iii. 24). What is the

meaning of the word "freely ?" What is the meaning of "by His grace?" How will merit, and endeavour, accord with freely-given righteousness ? But, perhaps, they will here say—that they attribute to "Free-will" a very little indeed, and that which is by no means the 'merit of worthiness' (*meritum condignum!*) These, however, are mere empty Words: for all that is sought for in the defence of "Free-will," is to make place for merit. This is manifest: for the Diatribe has, throughout, argued and expostulated thus,

—"If there be no freedom of will, how can there be place for merit ? And if there be no place for merit, how can there be place for reward? To whom will the reward be assigned, if justification be without merit ?"—

Paul here gives you an answer.—That there is no such thing as merit at all; but that all who are justified are justified "freely;" that this is ascribed to no one but to the grace of God.—And when this righteousness is given, the kingdom and life eternal are given with it! Where is your endeavouring now? Where is your devoted effort ? Where are your works? Where are your merits of "Free-will?" Where is the profit of them all put together ? You cannot here make, as a pretence, 'obscurity and ambiguity:' the facts and the works are most clear and most plain. But be it so, that they attribute to "Free-will" a very little indeed, yet they teach us that by that very little we can attain "unto" righteousness and grace. Nor do they solve that question, why does God justify one and leave another ? in any other way, than by asserting the freedom of the will, and saying, Because, the one endeavours and the other does not: and God regards the one for his endeavouring, and despises the other for his not endeavouring; lest, if he did otherwise, He should appear to be unjust.

And notwithstanding all their pretence, both by their tongue and pen, that they do not profess to attain unto grace by 'the merit of worthiness' (meritum condignum) nor call it the merit of worthiness, yet they only mock us with a term, and hold fast their tenet all the while. For what is the amount of their pretence that they do not call it 'the merit of worthiness,' if nevertheless they assign unto it all that belongs to the merit of worthiness,—saying, that he in the sight of God attains unto grace who endeavours, and he who does not endeavour, does not attain unto it? Is this not plainly making it to be the merit of worthiness? Is it not making God a respecter of works, of merits, and of persons,, to say that one man is devoid of grace from his own fault, because he did not endeavour after it, but that another, because he did endeavour after it, has attained unto grace, unto which he would not have attained, if he had not endeavoured after it? If this be not ,the merit of worthiness,' then I should like to be informed what it is that is called 'the merit of worthiness.'

In this way you may play a game of mockery upon all words; and say, it is not indeed the merit of worthiness, but is in effect the same as the 'merit of worthiness.'—The thorn is not a bad tree, but is in effect the same as a bad tree!—The fig is not a good tree, but is in effect the same as a good tree!— The Diatribe is not, indeed, impious, but says and does nothing but what is impious!

**Sect. CXLIX.**—it has happened to these assertors of "Free-will" according to the old proverb,, 'Striving dire Scylla's rock to shun, they 'gainst Charybdis headlong run.' For devotedly striving to dissent from the Pelagians, they begin to deny the 'merit of worthiness;' whereas, by the very way in which they deny it, they establish it more firmly than ever. They deny it by their word and

pen, but establish it in reality, and in heart-sentiment: and thus, they are worse than the Pelagians themselves: and that on two accounts. First, the Pelagians plainly, candidly, and ingenuously, assert the 'merit of worthiness;' thus calling a boat a boat, and a fig a fig; and teaching what they really think. Whereas, our "Free-will" friends, while they think and teach the same thing, yet mock us with lying words and false appearances, as though they dissented from the Pelagians; when the fact is quite the contrary. So that, with respect to their hypocrisy, they seem to be the Pelagians' strongest opposers, but with respect to the reality of the matter, and their heart-tenet, they are twice-dipped Pelagians. And next under this hypocrisy, they "estimate" and purchase the grace of God at a much lower rate than the Pelagians themselves. For these assert, that it is not a certain little something in us by which we attain unto grace, but whole, full, perfect, great, and many, devoted efforts and works. Whereas, our friends declare, that it is a certain little something, almost a nothing, by which we deserve grace.

If therefore there must be error, they err with more honesty and less pride, who say, that the grace of God is purchased at a great price, and who account it dear and precious, that those who teach, that it may be purchased at that which is very little, and inconsiderable, and who account it cheap and contemptible. But however, Paul pounds both in pieces in one mortar, by one word, where he saith, that all are "justified freely;" and again that they are justified "without the law" and "without the works of the law. " And he who asserts that the justification must be free in all who are justified, leaves none excepted who work, deserve, or prepare themselves; he leaves no work which can be called 'merit of congruity' or 'merit of worthiness;' and by the one hurling of this thunder-bolt, he dashes in pieces both the Pelagians with their 'whole merit,' and the Sophists with their 'very little merit.' For a free justification allows of no workmen:

because, a free gift, and a work-preparation, are manifestly in opposition to each other.

Moreover, the being justified through grace, will not allow of respect unto the worthiness of any person : as the apostle saith also afterwards, chap. xi., "If by grace then it is no more of works: otherwise, grace is no more grace." (Rom. xi. 6). He saith the same also, "Now to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. " (Rom. iv. 4). Wherefore, my Paul stands an invincible destroyer of "Free-will," and" lays prostrate two armies by one word. For if we be justified "without works," all works are condemned, whether they be very little, or very great. He excepts none, but thunders alike against all.

**Sect. CL.**—here you may see the yawning in-considerateness of all our friends, and what it profits a man to rely upon the ancient fathers, who have been approved through the series of so many ages. Were they not also all alike blind to, nay rather, did they not disregard, the most clear and most manifest words of Paul ? Pray what is there that can be spoken clearly and plainly in defence of grace, against "Free-will, " if the argument of Paul be not clear and plain ? He proceeds with a glow of argument, and exalts grace against works; and that, in words the most clear and most plain; saying, that we are "justified freely," and that grace is no more grace, if it be sought by works. Thus most manifestly excluding all works in the matter of justification, to the intent that, he might establish grace only and free justification. And yet we, in all this light, still seek after darkness; and when we cannot ascribe unto ourselves great things, and all things, we endeavour to ascribe unto ourselves a something 'in degree,' 'a very little,' merely that, we might maintain our tenet,

that justification through the grace of God is not "free" and "without works. " — As though he who declares, that greater things, and all things profit us nothing unto justification, does not much more deny that things 'in degree,' and things 'very little,' profit us nothing also : particularly when he has settled the point, that we are justified by grace alone without any works whatever, and therefore, without the law itself, in which are comprehended all works, great and little, works of 'congruity' and works of 'worthiness. '

Go now then and boast of the authorities of the ancients, and depend on what they say; all of whom you see, to a man, disregarded Paul, that most plain and most clear teacher; and, as it were, purposely shunned this morning star, yea, this sun rather, because, being wrapped up in their own carnal reason, they thought it absurd that no place should be left to merit.

**Sect. CLI.** —let us now bring forward that example of Abraham which Paul afterwards adduces. "If (saith he) Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory, but not before God. For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." (Rom. iv. 2-3.).

Mark here again, I pray you, the distinction of Paul, where he is shewing the two-fold righteousness of Abraham.—The one, is of works; that is, moral and civil; but he denies that he was justified by this before God, even though he were justified by it before men. Moreover, by that righteousness, "he hath whereof to glory " before men, but is all the while himself without the glory of God. Nor can any one here say, that they are the works of the law, or of ceremonies, which are here condemned; seeing that, Abraham existed so many years before the law. Paul plainly speaks of the

works of Abraham, and those his best works. For it would be ridiculous to dispute, whether or not any one were justified by evil works.

If therefore, Abraham be righteous by no works whatever, and if both he himself and all his works be left under sin, unless he be clothed with another righteousness, even with the righteousness of faith, it is quite manifest, that no man can do any thing by works towards his becoming righteous: and moreover, that no works, no devoted efforts, no endeavours of "Free-will," avail any thing in the sight of God, but are all judged to be ungodly, unrighteous, and evil. For if the man himself be not righteous, neither will his works or endeavours be righteous: and if they be not righteous, they are damnable, and merit wrath.

The other righteousness is that of faith; which I consists, not in any works, but in the favour and imputation of God through grace. And mark how Paul dwells upon the word "imputed;" how he urges it, repeats it, and inculcates it.—"Now (saith he) to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth in Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness," Rom. iv. 4-5), according to the purpose of the grace of God. Then he adduces David, saying the same thing concerning the imputation through grace. "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin," &c. (Rom. iv. 6-8).

In this chapter, he repeats the word "impute " above ten times. In a word, he distinctively sets forth "him that worketh" and "him that worketh not," leaving no medium between them. He declares, that righteousness is not imputed "to him that worketh," but asserts that righteousness is imputed "to him that worketh not," if he believe! Here is no way by which "Free-will," with its devoted efforts and



endeavours, can escape or get off: it must be numbered with "him that worketh," or with "him that worketh not." If it be numbered with "him that worketh," you hear that righteousness is not imputed unto it; if it be numbered with "him that worketh not, but believeth" in God, righteousness is imputed unto it. And then, it will not be the power of "Free-will," but the new creature by faith. But if righteousness be not imputed unto it, being "him that worketh," then, it becomes manifest, that all its works are nothing but sins, evils, and impieties before God.

Nor can any Sophist here snarl, and say, that, although man be evil, yet his work may not be evil. For Paul speaks not of the man simply, but of "him that worketh," to the very intent that, he might declare in the plainest words, that the works and devoted efforts themselves of man are condemned, whatever they may be, by what name soever they may be called, or under what form soever they may be done. He here also speaks of good works; because, the points of his argument are, justification, and merits. And when he speaks of "him that worketh," he speaks of all workers and of all their works; but more especially of their good and meritorious works. Otherwise, his distinction between "him that worketh," and "him that worketh not," will amount to nothing.

PAGES 390-391.

## CONCLUSION

**Sect. CLXVII.**—I shall here draw this book to a conclusion: prepared if it were necessary to pursue this Discussion still farther Though I consider that I have now abundantly satisfied the godly man, who wishes to believe the truth without making resistance. For

if we believe it to be true, that God fore-knows and fore-ordains all things; that He can be neither deceived nor hindered in His Prescience and Predestination; and that nothing can take place but according to His Will, (which reason herself is compelled to confess;) then, even according to the testimony of reason herself, there can be no “Free-will”—in man,—in angel,—or in any creature!

Hence:—If we believe that Satan is the prince of this world, ever ensnaring and fighting against the kingdom of Christ with all his powers; and that he does not let go his captives without being forced by the Divine Power of the Spirit; it is manifest, that there can be no such thing as—“Free-will!”

Again:—If we believe that original sin has so destroyed us, that even in the godly who are led by the Spirit, it causes the utmost molestation by striving against that which is good; it is manifest, that there can be nothing left in a man devoid of the Spirit, which can turn itself towards good, but which must turn towards evil!

Again:—If the Jews, who followed after righteousness with all their powers, ran rather into unrighteousness, while the Gentiles who followed after unrighteousness attained unto a free righteousness which they never hoped for; it is equally manifest, from their very works, and from experience, that man, without grace, can do nothing but will evil!

Finally:—If we believe that Christ redeemed men by His blood, we are compelled to confess, that the whole man was lost: otherwise, we shall make Christ superfluous, or a Redeemer of the grossest part of man only,—which is blasphemy and sacrilege!

# **The Person and Work of Christ**

## **The Person of Christ**

### **Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield**

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It is the purpose of this article to make as clear as possible the conception of the Person of Christ, in the technical sense of that term, which lies on - or, if we prefer to say so, beneath - the pages of the New Testament. Were it its purpose to trace out the process by which this great mystery has been revealed to men, a beginning would need to be taken from the intimations as to the nature of the person of the Messiah in Old Testament prophecy, and an attempt would require to be made to discriminate the exact contribution of each organ of revelation to our knowledge. And were there added to this a desire to ascertain the progress of the apprehension of this mystery by men, there would be demanded a further inquiry into the exact degree of understanding which was brought to the truth revealed at each stage of its revelation. The magnitudes with which such investigations deal, however, are very minute; and the profit to be derived from them is not, in a case like the present, very great. It is, of course, of importance to know how the person of the Messiah

was represented in the predictions of the Old Testament; and it is a matter at least of interest to note, for example, the difficulty experienced by Our Lord's immediate disciples in comprehending all that was involved in His manifestation. But, after all, the constitution of Our Lord's person is a matter of revelation, not of human thought; and it is pre-eminently a revelation of the New Testament, not of the Old Testament. And the New Testament is all the product of a single movement, at a single stage of its development, and therefore presents in its fundamental teaching a common character. The whole of the New Testament was written within the limits of about half a century; or, if we except the writings of John, within the narrow bounds of a couple of decades; and the entire body of writings which enter into it are so much of a piece that it may be plausibly represented that they all bear the stamp of a single mind. In its fundamental teaching, the New Testament lends itself, therefore, more readily to what is called dogmatic than to what is called genetic treatment; and we shall penetrate most surely into its essential meaning if we take our start from its clearest and fullest statements, and permit their light to be thrown upon its more incidental allusions. This is peculiarly the case with such a matter as the person of Christ, which is dealt with chiefly incidentally, as a thing already understood by all, and needing only to be alluded to rather than formally expounded. That we may interpret these allusions aright, it is requisite that we should recover from the first the common conception which underlies them all.

## **I. THE TEACHING OF PAUL**

We begin, then, with the most didactic of the New Testament writers, the apostle Paul, and with one of the passages in which he most fully intimates his conception of the person of his Lord, Phil. ii. 5-9. Even here, however, Paul is not formally expounding the doctrine of the

Person of Christ; he is only alluding to certain facts concerning His person and action perfectly well known to his readers, in order that he may give point to an adduction of Christ's example. He is exhorting his readers to unselfishness, such unselfishness as esteems others better than ourselves, and looks not only on our own things but also on those of others. Precisely this unselfishness, he declares, was exemplified by Our Lord. He did not look upon His own things but the things of others; that is to say, He did not stand upon His rights, but was willing to forego all that He might justly have claimed for Himself for the good of others. For, says Paul, though, as we all know, in His intrinsic nature He was nothing other than God, yet He did not, as we all know right well, look greedily on His condition of equality with God, but made no account of Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and, being found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself, becoming obedient up to death itself, and that, the death of the cross. The statement is thrown into historical form; it tells the story of Christ's life on earth. But it presents His life on earth as a life in all its elements alien to His intrinsic nature, and assumed only in the performance of an unselfish purpose. On earth He lived as a man, and subjected Himself to the common lot of men. But He was not by nature a man, nor was He in His own nature subject to the fortunes of human life. By nature He was God; and He would have naturally lived as became God - 'on an equality with God.' He became man by a voluntary act, 'taking no account of Himself,' and, having become man, He voluntarily lived out His human life under the conditions which the fulfilment of His unselfish purpose imposed on Him.

The terms in which these great affirmations are made deserve the most careful attention. The language in which Our Lord's intrinsic Deity is expressed, for example, is probably as strong as any that could be devised. Paul does not say simply, "He was God." He says,

"He was in the form of God," employing a turn of speech which throws emphasis upon Our Lord's possession of the specific quality of God. "Form" is a term which expresses the sum of those characterizing qualities which make a thing the precise thing that it is. Thus, the "form" of a sword (in this case mostly matters of external configuration) is all that makes a given piece of metal specifically a sword, rather than, say, a spade. And "the form of God" is the sum of the characteristics which make the being we call "God," specifically God, rather than some other being - an angel, say, or a man. When Our Lord is said to be in "the form of God," therefore, He is declared, in the most express manner possible, to be all that God is, to possess the whole fulness of attributes which make God God. Paul chooses this manner of expressing himself here instinctively, because, in adducing Our Lord as our example of self-abnegation, his mind is naturally resting, not on the bare fact that He is God, but on the richness and fulness of His being as God. He was all this, yet He did not look on His own things but on those of others.

It should be carefully observed also that in making this great affirmation concerning Our Lord, Paul does not throw it distinctively into the past, as if he were describing a mode of being formerly Our Lord's, indeed, but no longer His because of the action by which He became our example of unselfishness. Our Lord, he says, "being," "existing," "subsisting" "in the form of God" - as it is variously rendered. The rendering proposed by the Revised Version margin, "being originally," while right in substance, is somewhat misleading. The verb employed means "strictly 'to be beforehand,' 'to be already' so and so" (Blass, "Grammar of NT Greek," English translation, 244), "to be there and ready," and intimates the existing circumstances, disposition of mind, or, as here, mode of subsistence in which the action to be described takes place. It contains no intimation, however, of the cessation of these circumstances or disposition, or

mode of subsistence; and that, the less in a case like the present, where it is cast in a tense (the imperfect) which in no way suggests that the mode of subsistence intimated came to an end in the action described by the succeeding verb (cf. the parallels, Lk. xvi. 14, 23; xxiii. 50; Acts ii. 30; iii. 2; II Cor. viii. 17; xii. 16; Gal. i. 14). Paul is not telling us here, then, what Our Lord was once, but rather what He already was, or, better, what in His intrinsic nature He is; he is not describing a past mode of existence of Our Lord, before the action he is adducing as an example took place - although the mode of existence he describes was Our Lord's mode of existence before this action - so much as painting in the background upon which the action adduced may be thrown up into prominence. He is telling us who and what He is who did these things for us, that we may appreciate how great the things He did for us are.

And here it is important to observe that the whole of the action adduced is thrown up thus against this background - not only its negative description to the effect that Our Lord (although all that God is) did not look greedily on His (consequent) being on an equality with God; but its positive description as well, introduced by the "but . . . ." and that in both of its elements, not merely that to the effect (ver. 7) that 'he took no account of himself' (rendered not badly by the Authorized Version, He "made himself of no reputation"; but quite misleading by the Revised Version, He "emptied himself"), but equally that to the effect (ver. 8) that "he humbled himself." It is the whole of what Our Lord is described as doing in vs. 6-8, that He is described as doing despite His "subsistence in the form of God." So far is Paul from intimating, therefore, that Our Lord laid aside His Deity in entering upon His life on earth, that he rather asserts that He retained His Deity throughout His life on earth, and in the whole course of His humiliation, up to death itself, was consciously ever exercising self-abnegation, living a life which did not by nature

belong to Him, which stood in fact in direct contradiction to the life which was naturally His. It is this underlying implication which determines the whole choice of the language in which Our Lord's earthly life is described. It is because it is kept in mind that He still was "in the form of God," that is, that He still had in possession all that body of characterizing qualities by which God is made God, for example, that He is said to have been made, not man, but "in the likeness of man," to have been found, not man, but "in fashion as a man"; and that the wonder of His servanthood and obedience, the mark of servanthood, is thought of as so great. Though He was truly man, He was much more than man; and Paul would not have his readers imagine that He had become merely man. In other words, Paul does not teach that Our Lord was once God but had become instead man; he teaches that though He was God, He had become also man.

An impression that Paul means to imply, that in entering upon His earthly life Our Lord had laid aside His Deity, may be created by a very prevalent misinterpretation of the central clause of his statement - a misinterpretation unfortunately given currency by the rendering of the English Revised Version: "counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself," varied without improvement in the American Revised Version to: "counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself." The former (negative) member of this clause means just: He did not look greedily upon His being on an equality with God; did not "set supreme store" by it (see Lightfoot on the clause). The latter (positive) member of it, however, cannot mean in antithesis to this, that He therefore "emptied himself," divested Himself of this, His being on an equality with God, much less that He "emptied himself," divested Himself of His Deity ("form of God") itself, of which His being on an equality with God is the manifested consequence. The



verb here rendered "emptied" is in constant use in a metaphorical sense (so only in the New Testament: Rom. iv. 14; I Cor. i. 17; ix. 15; II Cor. ix. 3) and cannot here be taken literally. This is already apparent from the definition of the manner in which the "emptying" is said to have been accomplished, supplied by the modal clause which is at once attached: by "taking the form of a servant." You cannot "empty" by "taking" - adding. It is equally apparent, however, from the strength of the emphasis which, by its position, is thrown upon the "himself." We may speak of Our Lord as "emptying Himself" of something else, but scarcely, with this strength of emphasis, of His "emptying Himself" of something else. This emphatic "Himself," interposed between the preceding clause and the verb rendered "emptied," builds a barrier over which we cannot climb backward in search of that of which Our Lord emptied Himself. The whole thought is necessarily contained in the two words, "emptied Himself," in which the word "emptied" must therefore be taken in a sense analogous to that which it bears in the other passages in the New Testament where it occurs. Paul, in a word, says here nothing more than that Our Lord, who did not look with greedy eyes upon His estate of equality with God, emptied Himself, if the language may be pardoned, of Himself; that is to say, in precise accordance with the exhortation for the enhancement of which His example is adduced, that He did not look on His own things. 'He made no account of Himself,' we may fairly paraphrase the clause; and thus all question of what He emptied Himself of falls away. What Our Lord actually did, according to Paul, is expressed in the following clauses; those now before us express more the moral character of His act. He took "the form of a servant," and so was "made in the likeness of men." But His doing this showed that He did not set overweening store by His state of equality with God, and did not account Himself the sufficient object of all the efforts. He was not

self-regarding: He had regard for others. Thus He becomes our supreme example of self-abnegating conduct.

The language in which the act by which Our Lord showed that He was self-abnegating is described, requires to be taken in its complete meaning. He took "the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men," says Paul. The term "form" here, of course, bears the same full meaning as in the preceding instance of its occurrence in the phrase "the form of God." It imparts the specific quality, the whole body of characteristics, by which a servant is made what we know as a servant. Our Lord assumed, then, according to Paul, not the mere state or condition or outward appearance of a servant, but the reality; He became an actual "servant" in the world. The act by which He did this is described as a "taking," or, as it has become customary from this description of it to phrase it, as an "assumption." What is meant is that Our Lord took up into His personality a human nature; and therefore it is immediately explained that He took the form of a servant by "being made in the likeness of men." That the apostle does not say, shortly, that He assumed a human nature, is due to the engagement of his mind with the contrast which he wishes to bring out forcibly for the enhancement of his appeal to Our Lord's example, between what Our Lord is by nature and what He was willing to become, not looking on His own things but also on the things of others. This contrast is, no doubt, embodied in the simple opposition of God and man; it is much more pungently expressed in the qualificative terms, "form of God" and "form of a servant." The Lord of the world became a servant in the world; He whose right it was to rule took obedience as His life-characteristic. Naturally therefore Paul employs here a word of quality rather than a word of mere nature; and then defines his meaning in this word of quality by a further epexegetical clause. This further clause - "being made in the likeness of men" - does not throw doubt on the reality of the human

nature that was assumed, in contradiction to the emphasis on its reality in the phrase "the form of a servant." It, along with the succeeding clause - "and being found in fashion as a man" - owes its peculiar form, as has already been pointed out, to the vividness of the apostle's consciousness, that he is speaking of one who, though really man, possessing all that makes a man a man, is yet, at the same time, infinitely more than a man, no less than God Himself, in possession of all that makes God God. Christ Jesus is in his view, therefore (as in the view of his readers, for he is not instructing his readers here as to the nature of Christ's person, but reminding them of certain elements in it for the purposes of his exhortation), both God and man, God who has "assumed" man into personal union with Himself, and has in this His assumed manhood lived out a human life on earth.

The elements of Paul's conception of the person of Christ are brought before us in this suggestive passage with unwonted fulness. But they all receive endless illustration from his occasional allusions to them, one or another, throughout his Epistles. The leading motive of this passage, for example, reappears quite perfectly in II Cor. viii. 9, where we are exhorted to imitate the graciousness of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who became for our sakes (emphatic) poor - He who was (again an imperfect participle, and therefore without suggestion of the cessation of the condition described) rich - that we might by His (very emphatic) poverty be made rich. Here the change in Our Lord's condition at a point of time perfectly understood between the writer and his readers is adverted to and assigned to its motive, but no further definition is given of the nature of either condition referred to. We are brought closer to the precise nature of the act by which the change was wrought by such a passage as Gal. iv. 4. We read that "When the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them that were

under the law." The whole transaction is referred to the Father in fulfilment of His eternal plan of redemption, and it is described specifically as an incarnation: the Son of God is born of a woman - He who is in His own nature the Son of God, abiding with God, is sent forth from God in such a manner as to be born a human being, subject to law. The primary implications are that this was not the beginning of His being; but that before this He was neither a man nor subject to law. But there is no suggestion that on becoming man and subject to law, He ceased to be the Son of God or lost anything intimated by that high designation. The uniqueness of His relation to God as His Son is emphasized in a kindred passage (Rom. viii. 3) by the heightening of the designation to that of God's "own Son," and His distinction from other men is intimated in the same passage by the declaration that God sent Him, not in sinful flesh, but only "in the likeness of sinful flesh." The reality of Our Lord's flesh is not thrown into doubt by this turn of speech, but His freedom from the sin which is associated with flesh as it exists in lost humanity is asserted (cf. II Cor. v. 21). Though true man, therefore (I Cor. xv. 21; Rom. v. 21; Acts xvii. 31), He is not without differences from other men; and these differences do not concern merely the condition (as sinful) in which men presently find themselves; but also their very origin: they are from below, He from above - 'the first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven' (I Cor. xv. 47). This is His peculiarity: He was born of a woman like other men; yet He descended from Heaven (cf. Eph. iv. 9; Jn. iii. 13). It is not meant, of course, that already in heaven He was a man; what is meant is that even though man He derives His origin in an exceptional sense from heaven. Paul describes what He was in heaven (but not alone in heaven) - that is to say before He was sent in the likeness of sinful flesh (though not alone before this) - in the great terms of "God's Son," "God's own Son," "the form of God," or yet again in words whose import cannot be mistaken, 'God over all' (Rom. ix. 5). In the

last cited passage, together with its parallel earlier in the same epistle (Rom. i. 3), the two sides or elements of Our Lord's person are brought into collocation after a fashion that can leave no doubt of Paul's conception of His twofold nature. In the earlier of these passages he tells us that Jesus Christ was born, indeed, of the seed of David according to the flesh, that is, so far as the human side of His being is concerned, but was powerfully marked out as the Son of God according to the Spirit of Holiness, that is, with respect to His higher nature, by the resurrection of the dead, which in a true sense began in His own rising from the dead. In the later of them, he tells us that Christ sprang indeed, as concerns the flesh, that is on the human side of His being, from Israel, but that, despite this earthly origin of His human nature, He yet is and abides (present participle) nothing less than the Supreme God, "God over all [emphatic], blessed forever." Thus Paul teaches us that by His coming forth from God to be born of woman, Our Lord, assuming a human nature to Himself, has, while remaining the Supreme God, become also true and perfect man. Accordingly, in a context in which the resources of language are strained to the utmost to make the exaltation of Our Lord's being clear - in which He is described as the image of the invisible God, whose being antedates all that is created, in whom, through whom and to whom all things have been created, and in whom they all subsist - we are told not only that (naturally) in Him all the fulness dwells (Col. i. 19), but, with complete explication, that 'all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily' (Col. ii. 9) ; that is to say, the very Deity of God, that which makes God God, in all its completeness, has its permanent home in Our Lord, and that in a "bodily fashion," that is, it is in Him clothed with a body. He who looks upon Jesus Christ sees, no doubt, a body and a man; but as he sees the man clothed with the body, so he sees God Himself, in all the fulness of His Deity, clothed with the humanity. Jesus Christ is therefore God "manifested in the flesh" (I Tim. iii. 16), and His

appearance on earth is an "epiphany" (II Tim. i. 10), which is the technical term for manifestations on earth of a God. Though truly man, He is nevertheless also our "great God" (Tit. ii. 13).

## **II. TEACHING OF THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS**

The conception of the person of Christ which underlies and finds expression in the Epistle to the Hebrews is indistinguishable from that which governs all the allusions to Our Lord in the Epistles of Paul. To the author of this epistle Our Lord is above all else the Son of God in the most eminent sense of that word; and it is the Divine dignity and majesty belonging to Him from His very nature which forms the fundamental feature of the image of Christ which stands before his mind. And yet it is this author who, perhaps above all others of the New Testament writers, emphasizes the truth of the humanity of Christ, and dwells with most particularity upon the elements of His human nature and experience.

The great Christological passage which fills chap. ii of the Epistle to the Hebrews rivals in its richness and fulness of detail, and its breadth of implication, that of Phil. ii. It is thrown up against the background of the remarkable exposition of the Divine dignity of the Son which occupies chap. i (notice the "therefore" of ii. 1). There the Son had been declared to be "the effulgence of his (God's) glory, and the very image of his substance, through whom the universe has been created and by the word of whose power all things are held in being; and His exaltation above the angels, by means of whom the Old Covenant had been inaugurated, is measured by the difference between the designations "ministering spirits" proper to the one, and the Son of God, nay, God itself (i. 8, 9), proper to the other. The purpose of the succeeding statement is to enhance in the thought of the Jewish readers of the epistle the value of the salvation wrought

by this Divine Saviour, by removing from their minds the offence they were in danger of taking at His lowly life and shameful death on earth. This earthly humiliation finds its abundant justification, we are told, in the greatness of the end which it sought and attained. By it Our Lord has, with His strong feet, broken out a pathway along which, in Him, sinful man may at length climb up to the high destiny which was promised him when it was declared he should have dominion over all creation. Jesus Christ stooped only to conquer, and He stooped to conquer not for Himself (for He was in His own person no less than God), but for us.

The language in which the humiliation of the Son of God is in the first instance described is derived from the context. The establishment of His Divine majesty in chap. i had taken the form of an exposition of His infinite exaltation above the angels, the highest of all creatures. His humiliation is described here therefore as being "made a little lower than the angels" (ii. 9). What is meant is simply that He became man; the phraseology is derived from Ps. viii., Authorized Version, from which had just been cited the declaration that God has made man (despite his insignificance) "but a little lower than the angels," thus crowning him with glory and honor. The adoption of the language of the psalm to describe Our Lord's humiliation has the secondary effect, accordingly, of greatly enlarging the reader's sense of the immensity of the humiliation of the Son of God in becoming man: He descended an infinite distance to reach man's highest conceivable exaltation. As, however, the primary purpose of the adoption of the language is merely to declare that the Son of God became man, so it is shortly afterward explained (ii. 14) as an entering into participation in the blood and flesh which are common to men: "Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same." The voluntariness, the reality, the completeness of the assumption of

humanity by the Son of God, are all here emphasized. The proximate end of Our Lord's assumption of humanity is declared to be that He might die; He was "made a little lower than the angels . . . because of the suffering of death" (ii. 9); He took part in blood and flesh in order "that through death . . ." (ii. 14). The Son of God as such could not die; to Him belongs by nature an "indissoluble life" (vii. 16 m.). If he was to die, therefore, He must take to Himself another nature to which the experience of death were not impossible (ii. 17). Of course it is not meant that death was desired by Him for its own sake. The purpose of our passage is to save its Jewish readers from the offence of the death of Christ. What they are bidden to observe is, therefore, Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels because of the suffering of death, 'crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God the bitterness of death which he tasted might redound to the benefit of every man' (ii. 9), and the argument is immediately pressed home that it was eminently suitable for God Almighty, in bringing many sons into glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect (as a Saviour) by means of suffering. The meaning is that it was only through suffering that these men, being sinners, could be brought into glory. And therefore in the plainer statement of verse 14 we read that Our Lord took part in flesh and blood in order "that through death he might bring to nought him that has the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage"; and in the still plainer statement of verse 17 that the ultimate object of His assimilation to men was that He might "make propitiation for the sins of the people." It is for the salvation of sinners that Our Lord has come into the world; but, as that salvation can be wrought only by suffering and death, the proximate end of His assumption of humanity remains that He might die; whatever is more than this gathers around this.



The completeness of Our Lord's assumption of humanity and of His identification of Himself with it receives strong emphasis in this passage. He took part in the flesh and blood which is the common heritage of men, after the same fashion that other men participate in it (ii. 14); and, having thus become a man among men, He shared with other men the ordinary circumstances and fortunes of life, "in all things" (ii. 17). The stress is laid on trials, sufferings, death; but this is due to the actual course in which His life ran - and that it might run in which He became man - and is not exclusive of other human experiences. What is intended is that He became truly a man, and lived a truly human life, subject to all the experiences natural to a man in the particular circumstances in which He lived.

It is, not implied, however, that during this human life - "the days of his flesh" (v. 7) - He had ceased to be God, or to have at His disposal the attributes which belonged to Him as God. That is already excluded by the representations of chap. i. The glory of this dispensation consists precisely in the bringing of its revelations directly by the Divine Son rather than by mere prophets (i. 1), and it was as the effulgence of God's glory and the express image of His substance, upholding the universe by the word of His power, that this Son made purification of sins (i. 3). Indeed, we are expressly told that even in the days of the flesh, He continued still a Son (v. 8), and that it was precisely in this that the wonder lay: that though He was and remained (imperfect participle) a Son, He yet learned the obedience He had set Himself to (cf. Phil. ii. 8) by the things which He suffered. Similarly, we are told not only that, though an Israelite of the tribe of Judah, He possessed "the power of an indissoluble life" (vii. 16 m.), but, describing that higher nature which gave Him this power as an "eternal Spirit" (cf. "spirit of holiness," Rom. i. 4), that it was through this eternal Spirit that He could offer Himself without blemish unto God, a real and sufficing sacrifice, in contrast with the

shadows of the Old Covenant (ix. 14). Though a man, therefore, and truly man, sprung out of Judah (vii. 14), touched with the feeling of human infirmities (iv. 15), and tempted like as we are, He was not altogether like other men. For one thing, He was "without sin" (iv. 15; vii, 26), and, by this characteristic, He was, in every sense of the words, separated from sinners. Despite the completeness of His identification with men, He remained, therefore, even in the days of His flesh different from them and above them.

### **III. TEACHING OF OTHER EPISTLES**

It is only as we carry this conception of the person of Our Lord with us - the conception of Him as at once our Supreme Lord, to whom our adoration is due, and our fellow in the experiences of a human life - that unity is induced in the multiform allusions to Him throughout, whether the Epistles of Paul or the Epistle to the Hebrews, or, indeed, the other epistolary literature of the New Testament. For in this matter there is no difference between those and these. There are no doubt a few passages in these other letters in which a plurality of the elements of the person of Christ are brought together and given detailed mention. In I Pet. iii. 18, for instance, the two constitutive elements of His person are spoken of in the contrast, familiar from Paul, of the "flesh" and the "spirit." But ordinarily we meet only with references to this or that element separately. Everywhere Our Lord is spoken of as having lived out His life as a man; but everywhere also He is spoken of with the supreme reverence which is due to God alone, and the very name of God is not withheld from Him. In I Pet. i. 11 His preëxistence is taken for granted; in Jas. ii. 1 He is identified with the Shekinah, the manifested Jehovah - 'our Lord Jesus Christ, the Glory'; in Jude verse 4 He is "our only Master [Despot] and Lord"; over and over again He is the Divine Lord who is Jehovah (e. g., I Pet. ii. 3, 13; II

Pet. iii. 2, 18); in II Pet. i. 1, He is roundly called "our God and Saviour." There is nowhere formal inculcation of the entire doctrine of the person of Christ. But everywhere its elements, now one and now another, are presupposed as the common property of writer and readers. It is only in the Epistles of John that this easy and unstudied presupposition of them gives way to pointed insistence upon them.

#### **IV. TEACHING OF JOHN**

In the circumstances in which he wrote, John found it necessary to insist upon the elements of the person of Our Lord - His true Deity, His true humanity and the unity of His person - in a manner which is more didactic in form than anything we find in the other writings of the New Testament. The great depository of his teaching on the subject is, of course, the prologue to his Gospel. But it is not merely in this prologue, nor in the Gospel to which it forms a fitting introduction, that these didactic statements are found. The full emphasis of John's witness to the twofold nature of the Lord is brought out, indeed, only by combining what he says in the Gospel and in the Epistles. "In the Gospel," remarks Westcott (on Jn. xx. 31), "the evangelist shows step by step that the historic Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God (opposed to mere 'flesh'); in the Epistle he re-affirms that the Christ, the Son of God, was true man (opposed to mere 'spirit'; I Jn. iv. 2)." What John is concerned to show throughout is that it was "the true God" (I Jn. v. 20) who was "made flesh" (Jn. i. 14); and that this 'only God' (Jn. i. 18, Revised Version, margin "God only begotten") has truly come "in . . . flesh" (I Jn. iv. 2). In all the universe there is no other being of whom it can be said that He is God come in flesh (cf. II Jn. ver. 7, He that "cometh in the flesh," whose characteristic this is). And of all the marvels which have ever occurred in the marvelous history of the universe, this is

the greatest - that 'what was from the beginning' (I Jn. ii. 13, 14) has been heard and gazed upon, seen and handled by men (I Jn. i. 1).

From the point of view from which we now approach it, the prologue to the Gospel of John may be said to fall into three parts. In the first of these, the nature of the Being who became incarnate in the person we know as Jesus Christ is described; in the second, the general nature of the act we call the incarnation; and in the third, the nature of the incarnated person.

John here calls the person who became incarnate by a name peculiar to himself in the New Testament - the "Logos" or "Word." According to the predicates which he here applies to Him, he can mean by the "Word" nothing else but God Himself, "considered in His creative, operative, self-revealing, and communicating character," the sum total of what is Divine (C. F. Schmid). In three crisp sentences he declares at the outset His eternal subsistence, His eternal intercommunion with God, His eternal identity with God: 'In the beginning the Word was; and the Word was with God; and the Word was God' (Jn. i. 1). "In the beginning," at that point of time when things first began to be (Gen. i. 1), the Word already "was." He antedates the beginning of all things. And He not merely antedates them, but it is immediately added that He is Himself the creator of all that is: 'All things were made by him, and apart from him was not made one thing that hath been made' (i. 3). Thus He is taken out of the category of creatures altogether. Accordingly, what is said of Him is not that He was the first of existences to come into being - that 'in the beginning He already had come into being' - but that 'in the beginning, when things began to come into being, He already was.' It is express eternity of being that is asserted: "the imperfect tense of the original suggests in this relation, as far as human language can do so, the notion of absolute, supra-temporal existence" (Westcott).

This, His eternal subsistence, was not, however, in isolation: "And the Word was with God." The language is pregnant. It is not merely coexistence with God that is asserted, as of two beings standing side by side, united in a local relation, or even in a common conception. What is suggested is an active relation of intercourse. The distinct personality of the Word is therefore not obscurely intimated. From all eternity the Word has been with God as a fellow: He who in the very beginning already "was," "was" also in communion with God. Though He was thus in some sense a second along with God, He was nevertheless not a separate being from God: "And the Word was" - still the eternal "was" - "God." In some sense distinguishable from God, He was in an equally true sense identical with God. There is but one eternal God; this eternal God, the Word is; in whatever sense we may distinguish Him from the God whom He is "with," He is yet not another than this God, but Himself is this God. The predicate "God" occupies the position of emphasis in this great declaration, and is so placed in the sentence as to be thrown up in sharp contrast with the phrase "with God," as if to prevent inadequate inferences as to the nature of the Word being drawn even momentarily from that phrase. John would have us realize that what the Word was in eternity was not merely God's coeternal fellow, but the eternal God's self.

Now, John tells us that it was this Word, eternal in His subsistence, God's eternal fellow, the eternal God's self, that, as "come in the flesh," was Jesus Christ (I Jn. iv. 2). "And the Word became flesh" (Jn. i. 14), he says. The terms he employs here are not terms of substance, but of personality. The meaning is not that the substance of God was transmuted into that substance which we call "flesh." "The Word" is a personal name of the eternal God; "flesh" is an appropriate designation of humanity in its entirety, with the implications of dependence and weakness. The meaning, then, is simply that He who had just been described as the eternal God

became, by a voluntary act in time, a man. The exact nature of the act by which He "became" man lies outside the statement; it was matter of common knowledge between the writer and the reader. The language employed intimates merely that it was a definite act, and that it involved a change in the life-history of the eternal God, here designated "the Word." The whole emphasis falls on the nature of this change in His life-history. He became flesh. That is to say, He entered upon a mode of existence in which the experiences that belong to human beings would also be His. The dependence, the weakness, which constitute the very idea of flesh, in contrast with God, would now enter into His personal experience. And it is precisely because these are the connotations of the term "flesh" that John chooses that term here, instead of the more simply denotative term "man." What he means is merely that the eternal God became man. But he elects to say this in the language which throws best up to view what it is to become man. The contrast between the Word as the eternal God and the human nature which He assumed as flesh, is the hinge of the statement. Had the evangelist said (as he does in I Jn. iv. 2) that the Word 'came in flesh,' it would have been the continuity through the change which would have been most emphasized. When he says rather that the Word became flesh, while the continuity of the personal subject is, of course, intimated, it is the reality and the completeness of the humanity assumed which is made most prominent.

That in becoming flesh the Word did not cease to be what He was before entering upon this new sphere of experiences, the evangelist does not leave, however, to mere suggestion. The glory of the Word was so far from quenched, in his view, by His becoming flesh, that he gives us at once to understand that it was rather as "trailing clouds of glory" that He came. "And the Word became flesh," he says, and immediately adds: "and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory,

glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth" (i. 14). The language is colored by reminiscences from the Tabernacle, in which the Glory of God, the Shekinah, dwelt. The flesh of Our Lord became, on its assumption by the Word, the Temple of God on earth (cf. Jn. ii. 19), and the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord. John tells us expressly that this glory was visible, that it was precisely what was appropriate to the Son of God as such. "And we beheld his glory," he says; not divined it, or inferred it, but perceived it. It was open to sight, and the actual object of observation. Jesus Christ was obviously more than man; He was obviously God. His actually observed glory, John tells us further, was a "glory as of the only begotten from the Father." It was unique; nothing like it was ever seen in another. And its uniqueness consisted precisely in its consonance with what the unique Son of God, sent forth from the Father, would naturally have; men recognized and could not but recognize in Jesus Christ the unique Son of God. When this unique Son of God is further described as "full of grace and truth," the elements of His manifested glory are not to be supposed to be exhausted by this description (cf. ii. 11). Certain items of it only are singled out for particular mention. The visible glory of the incarnated Word was such a glory as the unique Son of God, sent forth from the Father, who was full of grace and truth, would naturally manifest.

That nothing should be lacking to the declaration of the continuity of all that belongs to the Word as such into this new sphere of existence, and its full manifestation through the veil of His flesh, John adds at the close of his exposition the remarkable sentence: 'As for God, no one has even yet seen him; God only begotten, who is in the bosom of the Father - He hath declared him' (i. 18 m.). It is the incarnate Word which is here called 'only begotten God.' The absence of the article with this designation is doubtless due to its parallelism

with the word "God" which stands at the head of the corresponding clause. The effect of its absence is to throw up into emphasis the quality rather than the mere individuality of the person so designated. The adjective "only begotten" conveys the idea, not of derivation and subordination, but of uniqueness and consubstantiality: Jesus is all that God is, and He alone is this. Of this 'only begotten God' it is now declared that He "is" - not "was," the state is not one which has been left behind at the incarnation, but one which continues uninterrupted and unmodified - "into" - not merely "in" - "the bosom of the Father" - that is to say, He continues in the most intimate and complete communion with the Father. Though now incarnate, He is still "with God" in the full sense of the external relation intimated in i. 1. This being true, He has much more than seen God, and is fully able to "interpret" God to men. Though no one has ever yet seen God, yet he who has seen Jesus Christ, "God only begotten," has seen the Father (cf. xiv. 9; xii. 45). In this remarkable sentence there is asserted in the most direct manner the full Deity of the incarnate Word, and the continuity of His life as such in His incarnate life; thus He is fitted to be the absolute revelation of God to man.

This condensed statement of the whole doctrine of the incarnation is only the prologue to a historical treatise. The historical treatise which it introduces, naturally, is written from the point of view of its prologue. Its object is to present Jesus Christ in His historical manifestation, as obviously the Son of God in flesh. "These are written," the Gospel testifies, "that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (xx. 31) ; that Jesus who came as a man (i. 30) was thoroughly known in His human origin (vii. 27), confessed Himself man (viii. 40), and died as a man dies (xix. 5), was, nevertheless, not only the Messiah, the Sent of God, the fulfiller of all the Divine promises of redemption, but also the very Son of God, that



God only begotten, who, abiding in the bosom of the Father, is His sole adequate interpreter. From the beginning of the Gospel onward, this purpose is pursued: Jesus is pictured as ever, while truly man, yet manifesting Himself as equally truly God, until the veil which covered the eyes of His followers was wholly lifted, and He is greeted as both Lord and God (xx. 28). But though it is the prime purpose of this Gospel to exhibit the Divinity of the man Jesus, no obscuration of His manhood is involved. It is the Deity of the man Jesus which is insisted on, but the true manhood of Jesus is as prominent in the representation as in any other portion of the New Testament. Nor is any effacement of the humiliation of His earthly life involved. For the Son of man to come from heaven was a descent (iii. 13), and the mission which He came to fulfil was a mission of contest and conflict, of suffering and death. He brought His glory with Him (i. 14), but the glory that was His on earth (xvii. 22) was not all the glory which He had had with the Father before the world was, and to which, after His work was done, He should return (xvii. 5). Here too the glory of the celestial is one and the glory of the terrestrial is another. In any event, John has no difficulty in presenting the life of Our Lord on earth as the life of God in flesh, and in insisting at once on the glory that belongs to Him as God and on the humiliation which is brought to Him by the flesh. It is distinctly a duplex life which he ascribes to Christ, and he attributes to Him without embarrassment all the powers and modes of activity appropriate on the one hand to Deity and on the other to sinless (Jn. viii. 46; cf. xiv. 30; I Jn. iii. 5) human nature. In a true sense his portrait of Our Lord is a dramatization of the God-man which he presents to our contemplation in his prologue.

## **V. TEACHING OF THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS**

The same may be said of the other Gospels. They are all dramatizations of the God-man set forth in thetical exposition in the prologue to John's Gospel. The Gospel of Luke, written by a known companion of Paul, gives us in a living narrative the same Jesus who is presupposed in all Paul's allusions to Him. That of Mark, who was also a companion of Paul, as also of Peter, is, as truly as the Gospel of John itself, a presentation of facts in the life of Jesus with a view to making it plain that this was the life of no mere man, human as it was, but of the Son of God Himself. Matthew's Gospel differs from its fellows mainly in the greater richness of Jesus' own testimony to His Deity which it records. What is characteristic of all three is the inextricable interlacing in their narratives of the human and Divine traits which alike marked the life they are depicting. It is possible, by neglecting one series of their representations and attending only to the other, to sift out from them at will the portrait of either a purely Divine or a purely human Jesus. It is impossible to derive from them the portrait of any other than a Divine-human Jesus if we surrender ourselves to their guidance and take off of their pages the portrait they have endeavored to draw. As in their narratives they cursorily suggest now the fulness of His Deity and now the completeness of His humanity and everywhere the unity of His person, they present as real and as forcible a testimony to the constitution of Our Lord's person as uniting in one personal life a truly Divine and a truly human nature, as if they announced this fact in analytical statement. Only on the assumption of this conception of Our Lord's person as underlying and determining their presentation, can unity be given to their representations; while, on this supposition, all their representations fall into their places as elements in one consistent whole. Within the limits of their common presupposition, each Gospel has no doubt its own peculiarities in the distribution of its emphasis. Mark lays particular stress on the Divine power of the man Jesus, as evidence of His supernatural being; and on the irresistible

impression of a veritable Son of God, a Divine being walking the earth as a man, which He made upon all with whom He came into contact. Luke places his Gospel by the side of the Epistle to the Hebrews in the prominence it gives to the human development of the Divine being whose life on earth it is depicting and to the range of temptation to which He was subjected. Matthew's Gospel is notable chiefly for the heights of the Divine self-consciousness which it uncovers in its report of the words of Him whom it represents as nevertheless the Son of David, the Son of Abraham; heights of Divine self-consciousness which fall in nothing short of those attained in the great utterances preserved for us by John. But amid whatever variety there may exist in the aspects on which each lays his particular emphasis, it is the same Jesus Christ which all three bring before us, a Jesus Christ who is at once God and man and one individual person. If that be not recognized, the whole narrative of the Synoptic Gospels is thrown into confusion; their portrait of Christ becomes an insoluble puzzle; and the mass of details which they present of His life-experiences is transmuted into a mere set of crass contradictions.

## **VI. TEACHING OF JESUS**

1. The Johannine Jesus. - The Gospel narratives not only present us, however, with dramatizations of the God-man, according to their authors' conception of His composite person. They preserve for us also a considerable body of the utterances of Jesus Himself, and this enables us to observe the conception of His person which underlay and found expression in Our Lord's own teaching. The discourses of Our Lord which have been selected for record by John have been chosen (among other reasons) expressly for the reason that they bear witness to His essential Deity. They are accordingly peculiarly rich in material for forming a judgment of Our Lord's conception of His higher nature. This conception, it is needless to say, is precisely that

which John, taught by it, has announced in the prologue to his Gospel, and has illustrated by his Gospel itself, compacted as it is of these discourses. It will not be necessary to present the evidence for this in its fulness. It will be enough to point to a few characteristic passages, in which Our Lord's conception of His higher nature finds especially clear expression.

That He was of higher than earthly origin and nature, He repeatedly asserts. "Ye are from beneath," he says to the Jews (viii. 23), "I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world" (cf. xvii. 16). Therefore, He taught that He, the Son of Man, had "descended out of heaven" (iii. 13), where was His true abode. This carried with it, of course, an assertion of preëxistence; and this preëxistence is explicitly affirmed: "What then," He asks, "if ye should behold the Son of man ascending where he was before?" (vi. 62). It is not merely preëxistence, however, but eternal preëxistence which He claims for Himself: "And now, Father," He prays (xvii. 5), "glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (cf. ver. 24); and again, as the most impressive language possible, He declares (viii. 58 A.V.): "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am," where He claims for Himself the timeless present of eternity as His mode of existence. In the former of these two last-cited passages, the character of His preëxistent life is intimated; in it He shared the Father's glory from all eternity ("before the world was"); He stood by the Father's side as a companion in His glory. He came forth, when He descended to earth, therefore, not from heaven only, but from the very side of God (viii. 42; xvii. 8). Even this, however, does not express the whole truth; He came forth not only from the Father's side where He had shared in the Father's glory; He came forth out of the Father's very being - "I came out from the Father, and am come into the world" (xvi. 28; cf. viii. 42). "The connection described is internal and essential, and not

that of presence or external fellowship" (Westcott). This prepares us for the great assertion: "I and the Father are one" (x. 30), from which it is a mere corollary that "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (xiv. 9; cf. viii. 19; xii. 45).

In all these declarations the subject of the affirmation is the actual person speaking: it is of Himself who stood before men and spoke to them that Our Lord makes these immense assertions. Accordingly, when He majestically declared, "I and the Father are" (plurality of persons) "one" (neuter singular, and accordingly singleness of being), the Jews naturally understood Him to be making Himself, the person then speaking to them, God (x. 33; cf. v. 18; xix. 7). The continued sameness of the person who has been, from all eternity down to this hour, one with God, is therefore fully safeguarded. His earthly life is, however, distinctly represented as a humiliation. Though even on earth He is one with the Father, yet He "descended" to earth; He had come out from the Father and out of God; a glory had been left behind which was yet to be returned to, and His sojourn on earth was therefore to that extent an obscuration of His proper glory. There was a sense, then, in which, because He had "descended," He was no longer equal with the Father. It was in order to justify an assertion of equality with the Father in power (x. 25, 29) that He was led to declare: "I and my Father are one" (x. 30). But He can also declare "The Father is greater than I" (xiv. 28). Obviously this means that there was a sense in which He had ceased to be equal with the Father, because of the humiliation of His present condition, and in so far as this humiliation involved entrance into a status lower than that which belonged to Him by nature. Precisely in what this humiliation consisted can be gathered only from the general implication of many statements. In it He was a "man" : 'a man who hath told you the truth, which I have heard from God' (viii. 40), where the contrast with "God" throws the assertion of humanity into

emphasis (cf. x. 33). The truth of His human nature is, however, everywhere assumed and endlessly illustrated, rather than explicitly asserted. He possessed a human soul (xii. 27) and bodily parts (flesh and blood, vi. 53 ff.; hands and side, xx. 27); and was subject alike to physical affections (weariness, iv. 6, and thirst, xix. 28, suffering and death), and to all the common human emotions - not merely the love of compassion (xiii. 34; xiv. 21; xv. 8-13), but the love of simple affection which we pour out on "friends" (xi. 11; cf. xv. 14, 15), indignation (xi. 33, 38) and joy (xv. 11; xvii. 13). He felt the perturbation produced by strong excitement (xi. 33; xii. 27; xiii. 21), the sympathy with suffering which shows itself in tears (xi. 35), the thankfulness which fills the grateful heart (vi. 11, 23; xi. 41). Only one human characteristic was alien to Him: He was without sin: "the prince of the world," He declared, "hath nothing in me" (xiv. 30; cf. viii. 46). Clearly Our Lord, as reported by John, knew Himself to be true God and true man in one indivisible person, the common subject of the qualities which belong to each.

2. The Synoptic Jesus. - (a) Mk. xiii. 32: The same is true of His self-consciousness as revealed in His sayings recorded by the synoptists. Perhaps no more striking illustration of this could be adduced than the remarkable declaration recorded in Mk. xiii. 32 (cf. Mt. xxiv. 36): 'But of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, nor yet the Son, but the Father.' Here Jesus places Himself, in an ascending scale of being, above "the angels in heaven," that is to say, the highest of all creatures, significantly marked here as supramundane. Accordingly, He presents Himself elsewhere as the Lord of the angels, whose behests they obey: "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity" (Mt. xiii. 41), "And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one

end of heaven to the other" (Mt. xxiv. 31; cf. xiii. 49; xxv. 31; Mk. viii. 38). Thus the "angels of God" (Lk. xii. 8, 9; xv. 10) Christ designates as His angels, the "kingdom of God" (Mt. xii. 28; xix. 24; xxi. 31, 43; Mk. and Lk. often) as His Kingdom, the "elect of God" (Mk. xiii. 20; Lk. xviii. 7; cf. Rom. viii. 33; Col. iii. 12; Tit. i. 1) as His elect. He is obviously speaking in Mk. xiii. 22 out of a Divine self-consciousness: "Only a Divine being can be exalted above angels" (B. Weiss). He therefore designates Himself by His Divine name, "the Son," that is to say, the unique Son of God (ix. 7; i. 11), to claim to be whom would for a man be blasphemy (Mk. xiv. 61, 64). But though He designates Himself by this Divine name, He is not speaking of what He once was, but of what at the moment of speaking He is: the action of the verb is present, "knoweth." He is claiming, in other words, the supreme designation of "the Son," with all that is involved in it, for His present self, as He moved among men: He is, not merely was, "the Son." Nevertheless, what He affirms of Himself cannot be affirmed of Himself distinctively as "the Son." For what He affirms of Himself is ignorance - "not even the Son" knows it; and ignorance does not belong to the Divine nature which the term "the Son" connotes. An extreme appearance of contradiction accordingly arises from the use of this terminology, just as it arises when Paul says that the Jews "crucified the Lord of glory" (I Cor. ii. 8), or exhorts the Ephesian elders to "feed the church of God which he purchased with his own blood" (Acts xx. 28 m.); or John Keble praises Our Lord for "the blood of souls by Thee redeemed." It was not the Lord of Glory as such who was nailed to the tree, nor have either "God" or "souls" blood to shed.

We know how this apparently contradictory mode of speech has arisen in Keble's case. He is speaking of men who are composite beings, consisting of souls and bodies, and these men come to be designated from one element of their composite personalities,

though what is affirmed by them belongs rather to the other; we may speak, therefore, of the "blood of souls" meaning that these "souls," while not having blood as such, yet designate persons who have bodies and therefore blood. We know equally how to account for Paul's apparent contradictions. We know that he conceived of Our Lord as a composite person, uniting in Himself a Divine and a human nature. In Paul's view, therefore, though God as such has no blood, yet Jesus Christ who is God has blood because He is also man. He can justly speak, therefore, when speaking of Jesus Christ, of His blood as the blood of God. When precisely the same phenomenon meets us in Our Lord's speech of Himself, we must presume that it is the outgrowth of precisely the same state of things. When He speaks of "the Son" (who is God) as ignorant, we must understand that He is designating Himself as "the Son" because of His higher nature, and yet has in mind the ignorance of His lower nature; what He means is that the person properly designated "the Son" is ignorant, that is to say with respect to the human nature which is as intimate an element of His personality as is His Deity.

When Our Lord says, then, that "the Son knows not," He becomes as express a witness to the two natures which constitute His person as Paul is when he speaks of the blood of God, or as Keble is a witness to the twofold constitution of a human being when he speaks of souls shedding blood. In this short sentence, thus, Our Lord bears witness to His Divine nature with its supremacy above all creatures, to His human nature with its creaturely limitations, and to the unity of the subject possessed of these two natures.

(b) Other passages: Son of Man and Son of God: All these elements of His personality find severally repeated assertions in other utterances of Our Lord recorded in the Synoptics. There is no need to insist here on the elevation of Himself above the kings and prophets



of the Old Covenant (Mt. xii. 41 ff.), above the temple itself (Mt. xii. 6), and the ordinances of the Divine Law (Mt. xii. 8) ; or on His accent of authority in both His teaching and action, His great "I say unto you" (Mt. v. 21, 22), 'I will; be cleansed' (Mk. i. 41; ii. 5; Lk. vii. 14) ; or on His separation of Himself from men in His relation to God, never including them with Himself in an "Our Father," but consistently speaking distinctively of "my Father" (e. g., Lk. xxiv. 49) and "your Father" (e. g., Mt. v. 16); or on His intimation that He is not merely David's Son but David's Lord, and that a Lord sitting on the right hand of God (Mt. xxii. 44); or on His parabolic discrimination of Himself a Son and Heir from all "servants" (Mt. xxi. 33 ff.); or even on His ascription to Himself of the purely Divine functions of the forgiveness of sins (Mk. ii. 8) and judgment of the world (Mt. xxv. 31), or of the purely Divine powers of reading the heart (Mk. ii. 8; Lk. ix. 47), omnipotence (Mt. xxiv. 30; Mk. xiv. 62) and omnipresence (Mt. xviii. 20; xxviii. 10). These things illustrate His constant assumption of the possession of Divine dignity and attributes; the claim itself is more directly made in the two great designations which He currently gave Himself, the Son of Man and the Son of God. The former of these is His favorite self-designation. Derived from Dan. vii. 13, 14, it intimates on every occasion of its employment Our Lord's consciousness of being a supramundane being, who has entered into a sphere of earthly life on a high mission, on the accomplishment of which He is to return to His heavenly sphere, whence He shall in due season come back to earth, now, however, in His proper majesty, to gather up the fruits of His work and consummate all things. It is a designation, thus, which implies at once a heavenly preëxistence, a present humiliation, and a future glory; and He proclaims Himself in this future glory no less than the universal King seated on the throne of judgment for quick and dead (Mk. viii. 31; Mt. xxv. 31). The implication of Deity imbedded in the designation, Son of Man, is perhaps more plainly spoken out in the

companion designation, Son of God, which Our Lord not only accepts at the hands of others, accepting with it the implication of blasphemy in permitting its application to Himself (Mt. xxvi. 63, 65; Mk. xiv. 61, 64; Lk. xxii. 29, 30), but persistently claims for Himself both, in His constant designation of God as His Father in a distinctive sense, and in His less frequent but more pregnant designation of Himself as, by way of eminence, "the Son." That His consciousness of the peculiar relation to God expressed by this designation was not an attainment of His mature spiritual development, but was part of His most intimate consciousness from the beginning, is suggested by the sole glimpse which is given us into His mind as a child (Lk. ii. 49). The high significance which the designation bore to Him is revealed to us in two remarkable utterances preserved, the one by both Matthew (xi. 27 ff.) and Luke (x. 22 ff.), and the other by Matthew (xxviii. 19).

(c) Mt. xi. 27; xxviii. 19: In the former of these utterances, Our Lord, speaking in the most solemn manner, not only presents Himself, as the Son, as the sole source of knowledge of God and of blessedness for men, but places Himself in a position, not of equality merely, but of absolute reciprocity and interpenetration of knowledge with the Father. "No one," He says, "knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son . . ." varied in Luke so as to read: "No one knoweth who the Son is, save the Father; and who the Father is, save the Son . . ." as if the being of the Son were so immense that only God could know it thoroughly; and the knowledge of the Son was so unlimited that He could know God to perfection. The peculiarly pregnant employment here of the terms "Son" and "Father" over against one another is explained to us in the other utterance (Mt. xxviii. 19). It is the resurrected Lord's commission to His disciples. Claiming for Himself all authority in heaven and on earth - which implies the possession of omnipotence - and promising

to be with His followers 'alway, even to the end of the world' which adds the implications of omnipresence and omniscience - He commands them to baptize their converts 'in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.' The precise form of the formula must be carefully observed. It does not read: 'In the names' (plural) - as if there were three beings enumerated, each with its distinguishing name. Nor yet: 'In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost,' as if there were one person, going by a threefold name. It reads: 'In the name [singular] of the Father, and of the [article repeated] Son, and of the [article repeated] Holy Ghost,' carefully distinguishing three persons, though uniting them all under one name. The name of God was to the Jews Jehovah, and to name the name of Jehovah upon them was to make them His. What Jesus did in this great injunction was to command His followers to name the name of God upon their converts, and to announce the name of God which is to be named on their converts in the threefold enumeration of "the Father" and "the Son" and "the Holy Ghost." As it is unquestionable that He intended Himself by "the Son," He here places Himself by the side of the Father and the Spirit, as together with them constituting the one God. It is, of course, the Trinity which He is describing; and that is as much as to say that He announces Himself as one of the persons of the Trinity. This is what Jesus, as reported by the Synoptics, understood Himself to be.

In announcing Himself to be God, however, Jesus does not deny that He is man also. If all His speech of Himself rests on His consciousness of a Divine nature, no less does all His speech manifest His consciousness of a human nature. He easily identifies Himself with men (Mt. iv. 4; Lk. iv. 4), and receives without protest the imputation of humanity (Mt. xi. 19; Lk. vii. 34). He speaks familiarly of His body (Mt. xxvi. 12, 26; Mk. xiv. 8; xiv. 22; Lk. xxii. 19), and of His bodily parts - His feet and hands (Lk. xxiv. 39), His

head and feet (Lk. vii. 44-46), His flesh and bones (Lk. xxiv. 39), His blood (Mt. xxvi. 28, Mk. xiv. 24; Lk. xxii. 20). We chance to be given indeed a very express affirmation on His part of the reality of His bodily nature; when His disciples were terrified at His appearing before them after His resurrection, supposing Him to be a spirit, He reassures them with the direct declaration: "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye behold me having" (Lk. xxiv. 39). His testimony to His human soul is just as express: "My soul," says He, "is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Mt. xxvi. 38; Mk. xiv. 34). He speaks of the human dread with which He looked forward to His approaching death (Lk. xii. 50), and expresses in a poignant cry His sense of desolation on the cross (Mt. xxvii. 46; Mk. xv. 34). He speaks also of His pity for the weary and hungering people (Mt. xv. 32; Mk. viii. 2), and of a strong human desire which He felt (Lk. xxii. 15). Nothing that is human is alien to Him except sin. He never ascribes imperfection to Himself and never betrays consciousness of sin. He recognizes the evil of those about Him (Lk. xi. 13; Mt. vii. 11; xii. 34, 39; Lk. xi. 29), but never identifies Himself with it. It is those who do the will of God with whom He feels kinship (Mt. xii. 50), and He offers Himself to the morally sick as a physician (Mt. ix. 12). He proposes Himself as an example of the highest virtues (Mt. xi. 28 ff.) and pronounces him blessed who shall find no occasion of stumbling in Him (Mt. xi. 6).

These manifestations of a human and Divine consciousness simply stand side by side in the records of Our Lord's self-expression. Neither is suppressed or even qualified by the other. If we attend only to the one class we might suppose Him to proclaim Himself wholly Divine; if only to the other we might equally easily imagine Him to be representing Himself as wholly human. With both together before us we perceive Him alternately speaking out of a

Divine and out of a human consciousness; manifesting Himself as all that God is and as all that man is; yet with the most marked unity of consciousness. He, the one Jesus Christ, was to His own apprehension true God and complete man in a unitary personal life.

## **VII. THE TWO NATURES EVERYWHERE PRESUPPOSED**

There underlies, thus, the entire literature of the New Testament a single, unvarying conception of the constitution of Our Lord's person. From Matthew where He is presented as one of the persons of the Holy Trinity (xxviii. 19) - or if we prefer the chronological order of books, from the Epistle of James where He is spoken of as the Glory of God, the Shekinah (ii. 1) - to the Apocalypse where He is represented as declaring that He is the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End (i. 8, 17; xxii. 13), He is consistently thought of as in His fundamental being just God. At the same time from the Synoptic Gospels, in which He is dramatized as a man walking among men, His human descent carefully recorded, and His sense of dependence on God so emphasized that prayer becomes almost His most characteristic action, to the Epistles of John in which it is made the note of a Christian that He confesses that Jesus Christ has come in flesh (I Jn. iv. 2) and the Apocalypse in which His birth in the tribe of Judah and the house of David (v. 5; xxii. 16), His exemplary life of conflict and victory (iii. 21), His death on the cross (xi. 8) are noted, He is equally consistently thought of as true man. Nevertheless, from the beginning to the end of the whole series of books, while first one and then the other of His two natures comes into repeated prominence, there is never a question of conflict between the two, never any confusion in their relations, never any schism in His unitary personal action; but He is obviously considered and presented as one, composite indeed, but undivided personality. In this state of the case not only may evidence of the constitution of

Our Lord's person properly be drawn indifferently from every part of the New Testament, and passage justly be cited to support and explain passage without reference to the portion of the New Testament in which it is found, but we should be without justification if we did not employ this common presupposition of the whole body of this literature to illustrate and explain the varied representations which meet us cursorily in its pages, representations which might easily be made to appear mutually contradictory were they not brought into harmony by their relation as natural component parts of this one unitary conception which underlies and gives consistency to them all. There can scarcely be imagined a better proof of the truth of a doctrine than its power completely to harmonize a multitude of statements which without it would present to our view only a mass of confused inconsistencies. A key which perfectly fits a lock of very complicated wards can scarcely fail to be the true key.

## **VIII. FORMULATION OF THE DOCTRINE**

Meanwhile the wards remain complicated. Even in the case of our own composite structure, of soul and body, familiar as we are with it from our daily experience, the mutual relations of elements so disparate in a single personality remain an unplumbed mystery, and give rise to paradoxical modes of speech, which would be misleading, were not their source in our duplex nature well understood. We may read, in careful writers, of souls being left dead on battlefields, and of everybody's immortality. The mysteries of the relations in which the constituent elements in the more complex personality of Our Lord stand to one another are immeasurably greater than in our simpler case. We can never hope to comprehend how the infinite God and a finite humanity can be united in a single person; and it is very easy to go fatally astray in attempting to explain the interactions in the

unitary person of natures so diverse from one another. It is not surprising, therefore, that so soon as serious efforts began to be made to give systematic explanations of the Biblical facts as to Our Lord's person, many one-sided and incomplete statements were formulated which required correction and complementing before at length a mode of statement was devised which did full justice to the Biblical data. It was accordingly only after more than a century of controversy, during which nearly every conceivable method of construing and misconstruing the Biblical facts had been proposed and tested, that a formula was framed which successfully guarded the essential data supplied by the Scriptures from destructive misconception. This formula, put together by the Council of Chalcedon, 451 A.D., declares it to have always been the doctrine of the church, derived from the Scriptures and Our Lord Himself, that Our Lord Jesus Christ is "truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body; consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and Only-begotten, God, the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ." There is nothing here but a careful statement in systematic form of the pure teaching of the Scriptures; and therefore this statement has stood ever since as the norm of thought and teaching as to the person of the Lord. As such, it has been incorporated, in one form or another, into the creeds of all the great branches of the

church; it underlies and gives their form to all the allusions to Christ in the great mass of preaching and song which has accumulated during the centuries; and it has supplied the background of the devotions of the untold multitudes who through the Christian ages have been worshippers of Christ.

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[NOTE. - In this article the author has usually given his own translation of quotations from Scripture, and not that of any particular VS.]

## **The Atonement**



## **J. Gresham Machen**

*Machen (1881-1937) was Professor of New Testament, first at Princeton Theological Seminary, and afterwards at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia. Excerpts from Christianity and Liberalism (1923).*

According to Christian belief, Jesus is our Savior, not by virtue of what He said, not even by virtue of what He was, but by what He did. He is our Savior, not because He has inspired us to live the same kind of life that He lived, but because He took upon Himself the dreadful guilt of our sins and bore it instead of us on the cross. Such is the Christian conception of the Cross of Christ.

This Bible doctrine is not intricate or subtle. On the contrary, though it involves mysteries, it is itself so simple that a child can understand it. "We deserved eternal death, but the Lord Jesus, because He loved us, died instead of us on the cross" - surely there is nothing so very intricate about that. It is not the Bible doctrine of the atonement which is difficult to understand - what are really incomprehensible are the elaborate modern efforts to get rid of the Bible doctrine in the interests of human pride.

Modern preachers do indeed sometimes speak of the "atonement." But they speak of it just as seldom as they possibly can, and one can see plainly that their hearts are elsewhere than at the foot of the Cross. Indeed, at this point, as at many others, one has the feeling that traditional language is being strained to become the expression of totally alien ideas. And when the traditional phraseology has been stripped away, the essence of the modern conception of the death of Christ is fairly plain. The essence of it is that the death of Christ had an effect not upon God but only upon man. Sometimes the effect

upon man is conceived of in a very simple way, Christ's death being regarded merely as an example of self-sacrifice for us to emulate. The uniqueness of this particular example, then, can be found only in the fact that Christian sentiment, gathering around it, has made it a convenient symbol for all self-sacrifice; it puts in concrete form what would otherwise have to be expressed in colder general terms. Sometimes, again, the effect of Christ's death upon us is conceived of in subtler ways: the death of Christ, it is said, shows how much God hates sin - since sin brought even the Holy One to the dreadful Cross - and we too, therefore, ought to hate sin, as God hates it, and repent. Sometimes, still again, the death of Christ is thought of as displaying the love of God; it exhibits God's own Son as given up for us all.

But these modern "theories of the atonement" err in that they ignore the dreadful reality of guilt, and make a mere persuasion of the human will all that is needed for salvation. They do indeed all contain an element of truth: it is true that the death of Christ is an example of self-sacrifice which may inspire self-sacrifice in others; it is true that the death of Christ shows how much God hates sin; it is true that the death of Christ displays the love of God. All of these truths are found plainly in the New Testament. But they are swallowed up in a far greater truth - that Christ died instead of us to present us faultless before the throne of God. Without that central truth, all the rest is devoid of real meaning: an example of self-sacrifice is useless to those who are under both the guilt and thralldom of sin; the knowledge of God's hatred of sin can in itself bring only despair; an exhibition of the love of God is a mere display unless there was some underlying reason for the sacrifice.

The Christian way of salvation through the Cross of Christ is criticized because it is dependent upon history. It is sometimes said that as Christians we may attend to what Christ does now for every

Christian rather than to what he did long ago in Palestine. Must we really depend for the welfare of our souls upon what happened long ago? With regard to this objection it should be observed that if religion be made independent of history there is no such thing as a gospel. For "gospel" means "good news," tidings, information about something that has happened. A gospel independent of history is a contradiction in terms. The Christian gospel means, not a presentation of what always has been true, but a report of something new - something that imparts a totally different aspect to the situation of mankind. The situation of mankind was desperate because of sin; but God has changed the situation by the atoning death of Christ - that is no mere reflection upon the old, but an account of something new.

We are shut up in this world as in a beleaguered camp. To maintain our courage, the liberal preacher offers us exhortation. Make the best of the situation, he says, look on the bright side of life. But unfortunately, such exhortation cannot change the facts. In particular it cannot remove the dreadful fact of sin. Very different is the message of the Christian evangelist. He offers not reflection on the old but tidings of something new, not exhortation but a gospel.

In the second place, the Christian doctrine of salvation through the death of Christ is criticized on the ground that it is narrow. It binds salvation to the name of Jesus, and there are many men in the world who have never in any effective way heard of the name of Jesus. What is really needed, we are told, is a salvation which will save all men everywhere, whether they have heard of Jesus or not, and whatever may be the type of life to which they have been reared. Not a new creed, it is said, will meet the universal need of the world, but some means of making effective in right living whatever creed men may chance to have.

It is sometimes said that although one way of salvation is by means of acceptance of the gospel there may be other ways. But this relinquishes one of the things that are most obviously characteristic of the Christian message - namely, its exclusiveness. What struck the early observers of Christianity most forcibly was not merely that salvation was offered by means of the Christian gospel, but that all other means were resolutely rejected. Such exclusiveness ran directly counter to the prevailing syncretism of the age. In that day, many saviors were offered by many religions to the attention of men, but the various pagan religions could live together in perfect harmony; when a man became a devotee of one god, he did not have to give up the others. But Christianity demanded an absolutely exclusive devotion; all other Saviors, it insisted, must be deserted for the one Lord. Salvation, in other words, was not merely through Christ, but it was only through Christ. In that little word "only" lay all the offence.

But modern liberalism has still more specific objections to the Christian doctrine of the Cross. How can one person, it is asked, suffer for the sins of another? The thing, we are told, is absurd. Guilt, it is said, is personal; if I allow another man to suffer for my fault, my guilt is not thereby one whit diminished.

It is perfectly true that no mere man can pay the penalty of another man's sin. But it does not follow that Jesus could not do it; for Jesus was no mere man but the eternal Son of God. He has done what none other could possibly do; He has borne our sin. Why is it that men are no longer willing to trust for their own salvation and for the hope of the world to one act that was done by one Man of long ago? The answer is plain. It is because they have lost sight of the majesty of Jesus' Person. They think of Him as a man like themselves; and if He was a man like themselves, His death becomes simply an example of self-sacrifice.

The Christian doctrine of the atonement, therefore, is altogether rooted in the Christian doctrine of the deity of Christ. The reality of an atonement for sin depends altogether upon the New Testament presentation of the Person of Christ.

But still another objection remains against the Christian doctrine of the Cross. The objection concerns the character of God. What a degraded view of God it is, the modern liberal exclaims, when God is represented as being "alienated" from man, and as waiting coldly until a price be paid before He grants salvation! In reality, we are told, God is more willing to forgive sin than we are willing to be forgiven; reconciliation, therefore, can have to do only with man; it all depends on us; God will receive us any time we choose.

The objection depends of course upon the liberal view of sin. If sin is so trifling a matter as the liberal supposes, then indeed the curse of God's law can be taken very lightly, and God can easily let by-gones be by-gones.

This business of letting by-gones be by-gones has a pleasant sound. But in reality it is the most heartless thing in world. It will not do at all even in the case of sin committed against our fellow men. To say nothing of sin against God, what shall be done about the harm that we have wrought to our neighbor? Sometimes, no doubt, the harm can be repaired. If we have defrauded our neighbor of a sum of money, we can pay the sum back with interest. But in the case of the more serious wrongs such repayment is usually quite impossible. The more serious wrongs are those that are done, not to the bodies, but to the souls of men. And who can think with complacency of wrongs of that kind which he has committed? Who can bear to think for example, of the harm that he has done to those younger than himself by a bad example?

The truly penitent man longs to wipe out the effects of sin, not merely to forget sin. But who can wipe out the effects of sin? Others are suffering because of our past sins. We long to go back into the tangle of our life, and make right the things that are wrong. And something like that Christ did for us when He died instead of us on the cross; He atoned for all our sins.

The sorrow for sins committed against one's fellow men does indeed remain in the Christian's heart. And he will seek by every means that is within his power to repair the damage that he has done. But atonement at least has been made - made as truly as if the sinner himself had suffered. And the sinner himself, by a mystery of grace, becomes right with God. All sin at bottom is a sin against God. "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned" is the cry of a true penitent (Psalm 51:4). Yet in Christ we stand spotless before the judgment throne.

Thus to deny the necessity of atonement is to deny the existence of a real moral order. And it is strange how those who venture upon such denial can regard themselves as disciples of Jesus; for it one thing is clear in the record of Jesus' life it is that Jesus recognized the justice, as distinguished from the love, of God. God is love, according to Jesus, but He is not only love. Clearly Jesus recognized the existence of retributive justice; Jesus was far from accepting the light modern view of sin.

But what, then, it will be objected, becomes of God's love? Even if it be admitted that justice demands punishment for sin, the modern liberal will say, what becomes of the Christian doctrine that justice is swallowed up by grace? If God is represented as waiting for a price to be paid before sin shall be forgiven, perhaps His justice may be rescued, but what becomes of His love?

Modern liberal teachers are never tired of ringing the changes upon this objection. They speak with horror of the doctrine of an "alienated" or an "angry" God. In answer, of course it would be easy to point to the New Testament. The New Testament clearly speaks of the wrath of God and the wrath of Jesus Himself; and all the teaching of Jesus presupposes a divine indignation against sin. If a man has once come under a true conviction of sin, he will have little difficulty with the doctrine of the Cross.

But as a matter of fact the modern objection to the doctrine of the atonement on the ground that that doctrine is contrary to the love of God is based upon the most abysmal misunderstanding of the doctrine itself. The modern liberal teachers persist in speaking of the sacrifice of Christ as though it were a sacrifice made by some one other than God. They speak of it as though it meant that God waits coldly until a price is paid to Him before He forgives sin. As a matter of fact, it means nothing of the kind; the objection ignores that which is absolutely fundamental in the Christian doctrine of the Cross. The fundamental thing is that God Himself, and not another, makes the sacrifice for sin - God Himself in the person of the Son who assumed our nature and died for us, God Himself in the Person of the Father who spared not His own Son but offered Him up for us all. Salvation is a free for us as the air we breathe; God's the dreadful cost, ours the gain. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16).

This love and this love alone brings true joy to men. Joy is indeed being sought by the modern liberal. But it is being sought in ways that are false. How may communion with God be made joyful? Obviously, we are told, by emphasizing the comforting attributes of God - His long-suffering, His love. Let us, it is urged, regard Him not

as a moody Despot, not as a sternly righteous Judge, but simply as a loving Father.

Two questions arise with regard to this method of making religion joyful - in the first place, Does it work? and in the second place, Is it true?

Does it work? It certainly ought to work. How can anyone be unhappy when the ruler of the universe is declared to be the loving Father of all men who will never permanently inflict pain upon His children? Where is the sting of remorse if all sin will necessarily be forgiven? Yet after the modern preacher has done his part with all diligence - after everything unpleasant has carefully been eliminated from the conception of God, after His unlimited love has been celebrated with the eloquence that it deserves - the congregation somehow persistently refuses to burst into the old ecstasies of joy. Is that really love that costs so little? If God will necessarily forgive, no matter what we do, why trouble ourselves about Him at all?

The other objection to the modern encouraging idea of God is that it is not true. How do you know that God is all love and kindness? Surely not through nature, for it is full of horrors. Human suffering may be unpleasant, but it is real, and God must have something to do with it. Just as surely not through the Bible. For it was from the Bible that the old theologians derived that conception of God which you would reject as gloomy. "The Lord thy God," the Bible says, "is a consuming fire" (Deuteronomy 4:24). Or is Jesus alone your authority? You are no better off. For it was Jesus who spoke of the outer darkness and the everlasting fire, of the sin that shall not be forgiven either in this age or in that which is to come.

Religion cannot be made joyful simply by looking on the bright side of God. For a one-sided God is not a real God, and it is the real God



alone who can satisfy the longing of our soul. The search for joy in religion seems to have ended in disaster. God is found to be enveloped in impenetrable mystery, and in awful righteousness; man is confined to the prison of the world, trying to make the best of his condition, beautifying the prison with tinsel, yet secretly dissatisfied with his bondage, dissatisfied with a merely relative goodness which is no goodness at all, dissatisfied with the companionship of his sinful fellows, unable to forget his heavenly destiny and his heavenly duty, longing for communion with the Holy One. There seems to be no hope; God is separate from sinners; there is no room for joy, but only a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.

Yet such a God has at least one advantage over the comforting God of modern preaching - He is alive, He is sovereign, He is not bound by His creation or by His creatures, He can perform wonders. Could He even save us if He would? He has saved us - in that message the gospel consists. The atoning death of Christ, and that alone, has presented sinners as righteous in God's sight; the Lord Jesus has paid the full penalty of their sins, and clothed them with His perfect righteousness before the judgment seat of God. It never could have been predicted, for sin deserves naught but eternal death. But God triumphed over sin through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

# Forgiveness

**J. C. Ryle**

*Ryle (1816-1900) was the Church of England's Bishop of Liverpool. Excerpts from Old Paths, Being Plain Statements on Some of the Weightier Matters of Christianity (1877).*

All men need forgiveness, because all men are sinners. It is the very ABC of Christianity, that a man should know his right place in the sight of God, and understand his deserts. "There is none righteous, no, not one." "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:10, 23) Sinners we were born, and sinners we have been all our lives. We take to sin naturally from the very first. No child ever needs schooling and education to teach it to do wrong.

We are all guilty sinners in the sight of God. We have broken His holy law. We have not done His will. There is not a commandment in all the ten which does not condemn us. If we have not broken it in deed we have in word; if we have not broken it in word, we have in thought and imagination, and that continually. Tried by the standard of the fifth chapter of Matthew, there is not one of us that would be acquitted. All the world is "guilty before God." And "as it is appointed unto men once to die, so after this comes the judgment." (Romans

3:19, Hebrews 9:27) We must either be forgiven, or perish everlastingly.

When I walk through the crowded streets, I see hundreds and thousands of whom I know nothing beyond their outward appearance. Each has his own object in view. Each has his own aims and ends, all alike hidden from me. But one thing I know for a certainty, as I look upon them -- they are all sinners. There breathes not the man or woman in that crowd but must die forgiven, or else rise again to be condemned forever at the last day.

What is the life of the best Christian among us? What is it but one great career of shortcomings? What is it but a daily acting out the words -- "leaving undone things we ought to do, and doing things that we ought not to do"? Our faith, how feeble! Our love, how cold! Our patience, how short-breathed! Our humility, how threadbare! Our self-denial, how dwarfish! Our knowledge, how dim! Our spirituality, how shallow! Never did the wisest of men speak more wisely than when he said, "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." (Ecclesiastes 7:20) And what is the best action that is ever done by the very best of Christians? What is it after all but an imperfect work? It is always more or less defective. It is either wrong in its motive or incomplete in its performance. David's account is true: "There is none that doeth good, no, not one." (Psalm 14:3)

And then what is the Lord God, whose eyes are on all our ways, and before whom we have one day to give account? "Holy, holy, holy," is the remarkable expression applied to Him by those who are nearest to Him, as if no one word could express the intensity of His holiness. (Isaiah 6:3, Revelation 4:8) Surely we ought all to cease from proud thoughts about ourselves. We ought to lay our hands upon our

mouths, and say with Abraham, "I am dust and ashes"; and with Job, "I am vile"; and with John, "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (Genesis 18:27, Job 40:4, I John 1:8)

See now what just cause I have to say that to know our need of forgiveness is the first thing in true religion. Sin is a burden, and must be taken off. Sin is a defilement, and must be cleansed away. Sin is a mighty debt, and must be paid. Sin is a mountain standing between us and heaven, and must be removed. The first step towards heaven is to see clearly that we deserve hell.

See too how little many persons know of the main design of Christianity. They have yet to learn that the leading mark of Christianity is the remedy it provides for sin. This is the glory and excellence of the gospel. It meets man as he really is. I ask every reader to consider these things well, if he never considered them before. It is no light matter whether you know your soul's necessities or not. Try to become acquainted with your own heart. Sit down and think what you are in the sight of God. Bring together the thoughts, the words, and actions of any day in your life, and measure them by the measure of God's Word. Judge yourself honestly, that you may not be condemned at the last day. Learn to pray Job's prayer: "Make me to know my transgression and my sin." (Job 13:23)

Let me point out the way of forgiveness. Which way will you turn? Will you trust in your own works and endeavors, your virtues and your good deeds, your prayers? They will never pay your debt to God. They are all imperfect in themselves, and only increase your guilt. Will you trust in your own repentance? You are very sorry for the past. You hope to do better for time to come. Alas, the judge does not

pardon the thief because he is sorry for what he did. Today's sorrow will not wipe off the score of yesterday's sins.

Where then must a man go for pardon? Where is forgiveness to be found? That way is simply to cast your soul, with all its sins, unreservedly on Christ -- to cease completely from any dependence on your own works or doings, either in whole or in part, and to rest on no other work but Christ's work. Take this course and you are a pardoned soul. "To Christ," says Peter, "give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." (Acts 10:43) "Through this man," says Paul, "is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by Him all that believe are justified from all things." (Acts 13:38) "In Him," writes Paul, "we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." (Colossians 1:14)

Jesus Christ, in great compassion, has made a full and complete satisfaction for sin, by suffering death in our place. On the cross He offered Himself as a sacrifice for us, and allowed the wrath of God, which we deserved, to fall on His own head. For our sins, as our substitute, He gave Himself, suffered, and died -- the just for the unjust, the innocent for the guilty, that He might deliver us from the curse of a broken law, and provide a complete pardon. And by so doing, as Isaiah says, He has borne our sins; as John the Baptist says, He has *taken away* sin; as Paul says, He has *purged* our sins, and *put away* sin; and as Daniel says, He has *made an end of sin*, and *finished* transgression. (Isaiah 53:11, John 1:29, Hebrews 1:3, 9:26, Daniel 9:24)

And now Jesus Christ is sealed and appointed by God the Father to be a Prince and a Savior, to give remission of sins to all who will have it. The keys of death and hell are put in His hand. The government of

the gate of heaven is laid on His shoulder. He Himself is the door; and by Him all that enter in shall be saved. (Acts 5:31, Revelation 1:18, John 10:9)

Christ, in one word, has purchased a full forgiveness. He has done all, paid all, suffered all that was needful to reconcile us to God. And faith, simple faith, is the only thing required in order that you and I may be forgiven. That we will come by faith to Jesus as sinners with our sins -- trust in Him, rest on Him -- and forsaking all other hope, cleave only to Him, this is all and everything that God asks for. Let a man only do this, and he shall be saved. His iniquities shall be found completely pardoned, and his transgressions entirely taken away. His sins are clean gone, and his soul is justified in God's sight, however bad and guilty he may have been. "All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies, wherewithsoever they shall blaspheme." (Mark 3:28) "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall become white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Isaiah 1:18) They are removed as far as the east from the west. (Psalm 103:12) Jesus does all, and man has only to hold out an empty hand and to receive.

It is an offered forgiveness. "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." (John 7:37) "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28) It is a willing forgiveness. I have heard of pardons granted in reply to long entreaty, and wrung out by much importunity. But Jesus is not willing that any should perish. (II Peter 3:9) He would have all men saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. (I Timothy 2:4) He wept over unbelieving Jerusalem. "As I live," He says, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; why will ye die?" (Ezekiel 33:11)

Besides this, it is a present forgiveness. The very day that David said, "I have sinned against the Lord," he was told by Nathan, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin." (II Samuel 12:13) Your pardon is not a thing far away, to be obtained only after many years. From the time of believing, condemnation is gone. "He that believeth hath everlasting life." (John 3:36) It is an everlasting forgiveness. Once justified, you are justified forever. The sins of God's children are said to be cast into the depths of the sea, to be sought for and not found, to be remembered no more, to be cast behind God's back. (Micah 7:19, Jeremiah 50:20, 31:34, Isaiah 38:17)

Do you call it nothing to be able to think of the great day of account, the throne, the books, the Judge, the assembled worlds, the revealing of secrets, the final sentence, and yet to feel, "I am safe"? This is the privilege of a forgiven soul. Such an one is in an hiding place. When God arises to judge terribly the earth, and men are calling to rocks and mountains to fall upon them and cover them, the Everlasting Arms shall be thrown around him, and the storm shall pass over his head.

Let me supply the readers with some marks of having found forgiveness. I dare not leave out this point. Too many persons presume they are forgiven, who have no evidence to show.

(a) Forgiven souls hate sin. Sin is the serpent which bit them: how should they not shrink from it with horror? How should they not loathe it with a godly disgust? How should not the very memory of it be bitter to their hearts? Remember how the Ephesians publicly burned their wicked books. (Acts 19:19) Remember how Paul mourned over his youthful transgressions: "I am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." (I

Corinthians 15:9) If you and sin are friends, you and God are not yet reconciled.

(b) Forgiven souls love Christ. His person, His work, His cross, His words -- all are precious to forgiven souls. The ministry which exalts Him most is that which they enjoy most. They would tell you they cannot help feeling as they do. He is their Redeemer, their Shepherd, their Physician, their King, their hope, their joy. Were it not for Him they would be of all men most miserable.

(c) Forgiven souls are humble. They cannot forget that they owe all they have and hope for to free grace, and this keeps them lowly. They are debtors who could not pay for themselves, and what right have they to be proud? I do not deny that there are proud saints. But this I do say, they are of all God's creatures the most inconsistent, and of all God's children the most likely to stumble and pierce themselves with many sorrows. Forgiveness more often produces the spirit of Jacob: "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and all the truth which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant" (Genesis 32:10); and of the Apostle Paul: "I am less than the least of all saints -- chief of sinners." (Ephesians 3:8, I Timothy 1:15) When you and I have nothing we can call our own but sin and weakness, there is surely no garment that becomes us so well as humility.

(d) Forgiven souls are holy. Their chief desire is to please Him who has saved them, to do His will, to glorify Him in body and in spirit, which are His. "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits?" (Psalm 116:12) is a leading principle in a pardoned heart. It was the remembrance of Jesus showing mercy that made Paul in labors so abundant, and in doing good so unwearied. It was a sense of pardon that made Zaccheus say, "The half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation,



I restore him fourfold." (Luke 19:8) If you show me a man deliberately living an unholy and licentious life, and yet boasting that his sins are forgiven, I answer, "He is under a ruinous delusion, and is not forgiven at all."

(e) Forgiven souls are forgiving. They do as they have been done by. They remember how God for Christ's sake forgave them, and endeavor to do the same towards their fellow creatures. Doubtless in this, as in everything else, they come short; but this is their desire and their aim. A spiteful, quarrelsome Christian is a scandal to his profession. It is very hard to believe that such an one has ever sat at the foot of the cross.

I know well that saving faith in Christ is consistent with many imperfections. But still I do believe the five marks I have just been naming will generally be found more or less in all forgiven souls. I cannot conceal from you, these marks should raise in many minds great searchings of heart. I must be plain. I fear there are thousands of persons called Christians, who know nothing of these marks. They are baptized. They attend the services of their church. They would not on any account be reckoned infidels. But as to true repentance and saving faith, union with Christ and sanctification by the Spirit, they are "names and words" of which they know nothing at all. Now if this is read by such persons, it will probably either alarm them, or make them very angry. If it makes them angry I shall be sorry. If it alarms them I shall be glad. I want to alarm them. I want to awaken them. I want them to take in the great fact that they are not yet forgiven, that they have not peace with God, and are on the high road to destruction. I must say this, for I see no alternative. It seems neither Christian faithfulness, nor Christian charity, to keep it back. Where is the honesty of acting the part of a lying physician, and telling people there is no danger?

I have told you about forgiveness. But are you forgiven *yourself*? What does it profit the shipwrecked sailor that the life boat is alongside, if he sticks by the wreck, and does not jump in and escape? What does it avail the sick man that the doctor offers him a medicine, if he only looks at it, and does not swallow it down? Except you lay hold for your own soul, you will be as surely lost as if there was no forgiveness at all. There must be actual business between you and Christ. Surely that a man can make his will, insure his life, give directions about his funeral, and yet leave his soul's affairs in uncertainty, is a wonderful thing indeed.

I know not who you are, or what you have been in time past, but I say, Come to Christ by faith and you shall be freely forgiven. Think not for a moment that you have some great thing to do before you come to Christ. Man's idea is to make his peace with God by repentance, and then come to Christ; the gospel way is to receive peace from Christ first of all, and begin with Him. Man's idea is to amend, and turn over a new leaf, and so work his way up to reconciliation and friendship with God: the gospel way is first to be friends with God through Christ, and then to do His will. Come, willing to take what Christ offers, and not fancying you can give anything in return.

# **The Way of Salvation**

**by J. C. Ryle**

Where must a man go for pardon? Where is forgiveness to be found? There is a way both sure and plain, and into that way I desire to guide every inquirers feet. That way is simply to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior. It is to cast your soul with all its sins, unreservedly on Christ—to cease completely from any dependence on your own works or doings, either in whole or in part—and to rest on no other work but Christ's work—no other righteousness but Christ's righteousness, no other merit but Christ's merit as your ground of hope. Take this course—and you are a pardoned soul.

Says Peter "All the prophets testify about Him, that through His name everyone who believes in Him will receive forgiveness of sins." (Acts 10:43). Says Paul at Antioch, "Through this Man forgiveness of sins is being proclaimed to you, and everyone who believes in Him is justified from everything." (Acts 13:38). "In Him," writes Paul to the Colossians, "we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:14).

The Lord Jesus Christ, in great love and compassion has made a full and complete satisfaction for sin, by suffering death in our place upon the cross. There He offered Himself as a sacrifice for us, and allowed the wrath of God which we deserved—to fall on His own

head! For our sins, as our Substitute, He gave Himself, suffered, and died—the just for the unjust, the innocent for the guilty—that He might deliver us from the curse of a broken law, and provide a complete pardon for all who are willing to receive it. And by so doing, as Isaiah says—He has borne our sins. As John the Baptist says—He has taken away sin. As Paul says—He has purged our sins, and put away sin. As Daniel says—He has made an end of sin and finished transgression.

And now the Lord Jesus Christ is sealed and appointed by God the Father to be a Prince and a Savior, to give forgiveness of sins, to all who will have it. The keys of death and hell are put in His hand. The government of the *gate of heaven* is laid on His shoulder. He Himself is the door, and by Him all who enter in shall be saved. Christ, in one word, has purchased a full forgiveness, if we are only willing to receive it. He has done all, paid all, suffered all that was needful, to reconcile us to God. He has provided a *garment of righteousness* to clothe us. He has opened a *fountain of living waters* to cleanse us. He has removed every barrier between us and God the Father, taken every obstacle out of the way—and made a road by which the vilest may return to God. All things are now ready, and the sinner has only to believe and be saved, to eat and be satisfied, to ask and receive, to wash and be clean.

Faith, or simple trust is the only thing required, in order that you and I may be forgiven. That we will come by faith to Jesus as sinners with our sins—trust in Him—and forsaking all other hope, cleave only to Him—that is all and everything that God asks for. Let a man only do this, and he shall be saved. His iniquities shall be found completely pardoned, and his transgressions completely taken away!

Who, among all the readers of this paper, desires to be saved by Christ, and yet is not saved at present? Come, I beseech you! Come to Christ without delay. Though you have been a great sinner, COME! Though you have long resisted warnings, counsels, sermons, COME! Though you have sinned against light and knowledge, against a father's advice and a mother's tears, COME! Though you have plunged into every excess of wickedness, and lived without prayer, yet COME! The door is not shut, the fountain is not yet closed. Jesus Christ invites you. It is enough that you feel laboring and heavy-laden, and desire to be saved. COME! COME TO CHRIST WITHOUT DELAY! Come to Him by faith, and pour out your heart before Him in prayer. Tell Him the whole story of your life, and ask Him to receive you. Cry to Him as the penitent thief did, when He saw Him on the cross. Say to Him, "Lord save me also! Lord remember me!" COME! COME TO CHRIST!

## **Blessed are They Whose Iniquity if Forgiven**

**by John Calvin**

This selection was extracted from Calvin's Commentary on the Psalms, translated into english by Henry Beveridge (Calvin Translation Society, Edinburgh, 1854).

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*Blessed are they whose iniquity is forgiven, and whose transgression is covered. Blessed is the man to whom Jehovah imputeth no sin, and in whose spirit there is no guile. (Ps. 32:1-2).*

1. Blessed are they whose iniquity is forgiven. This exclamation springs from the fervent affection of the Psalmist's heart as well as from serious consideration. Since almost the whole world turning away their thoughts from God's judgment, bring upon themselves a fatal forgetfulness, and intoxicate themselves with deceitful pleasures; David, as if he had been stricken with the fear of God's wrath, that he might betake himself to Divine mercy, awakens others also to the same exercise, by declaring distinctly and loudly that those only are blessed to whom God is reconciled, so as to acknowledge those for his children whom he might justly treat as his enemies. Some are so blinded with hypocrisy and pride, and some with such gross contempt of God, that they are not at all anxious in seeking forgiveness, but all acknowledge that they need forgiveness; nor is there a man in existence whose conscience does not accuse him at God's judgment-seat, and gall him with many stings. This confession, accordingly, that all need forgiveness, because no man is perfect, and that then only is it well with us when God pardons our sins, nature herself extorts even from wicked men. But in the meantime, hypocrisy shuts the eyes of multitudes, while others are so deluded by a perverse carnal security, that they are touched either with no feelings of Divine wrath, or with only a frigid feeling of it.

From this proceeds a twofold error: first, that such men make light of their sins, and reflect not on the hundredth part of their danger from God's indignation; and, secondly, that they invent frivolous expiations to free themselves from guilt and to purchase the favor of God. Thus in all ages it has been everywhere a prevailing opinion, that although all men are infected with sin, they are at the same time adorned with merits which are calculated to procure for them the favor of God, and that although they provoke his wrath by their crimes, they have expiations and satisfactions in readiness to obtain their absolution. This delusion of Satan is equally common among

Papists, Turks, Jews, and other nations. Every man, therefore, who is not carried away by the furious madness of Popery, will admit the truth of this statement, that men are in a wretched state unless God deal mercifully with them by not laying their sins to their charge. But David goes farther, declaring that the whole life of man is subjected to God's wrath and curse, except in so far as he vouchsafes of his own free grace to receive them into his favor; of which the Spirit who spake by David is an assured interpreter and witness to us by the mouth of Paul, (Rom. 4:6.) Had Paul not used this testimony, never would his readers have penetrated the real meaning of the prophet; for we see that the Papists, although they chant in their temples, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven," etc., yet pass over it as if it were some common saying and of little importance. But with Paul, this is the full definition of the righteousness of faith; as if the prophet had said, Men are then only blessed when they are freely reconciled to God, and counted as righteous by him. The blessedness, accordingly, that David celebrates utterly destroys the righteousness of works. The device of a partial righteousness with which Papists and others delude themselves is mere folly; and even among those who are destitute of the light of heavenly doctrine, no one will be found so mad as to arrogate a perfect righteousness to himself, as appears from the expiations, washings, and other means of appeasing God, which have always been in use among all nations. But yet they do not hesitate to obtrude their virtues upon God, just as if by them they had acquired of themselves a great part of their blessedness.

David, however, prescribes a very different order, namely, that in seeking happiness, all should begin with the principle, that God cannot be reconciled to those who are worthy of eternal destruction in any other way than by freely pardoning them, and bestowing upon them his favor. And justly does he declare that if mercy is withheld

from them, all men must be utterly wretched and accursed; for if all men are naturally prone only to evil, until they are regenerated, their whole previous life, it is obvious, must be hateful and loathsome in the sight of God. Besides, as even after regeneration, no work which men perform can please God unless he pardons the sin which mingles with it, they must be excluded from the hope of salvation. Certainly nothing will remain for them but cause for the greatest terror. That the works of the saints are unworthy of reward because they are spotted with stains, seems a hard saying to the Papists. But, in this they betray their gross ignorance in estimating, according to their own conceptions, the judgment of God, in whose eyes the very brightness of the stars is but darkness. Let this therefore remain an established doctrine, that as we are only accounted righteous before God by the free remission of sins, this is the gate of eternal salvation; and, accordingly, that they only are blessed who rely upon God's mercy. We must bear in mind the contrast which I have already mentioned between believers who, embracing the remission of sins, rely upon the grace of God alone, and all others who neglect to betake themselves to the sanctuary of Divine grace.

Moreover, when David thrice repeats the same thing, this is no vain repetition. It is indeed sufficiently evident of itself that the man must be blessed whose iniquity is forgiven; but experience teaches us how difficult it is to become persuaded of this in such a manner as to have it thoroughly fixed in our hearts. The great majority, as I have already shown you, entangled by devices of their own, put away from them, as far as they can, the terrors of conscience and all fear of Divine wrath. They have, no doubt, a desire to be reconciled to God; and yet they shun the sight of him, rather than seek his grace sincerely and with all their hearts. Those, on the other hand, whom God has truly awakened so as to be affected with a lively sense of their misery, are so constantly agitated and disquieted that it is



difficult to restore peace to their minds. They taste indeed God's mercy, and endeavor to lay hold of it, and yet they are frequently abashed or made to stagger under the manifold assaults which are made upon them. The two reasons for which the Psalmist insists so much on the subject of the forgiveness of sins are these, - that he may, on the one hand, raise up those who are fallen asleep, inspire the careless with thoughtfulness, and quicken the dull; and that he may, on the other hand, tranquillise fearful and anxious minds with an assured and steady confidence. To the former, the doctrine may be applied in this manner: "What mean ye, O ye unhappy men! that one or two stings of conscience do not disturb you? Suppose that a certain limited knowledge of your sins is not sufficient to strike you with terror, yet how preposterous is it to continue securely asleep, while you are overwhelmed with an immense load of sins?" And this repetition furnishes not a little comfort and confirmation to the feeble and fearful. As doubts are often coming upon them, one after another, it is not sufficient that they are victorious in one conflict only. That despair, therefore, may not overwhelm them amidst the various perplexing thoughts with which they are agitated, the Holy Spirit confirms and ratifies the remission of sins with many declarations.

It is now proper to weigh the particular force of the expressions here employed. Certainly the remission which is here treated of does not agree with satisfactions. God, in lifting off or taking away sins, and likewise in covering and not imputing them, freely pardons them. On this account the Papists, by thrusting in their satisfactions and works of supererogation as they call them, bereave themselves of this blessedness. Besides, David applies these words to complete forgiveness. The distinction, therefore, which the Papists here make between the remission of the punishment and of the fault, by which they make only half a pardon, is not at all to the purpose. Now, it is

necessary to consider to whom this happiness belongs, which may be easily gathered from the circumstance of the time. When David was taught that he was blessed through the mercy of God alone, he was not an alien from the church of God; on the contrary, he had profited above many in the fear and service of God, and in holiness of life, and had exercised himself in all the duties of godliness. And even after making these advances in religion, God so exercised him, that he placed the alpha and omega of his salvation in his gratuitous reconciliation to God. Nor is it without reason that Zacharias, in his song, represents "the knowledge of salvation" as consisting in knowing "the remission of sins," (Luke 1:77.) The more eminently that any one excels in holiness, the farther he feels himself from perfect righteousness, and the more clearly he perceives that he can trust in nothing but the mercy of God alone. Hence it appears, that those are grossly mistaken who conceive that the pardon of sin is necessary only to the beginning of righteousness. As believers are every day involved in many faults, it will profit them nothing that they have once entered the way of righteousness, unless the same grace which brought them into it accompany them to the last step of their life. Does any one object, that they are elsewhere said to be blessed "who fear the Lord," "who walk in his ways," "who are upright in heart," etc., the answer is easy, namely, that as the perfect fear of the Lord, the perfect observance of his law, and perfect uprightness of heart, are nowhere to be found, all that the Scripture anywhere says, concerning blessedness, is founded upon the free favor of God, by which he reconciles us to himself.

2. In whose spirit there is no guile. In this clause the Psalmist distinguishes believers both from hypocrites and from senseless despisers of God, neither of whom care for this happiness, nor can they attain to the enjoyment of it. The wicked are, indeed, conscious to themselves of their guilt, but still they delight in their wickedness;

harden themselves in their impudence, and laugh at threatenings; or, at least, they indulge themselves in deceitful flatteries, that they may not be constrained to come into the presence of God. Yea, though they are rendered unhappy by a sense of their misery, and harassed with secret torments, yet with perverse forgetfulness they stifle all fear of God. As for hypocrites, if their conscience at any time stings them, they soothe their pain with ineffectual remedies: so that if God at any time cite them to his tribunal, they place before them I know not what phantoms for their defense; and they are never without coverings whereby they may keep the light out of their hearts. Both these classes of men are hindered by inward guile from seeking their happiness in the fatherly love of God. Nay more, many of them rush frowardly into the presence of God, or puff themselves up with proud presumption, dreaming that they are happy, although God is against them. David, therefore, means that no man can taste what the forgiveness of sins is until his heart is first cleansed from guile. What he means, then, by this term, guile, may be understood from what I have said. Whoever examines not himself, as in the presence of God, but, on the contrary, shunning his judgment, either shrouds himself in darkness, or covers himself with leaves, deals deceitfully both with himself and with God. It is no wonder, therefore, that he who feels not his disease refuses the remedy. The two kinds of this guile which I have mentioned are to be particularly attended to. Few may be so hardened as not to be touched with the fear of God, and with some desire of his grace, and yet they are moved but coldly to seek forgiveness. Hence it comes to pass, that they do not yet perceive what an unspeakable happiness it is to possess God's favor. Such was David's case for a time, when a treacherous security stole upon him, darkened his mind, and prevented him from zealously applying himself to pursue after this happiness. Often do the saints labor under the same disease. If, therefore, we would enjoy the happiness which David here proposes to us, we must take the greatest heed lest

Satan, filling our hearts with guile, deprive us of all sense of our wretchedness, in which every one who has recourse to subterfuges must necessarily pine away.

## **SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH**

### **God's Purpose of Grace**

**by Horatius Bonar (1808-1889)**

*To make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ; to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God; according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus, our Lord — Ephesians 3:9-11.*

*According to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began — 2 Timothy 1:9.*

“The fall” is a word with which we have become so familiar, that the event itself has lost its appalling magnitude of evil in our eyes. Yet what an infinite calamity was it in reality! What a triumph of the evil one! What dishonor to Jehovah! What desolation to this earth! The floodgates of iniquity had been burst open, and who could close them

again or stay the overflowing waters? The torch which God had lighted upon earth had been extinguished, and who could rekindle it or dissipate the gross darkness now brooding over the desolate region, which had so lately been pronounced “very good”?

To the unfallen creation how fearful the disaster must have seemed! God’s purpose appeared frustrated, his power baffled, his wisdom defeated, his very throne assailed. Who could now deem himself secure? Who might not in like manner fall? The highest creature-throne in heaven was no longer safe; for who could assure himself that this flood of evil now broken loose might not swell up till it left nothing but the throne of God untouched? What region, what station could be reckoned safe when this new creation had given way? What angel could feel secure, when man had fallen? Everything created seemed on the edge of ruin, and it was as if even the Creator’s arm had lost its hold over the work of his hands, and was unable to arrest the universal collapse of creation into its former nonexistence, or rather into a state far worse and more terrible than that—SIN!

For scarce had God finished his six days’ work, fashioning man in his own image and providing for his habitation a world of beauty, than man revolted, and this rejoicing earth began to sink back into its former chaos. Scarce had the morning stars concluded their glad song over the new-formed earth, than they were called to weep over its ruins. Scarce had the sons of God done shouting for joy over their newborn fellow-immortal, than they were called to mourn over his untimely and disastrous fall. The event seemed like a deathblow to the hopes of the universe; and if some new-lighted star had suddenly gone out, it could not have left the circle which it enlightened in such hopeless gloom as did the apostasy of man. The former rebellion (of the angels) had indeed broken in like a flood upon the region of blessedness above, and carried off with one sweep a whole host of

God's happy creation; and fearfully strange seemed that dark event which thinned the ranks of heaven's rejoicing myriads, which first made a portion of God's universe acquainted with sin, and disturbed the unbroken harmony of heaven. But then by the formation of man that breach seemed to be repaired, and harmony restored, never to jar again. A barrier seemed placed immovably against any future invasion of a like desolating flood. When, however, this was swept away—when the recovered harmony was marred again, the case might be deemed desperate. Each creative movement seemed only to end in more signal failure. Especially when this strange reverse was not the operation of ages or years, but the work of a moment, the case seemed doubly hopeless. What God occupied six whole days in building, was overthrown in the twinkling of an eye! It looked as if evil had the entire mastery over good, and the creature over the Creator—and as if all things must be left to fall inevitably to wreck, the universe to drift away from the control of the hand that formed it, and sin to prove omnipotent.

But the Creator was still upon his throne, and his scepter unwrested from his hand. He was still the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, God only wise, of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things. The time had now come for the forth-putting of his power, and the exhibition of the riches of his unsearchable wisdom and knowledge.

That very event, so appalling in itself and apparently so unforeseen, soon began to assume a very different aspect. Light broke, though but in a faint streak at first, yet sufficient to proclaim a blessed dawn and a glorious day. The creature's ruin, instead of appearing the result of accident, or as an irreparable disaster, began to develop itself as the first indication of a marvelous purpose of manifesting the character of the Creator, and laying far deeper and broader than

before, the foundations on which a holy creation might be immovably based. The darkness was permitted, not only that it might furnish a contrast to the light, but that it might afford an opportunity for bringing forth that light into sevenfold brightness and beauty. God's mighty, original, eternal design now began to unroll itself. It became evident that the fall was no unforeseen occurrence, and its remedy no *afterthought*, no sudden expedient devised for the purpose of arresting an unexpected calamity. The permitted entrance of sin, through man's apostasy, was seen to be part of an everlasting design on the part of God for accomplishing ends which could not have been fulfilled, had sin not been allowed to enter.

When the angels kept not their first estate, they were at once consigned over to the judgment of the great day. There was no deliverance for them. Chains and darkness were their portion and inheritance. Once fallen, they were fallen forever. Once condemned, they were forever doomed to lie under wrath. In their case God showed himself a consuming fire. Nothing of his character was displayed save his displeasure against sin, and his swiftness to avenge it on all the workers of iniquity. Righteousness shone out in this prompt act of recompense, but no further light was cast upon his character, no further discovery made of his infinite mind. He had spoken out once, and let the universe know how he hated iniquity. But that was all. There was manifested no mercy, no pity, no love, no grace. It had been seen how "glorious in holiness" he was in punishing it had not yet been known whether he could be glorious in love by forgiving. The infinite dimensions of his heart had not yet been seen. Neither had any security been given that sin should not infect the whole creation like a universal pestilence, seizing upon every creature that either had been or might be brought into being. Now, however, by the second grand revolt, a scheme was to be

introduced, which, while it was to unfold the character of Jehovah in a way which could not have been done before, was also to afford security against all future inroads of the dreaded pestilence, and establish in holy peace forever that universe whose very foundations seemed to be giving way.

In the creation of man, no more of God's perfections were displayed than in the creation of angels. Mercy had not yet been shown forth, nor, indeed, could be to an unfallen creature, for mercy is love to the miserable, and therefore could go forth to none but the fallen. Thus, the very goodness of the newborn creation appeared as if it would impede the display of the Creator's glory. Man, therefore, was permitted to fall. And then began the full display of God's character, by the manifestation of his infinite love; and then it was that sevenfold luster began to be shed upon every other perfection, by the manner in which this love secured the deliverance of the object loved. The power, the wisdom, and goodness, the justice of Jehovah, rose up into new and awful grandeur, borne up by mercy, and with mercy crowning all. It was not the magnifying of one attribute at the expense of another—love at the expense of holiness; it was glorifying all the perfections of the Godhead together. It was a stupendous display of God's character. It was a marvelous insight into the bosom of the Father.

The *grace*, that is, the free love of God was the center round which all this glory gathered. In redemption, we have the unveiling of this free love to sinners. In creation, it was seen that he could love the holy; in redemption, it is declared that he can love the unholy, and yet be holy himself; yea, be glorified in holiness; that in the very act of loving the unholy, he could manifest more holiness than in punishing them. The infinite dimensions of his paternal heart now began to disclose themselves. Until now, his character had only been partially



revealed. But now in redeeming man, its hitherto undiscovered depths were displayed to view. Before the fall, the question was, Can God love the sinner? At the fall this was answered by himself, and it was declared that he could; that there was love in him, even to those who had entirely forfeited it, and stripped themselves of everything that could have attracted love. This was the dawn of day for a dark world. In this there was hope for the guilty. But the next question was, What will this love do for these worthless objects? Will it content itself with mere compassion? God's first promise proclaimed it to be a love that would rest satisfied with nothing but the salvation of its object. It was love that could not rest till it had replaced the fallen creature in its former condition of blessedness and favor. But is it a love that will encounter obstacles, that will incur sacrifices in order to accomplish its end? The answer to this was God's gift of his well-beloved Son. God so loved the world that he gave his Son. Thus it was proved that there was nothing too costly for this love to part with in order to get vent to itself in the salvation of the beloved object. This unspeakable gift is alike the pledge and measure of the love. What infinite depths of undiscovered love were thus laid bare! But, is it a love that can survive contempt and rejection? Is it a love that can love on, even when it meets with nothing but hatred in return for all this lavish kindness—malignant enmity in requital of friendship so glorious, so amazing? The history of this world's six thousand years attests this. It has been proved that it is patient, unwearied, long-suffering love—love which many waters cannot quench, neither can the floods drown.

It is thus, that through the fall of man, God's character has been opened up to us, and his name revealed in a way which otherwise could not have been accomplished. The exceeding riches of the grace of God have thus been displayed to us by means of the utter worthlessness of the object on which that grace was fixed. Grace can

only show itself in connection with an object in which there is absolutely “no good thing.” Let there be one good thing about it—one part not utterly naught—and grace has no room to show itself. Grace steps in when every other attribute retires. Grace takes for granted not that we *have* anything, but that we are destitute of everything; that “the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.” With the righteous, grace has nothing to do. It hands them over to righteousness to be dealt with according to its decree. With those who can produce even one lingering remnant of goodness, one trace or token of holiness, it can have nothing to do. It has to do with the lost, the guilty, the hopeless, the undone. These are its objects. “The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.”

From the beginning, God’s dealings with fallen man, have been such as to bring out the riches of his grace. At man’s first sin, grace came forth. It does not matter whether the scene recorded in Genesis, at the first giving of the promise took place one hour, or many hours after the sin had been committed. The moment the sin was committed, grace stepped in to suspend the stroke of vengeance from the transgressor’s head. Nothing but grace could have kept Adam one moment out of hell, or obtained for him the respite of a single hour. From that moment to this, grace has been flowing out to this fallen world; and in God’s treatment of the sinner, its fullness has been displaying itself. One sin and one sinner were not enough for its development. It is “the manifold grace of God”; and hence, there must be sins innumerable, and of every various form and name, as well as sinners in number countless, in order to show forth its manifold nature, as well as its infinite dimensions. In every variety of situation man has been placed, and sin of every shape allowed to develop itself, in order that grace yet more abundant might be brought forth to meet it. Man has been permitted to wander to the utmost lengths to which it is possible for a creature to go, in order to

show what resources of grace there are in God to meet the utmost extremity of sin. At each successive outburst of human wickedness, grace has come in and taken new occasion to display itself; and the more that sin has abounded, the more has grace “over abounded.” The higher that the tide of iniquity has swelled, the higher has grace risen, far surmounting the utmost heights of sin. The wider that wickedness has spread its hideous circle, the wider has grace stretched her far ampler compass, proving that there is not one spot on this ruined world, even “the ends of the earth,” nor one being of the fallen race on this side of hell, to which in its boundless reach it cannot extend.

Nor is it enough to say that every sinner is a monument of grace, and every sin an occasion for the display of grace. This is true, but it is not all. Each sinner is so in a way *different from any other*; and hence there is a different development of grace in each. Each case is quite peculiar, and hence each case is a new, distinct, peculiar manifestation of grace. It is grace seen in a new aspect, and in a new light, such as it has in no other case ever been presented to us. It is not merely true, that the history of the ransomed multitude is a history of the “reign of grace”; but the story of each individual of all that glorious company forms of itself a distinct and peculiar history of the same. It is not as if we were merely called to contemplate and admire one dazzling blaze from one great central planet; it is the form and luster of ten thousand resplendent orbs that we are summoned to gaze upon; learning from each a different story, and gathering from each a peculiar display of the infinite power of God. Thus, each saved sinner is a trophy of grace in a way such as no other sinner is or can be. Each has a wondrous story to tell of the grace that sought and found him; and each has a story of his own, such as no other has or can have. It is of grace that all have learned to sing; but one has one thing to say of it, and another has another; all

marvelous, yet all different! And then each single sin of each of these redeemed ones has been the occasion of a separate display of grace! What a history of manifold grace, then, does the life even of one ransomed sinner furnish! What, then, must be that manifestation of it brought out by the whole history of the great multitude that no man can number, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation!

But how far has this grace come? It has come the whole length of a sinner's distance from God. It did not wait till the sinner sought it, ere it came forth. It came unbidden and undesired. Nor did it wait till some of the distance had been removed, or some of the hindrances surmounted by the sinner himself. It traversed the whole distance itself, and over-leaped, or rather leveled every barrier. It burst forth spontaneous from the bosom of eternal love, and rested not till it had removed every impediment, and found its way up to the sinner's side, swelling round him in full flow. It does away the distance between the sinner and God, which sin had created. It meets the sinner on the spot where he stands, and it approaches him just as he is. It does not wait till there is something to attract it, nor till there is some good reason in the sinner for its flowing to him. No; unattracted, and without any reason in the sinner, it pours itself forth in all its fullness towards objects whose only title is their utter worthlessness, and their possessing nothing for the holy eye of God to delight in.

But what does grace expect from the sinner? Simply that he be a recipient of its boundless fullness. It asks no recompense *afterwards*, just as it sought no recommendation *before*. It does not calculate upon receiving an adequate requital in order to compensate for its freeness before. No. It never supposes anything in man but unworthiness, nor could it do so without losing its character as

*grace*. No doubt, when once it comes into contact with the sinner, it flings and fastens round him bonds of resistless love; it sets the whole soul in motion towards the God of grace, but this not as a matter of recompense, but simply a necessary and inevitable result. It is *grace* entirely from first to last. It was grace when it first thought of the sinner; it was grace when it found and laid hold of him; and it is grace still when it hands him up into glory.

But what is the *extent* of this grace? It is boundless. Like the heart of which it is the gracious out-flowing, it is altogether infinite. No amount of sin can impede its course, or arrest its resistless flow. Transgressions of scarlet and crimson dye, in a moment disappear before it, and become like snow or wool. Mountains of iniquity are leveled at its touch as the small dust of the balance. An ocean of guilt evaporates as a drop before its glowing warmth, and becomes as if it had never been. No number, no extent, no enormity of abominations can withstand grace so free, so abundant, so omnipotent. Where is the sinner on this side of hell that is beyond its reach? What mountains of sin can it not level; what valleys of iniquity can it not exalt, till the highway between the sinner and God is made straight and plain, so that none need mistake it or stumble upon it, or imagine that it is not for him?

But how has the distance been removed? How have these mountains been swept away? How have mercy and truth met together? How have righteousness and peace kissed each other? The apostle answers, "He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." And again he tells us, "Him God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past." It is by the blood of sacrifice that the channel has been opened up through which grace might find its way to us. Nothing but

propitiating blood could effect this. Grace was from eternity in the Father's bosom, but it was, if we may so speak, pent up, and could find no vent to itself till the death of God's own Son opened up a righteous way. It is then through blood that grace reaches us, the blood of a sin-bearer, a substitute; blood that proclaimed God's infinite love of holiness, and infinite abhorrence of sin; blood whose shedding proclaimed to the universe that not one jot or tittle of God's inexorable law had fallen to the ground. It is by this accepted sacrifice that grace now flows freely down to the chief of sinners. It is thus that the distance between the soul and God is done away with. It is thus that God can speak peace to the unrighteous and be righteous still; yea, be more righteous than before—be glorified in every holy perfection. The law has been magnified, and its uttermost penalty exhausted by another as our substitute, and thus the lawful captive is permitted to go free, and in his freedom God is glorified.

But how does this grace become connected with individuals so as to save them? It is free in itself, but may not its coming to the soul be a matter of merit or purchase? No! The link that binds it to the soul is as free as itself. "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." It is by believing God's declaration concerning the grace that a way is opened for its entrance. And this believing is the result of the Holy Spirit's teaching—the effect of his almighty power. In believing it we become recipients of it, just as by our unbelief we were rejecters of it; and this change, this reversal of our attitude in reference to grace is through the mighty power of God. There is nothing that the natural man is so unwilling to admit or so unable to comprehend as grace. In our dealings with each other, equity, law, justice are supposed to mingle, but grace is not admitted. Hence we are far more ready to introduce the former than the latter into our dealings with God, and we more easily understand principles of legal right and claim, than principles of simple grace.

The natural *mind* is as much a stranger to the very idea of grace as the natural heart is opposed to it. Hence unbelief of this grace is our besetting sin. It is the rock upon which sinners stumble and are lost. They will submit to anything for salvation but grace. They would do anything to be saved, but take it freely they will not. They prefer to perish. Hence the necessity of the Spirit's taking of the things of Christ, and showing them to the soul.

And what, then, is the effect of grace, believed by the sinner? Peace with God and a holy walk with him through this wilderness. Being justified by faith we have peace with God. The perception of God's gracious character, the belief of his forgiving love, removes the gloomy dread of him which the awakened conscience entertains, and we see in him a Being such as we can rejoice in, such as we can hold fellowship with, even in the full consciousness that we are the chief of sinners. Acquaintanceship with God produces peace as its immediate and sure result, and the soul being at peace with him delights to walk with him in holy fellowship and filial trust, seeking to be entirely like him whom he loves, and to spend and be spent for him who has removed his sins from him as far as the east is from the west.

But there are "riches of grace" in God, which "eye hath not seen nor ear heard"; riches of grace which, for their full development, are reserved for the ages yet to come (Eph. 2:7). We are told of the "grace that is to be brought us at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:13). Eternity alone will unfold these unsearchable riches, and disclose all their unfathomable depths. What openings up are yet to be made of God's marvelous grace! What a reserve of rich discovery is in store for the ransomed multitude, when out of the bosom of eternity new treasures of grace shall unroll themselves, as if all that is past had been as nothing when compared with what is still to come!

If such be the “exceeding riches of the grace of God,” past, present, and to come, what ample encouragement is held out to sinners! There is grace enough in the bosom of the Father for the chief of sinners. His love flows freely out like a full river, and ail may come. Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely. This love is *free*, and no amount of sin in us can straiten it, or make it insufficient to meet our case. It takes us just as we are, and brings to us its message of peace.

True, many refuse, but this does not alter the invitation or diminish the grace. Nay, *all would refuse*; not one would listen, or believe, or turn, were it not for the forth-putting of that mighty power of the Father, by which he wrought in Christ Jesus, when he raised him from the dead (Eph. 1:19). It is the resurrection-power of God alone that can raise the dead in sin. And it is this that brings out the hidden depths of the love of God. It is this that shows us yet deeper riches of grace than could have been conceived. For it brings to light that deep purpose of eternal love which resolved to bear with all rejection and refusal; which resolved to put forth an overcoming power, and take possession of the very hearts that had resisted and scorned his love. The riches of grace seen in the glad tidings of great joy are unutterable; but the riches of grace brought out in subduing the very souls that had for years rejected these, are deeper—vaster still. And every soul that has been drawn by the Father owns and feels the amazing grace that sent from above, and took him, and drew him out of many waters. He owns the deep love that at first sent the message of peace; but he also owns the deeper love that made that message effectual—that won his heart—that subdued his whole man—that wrought love in him in whom there had been nothing but enmity before. Take, for instance, a people to whom some faithful messenger of God has for many a Sabbath preached the glad tidings of the kingdom. Each message that he brought proclaimed the free love of



God. Long it was rejected. At length the Spirit was poured out, and the Father drew many sinners to himself. Was not this a new store of love that had hitherto remained unopened? Was not this a fuller gushing forth of the fountain of love? There was love manifested before in the message, even when not a soul was converted; but the conversion of so many souls was an additional manifestation of love. This was bringing into view an inner circle of love—the love that led not merely to the opening of a way of salvation, but of actually saving—the love of the Father in “drawing” (John 6:44, 65); the love of the Son in “quickenings” (John 5:21), and the love of the Spirit in “renewing” (Titus 3:5).

Oh, surely the God in whom there are such “riches of grace” is just the very God for a sinner to go to. The grace thus manifested is just the very thing that he needs; and the knowing this grace must be enough to dispel his fears. To know this free love, to go with assured confidence to that God in whom it is, as soon as we have heard that it is there, and to sit down among his children simply as those who have believed his love—this, this is blessedness—this, this is the foretaste of being forever with the Lord.

To this we are invited. To this the gospel calls each weary child of Adam. It is into our Father’s house, and into the fellowship of our Father’s love, that the Spirit fain would lead us, knowing that there is enough and to spare. And, oh, who would not enter in and rejoice forever? Whosoever will, is the word that salutes the ear of the far-off wanderer, and beckons him home. Whosoever will, is the inscription above the gate. Whosoever will, is the word of welcome that greets him as he enters the long-forsaken dwelling.

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blest us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ,*

*according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved”(Eph. 1:3-5).*

## **Faith Born of Need**

### **J. Gresham Machen**

Machen (1881-1937) was Professor of New Testament, first at Princeton Theological Seminary, and afterwards at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia. Excerpts from *What is Faith?* (1925).

The men and women to whom Jesus said in the Gospels, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace," all had very definite needs that they trusted Jesus to relieve. One was sick, one was deaf, one was blind; and when they came to Jesus they were not merely convinced that He was in general a powerful healer, but each of them was convinced, more or less firmly, that He could heal his peculiar infirmity, and each of them sought healing in his own specific case. So it is with us today. It is not enough for us to know that Jesus is great and good; it is not enough for us to know that He was instrumental in the creation of the world and that He is now seated

on the throne of all being. These things are indeed necessary to faith, but they are not all that is necessary; if we are to trust Jesus, we must come to Him personally and individually with some need of the soul which He alone can relieve. That need of the soul from which Jesus alone can save is sin.

How is it that Christ touches our lives? The answer which the Word of God gives to that question is perfectly specific and perfectly plain. Christ touches our lives, according to the New Testament, through the Cross. We deserved eternal death, in accordance with the curse of God's law; but the Lord Jesus, because He loved us, took upon Himself the guilt of our sins and died instead of us on Calvary. And faith consists simply in our acceptance of that wondrous gift. When we accept the gift, we are clothed, entirely without merit of our own, by the righteousness of Christ; when God looks upon us, He sees not our impurity but the spotless purity of Christ, and accepts us "as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone."

The Cross of Christ is the special basis of Christian faith. On the cross the penalty of our sins was paid; it is as though we ourselves had died in fulfillment of the just curse of the law; the handwriting of ordinances that was against us was wiped out; and henceforth we have an entirely new life in the full favor of God. The greatest offence of all, perhaps, is the wondrous simplicity of the gospel, which is so different from the plans which we on our part had made. Like Naaman the Syrian we are surprised when our rich fees and our letters of introduction are spurned, when all our efforts to save ourselves by our own character or our own good works are counted as not of the slightest avail. Are not our own efforts to put into operation the "principles of Jesus," or to "make Christ Master" by our own efforts in our lives, better than this strange message of the

Cross? But like Naaman we may find, if we put away our pride, if we are willing to take God at His word, if we confess that His way is best, that our flesh, so foul with sin, may come again like the flesh of a little child and we may be clean.

Acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ, as He is offered to us in the gospel of His redeeming work, is saving faith. Despairing of any salvation to be obtained by our own efforts, we simply trust in Him to save us; we say no longer, as we contemplate the Cross, merely "He saved others" or "He saved the world" or "He saved the church"; but we say, by the strange individualizing power of faith, "He loved me and gave Himself for me." When a man once says that, in his heart and not merely with his lips, then no matter what his guilt may be, no matter how far he is beyond any human pale, no matter how little opportunity he has for making good the evil that he has done, he is a ransomed soul, a child of God forever.

Faith consists not in doing something but in receiving something. To say that we are justified by faith is just another way of saying that we are justified not in slightest measure by ourselves, but simply and solely by the One in whom our faith is reposed. At this point appears the profound reason for what at first sight might seem to be a surprising fact. Why is it that with regard to the attainment of salvation the New Testament assigns such an absolutely exclusive place to faith; why does it not also speak, for example, of our being justified by love? It is perfectly clear that Paul did not speak of salvation by love, but that he spoke instead of justification by faith. Surely the thing requires an explanation; and certainly it does not mean that the apostle was inclined to depreciate love. And why did not Jesus say: "Thy love hath saved thee, go in peace," but rather: "Thy faith hath saved thee"? (Luke 7:50)

The answer to this question is really abundantly plain. The true reason why faith is given such an exclusive place by the New Testament, so far as the attainment of salvation is concerned, over against love and over against everything else in man, is that faith means receiving something, not doing something or even being something. To say, therefore, that our faith saves us means that we do not save ourselves even in the slightest measure, but that God saves us. The very center and core of the whole Bible is the doctrine of the grace of God -- the grace of God which depends not one whit upon anything that is in man, but is absolutely undeserved, resistless and sovereign. Christian experience depends for its depth and for its power upon the way in which that blessed doctrine is cherished in the depths of the heart. The center of the Bible, and the center of Christianity, is found in the grace of God.

At bottom, faith is in one sense a very simple thing; it simply means that abandoning the vain effort of earning one's way into God's presence we accept the gift of salvation which Christ offers so full and free. The man who has been justified by God, the man who has accepted as a free gift the condition of rightness with God which Christ offers, is not a man who hopes that possibly, with due effort, if he does not fail, he may finally win through to become a child of God. But he is a man who has already become a child of God. If our being children of God depended in slightest measure upon us, we could never be sure that we had attained the high estate. But as a matter of fact it does not depend upon us; it depends only upon God. It is not a reward that we have earned but a gift that we have received.

In the New Testament, faith, as the reception of a free gift, is placed in sharpest contrast with any intrusion of human merit; it is natural to find that faith is sharply contrasted with works. The contrast is really implied by the New Testament throughout, and in one book,

the Epistle to the Galatians, it forms the express subject of the argument. Paul is not merely arguing that a man is justified by faith - - so much no doubt his opponents, the Judaizers, admitted -- but he is arguing that a faith is justified by faith alone. What the Judaizers said was not that a man is justified by works, but that he is justified by faith and works -- exactly the thing that is being taught by the Roman Catholic Church today. No doubt they admitted that it was necessary for a man to have faith in Christ in order to be saved. A man's obedience to the law of God, they held, was not, indeed, sufficient for salvation, but it was necessary; and it became sufficient when it was supplemented by Christ.

Against this compromising solution of the problem, the Apostle insists upon a sharp alternative: a man may be saved by works (if he keeps the law perfectly), or he may be saved by faith; but he cannot possibly be saved by faith and works together. Christ, according to Paul, will do everything or nothing; if righteousness is in slightest measure obtained by our obedience to the law, then Christ died in vain; if we trust in slightest measure in our own good works, then we have turned away from grace and Christ profiteth us nothing.

To the world, that may seem to be a hard saying: but it is not a hard saying to the man who has ever known the weary effort at establishment of his own righteousness in the presence of God, and then has come to understand that Christ has done all. The man who has said with Toplady, "Nothing in my hand I bring, Simply to Thy cross I cling" -- that man knows that to trust Christ only for part is not to trust Him at all, that our own righteousness is insufficient even to bridge the smallest gap which might be left open between us and God, that there is no hope unless we can safely say to the Lord Jesus: "Thou must save, and Thou alone."

That is the center of the Christian religion -- the absolutely undeserved and sovereign grace of God, saving sinful men by the gift of Christ upon the cross. Condemnation comes by merit; salvation comes only by grace: condemnation is earned by man; salvation is given by God. Everywhere the basis of the New Testament is the same -- the mysterious, incalculable, wondrous, grace of God. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

The reception of that gift is faith; faith means not doing something but receiving something; it means not the earning of a reward but the acceptance of a gift. A man can never be said to obtain a thing for himself if he obtains it by faith; indeed to say that he obtains it by faith is only another way of saying that he does not obtain it for himself but permits another to obtain it for him. To say that we are saved by faith is to say that we do not save ourselves but are saved only by the one in whom our faith is reposed. Even we, weak and ignorant though we are, can see, I think, why faith was chosen instead of love, for example, as the channel by which salvation could enter into our lives. Even before we could love as we ought to love, even before we could do anything or feel anything aright, we were saved by faith; we were saved by abandoning all confidence in our own thoughts or feelings or actions and by simply allowing ourselves to be saved by God.

In one sense, indeed, we were saved by love. Yes, we were saved by love, but it was by a greater love than the love in our cold and sinful hearts; we were saved by love, but it was not our love for God but God's love for us, God's love for us by which he gave the Lord Jesus to die for us upon the cross. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our

sins" (I John 4:10). That love alone is the love that saves. And the means by which it saves is faith.



# Faith in God

## J. Gresham Machen

*Machen (1881-1937) was Professor of New Testament, first at Princeton Theological Seminary, and afterwards at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia. Excerpts from What is Faith? (1925).*

It is impossible to have faith in a person without having knowledge of the person. In the classic treatment of faith in the Epistle to the Hebrews, there is a verse that goes to the very root of the matter. "He that cometh to God," the author says, "must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6). Religion is here made to depend absolutely upon doctrine; the one who comes to God must not only believe in a person, but he must also believe *that* something is true; faith is here declared to involve acceptance of a proposition. It is impossible, according to the Epistle to the Hebrews, to have faith in a person without accepting with the mind the facts about the person.

Confidence in a person is more than intellectual assent to a series of propositions about the person, but it always involves those propositions, and becomes impossible the moment they are denied. It is quite impossible to trust a person about whom one assents to propositions that make the person untrustworthy, or fails to assent to propositions that make him trustworthy. Assent to certain propositions is not the whole of faith, but it is an absolutely necessary element in faith. So assent to certain propositions about God is not all of faith in God, but it is necessary to faith in God; and

Christian faith, in particular, though it is more than assent to a creed, is absolutely impossible without assent to a creed. One cannot trust a God whom one holds with the mind to be either non-existent or untrustworthy.

According to the New Testament, communion with God or faith in God is dependent upon the doctrine of his existence. But it is dependent upon other doctrines in addition to that. "He that cometh to God," says the Epistle to the Hebrews, "must believe that he is, *and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*" In this latter part of the sentence, we have, expressed in a concrete way, the great truth of the personality of God. What we have is a presentation of what the Bible elsewhere calls the "living" God. God not only exists, but is a free Person who can act. The same truth appears with even greater clearness in the third verse of the same great chapter. "Through faith we understand," says the author, "that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." Here we have, expressed with a clearness that leaves nothing to be desired, the doctrine of creation out of nothing, and that doctrine is said to be received by faith. It is the same doctrine that appears in the first verse of the Bible, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," and that really is presupposed in the Bible from beginning to the end.

Certain things, according to the Bible, are known about God, and without these things there can be no faith. The Bible teaches plainly that God has given to man a faculty of reason which is capable of apprehending truth, even truth about God. That does not mean that we finite creatures can find out God by our own searching; but it does mean that God has made us capable of receiving the information which He chooses to give. I cannot evolve an account of China out of my own inner consciousness, but I am perfectly capable

of understanding the account which comes to me from travelers who have been there themselves. So our reason is certainly insufficient to tell us about God unless He reveals Himself; but it is capable (or would be capable if it were not clouded by sin) of receiving revelation when once it is given. The knowledge that God has graciously given us of Himself is the basis of our confidence in Him; the God of the Bible is One whom it is reasonable to trust.

How then may we attain to this knowledge of God that is so necessary to faith; how may we become acquainted with Him? God is known through the Bible. It presents God in loving action, in the course of history, for the salvation of sinful men. From Genesis to Revelation, from Eden to Calvary, as the covenant God of Israel and as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, all through the varied course of Bible story, God appears in the fulfillment of one loving plan. We see various aspects of His person; He appears in anger as well as in love. But it is plainly the same Person throughout: we rise from the Bible -- I think we can say it without irreverence -- with a knowledge of the character of God. There is a real analogy here to our relation with an earthly friend. How do we come to know one another? Not all at once, but by years of observation of one another's actions. We have seen a friend in time of danger, and he has been brave; we have gone to him in perplexity, and he has been wise; we have had recourse to him in time of trouble, and he has given us his sympathy. So gradually, with the years, on the basis of many, many such experiences, we have come to love him and revere him. So it is, somewhat, with the knowledge of God that we obtain from the Bible. In the Bible we see God in action; we see Him in fiery indignation wiping out the foulness of Sodom; we see Him leading Israel like a flock; we see Him giving His only begotten Son for the sins of the world. And by what we see we learn to know Him.

Redemption was accomplished, according to the New Testament, by an event in the external world, at a definite time in the world's history, when the Lord Jesus died upon the cross and rose again. It is Christ, therefore, very naturally, who is ordinarily represented as the object of faith. In the case of our relation to Jesus, we are committing to Him the most precious thing that we possess -- our own immortal souls. It is a stupendous act of trust. And it can be justified only by an appeal to facts.

The facts which justify our appeal to Jesus concern not only His goodness but also His power. We might be convinced of His goodness, and yet not trust Him with those eternal concerns of the soul. He might have the will to help and not the power. We might be in the position of the ship-captain's child in the touching story, who, when all on shipboard were in terror because of an awful storm, learned that his father was on the bridge and went peacefully to sleep. The confidence of the child very probably was misplaced; but it was misplaced not because the captain was not faithful and good, but because the best of men has no power to command the wind and the sea that they should obey him. Is our confidence in Jesus equally misplaced? It is misplaced if Jesus was the poor, weak enthusiast that He is represented as being by those who regard Him simply as a Jewish teacher. But very different is the case if He was the Person presented in the Word of God.

It is one thing to hold that the ethical principles which Jesus enunciated will solve the problems of society, and quite a different thing to trust Him as the eternal Son of God, come voluntarily to earth for our redemption, now risen from the dead and holding communion with those who commit their lives to Him. A man can admire General Washington, for example, and accept the principles of his life; yet one cannot be said to trust him, for the simple reason

that he died over a hundred years ago. His soldiers could trust him: for in their day he was alive; but we cannot trust him, because now he is dead.

But the words of Jesus that are recorded in the New Testament make it abundantly plain that the gospel which Jesus proclaimed was, at its very center, a gospel about Him; it did far more than set forth a way of approach to God which Jesus Himself followed, for it presented Jesus as Himself the way. According to the New Testament our Lord presented Himself not merely as Teacher and Example and Leader but also, and primarily, as Savior; He offered Himself to sinful men as One who alone could give them entrance into the Kingdom of God. "The Son of Man," He said, "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). He invited men not merely to have faith in God like the faith which He had in God, but He invited them to have faith in Him. He clearly regarded Himself as Messiah, not in some lower meaning of the word, but as the heavenly Son of Man who was to come with the clouds of heaven and be the instrument in judging the world.

According to a very widespread way of thinking Jesus was the Founder of the Christian religion because He was the first to live the Christian life, in other words because He was Himself the first Christian. But Jesus stands in a far more fundamental relation to Christianity than that; He was the Founder of our religion not because He was the first Christian, but because He made Christianity possible by His redeeming work. Christianity is a way of getting rid of sin. Our trouble is that our lives do not seem to be like the life of Jesus. Unlike Jesus, we are sinners, and hence, unlike Him, we become Christians; we are sinners, and hence we accept with thankfulness the redeeming love of the Lord Jesus Christ, who had

pity on us and made us right with God, through no merit of our own, by His atoning death.

The Lord Jesus, then, came into this world not primarily to say something, not even to be something, but to do something; He came not merely to lead men through His example out into a "larger life," but to give life, through His death and resurrection, to those who were dead in trespasses and sins; we are Christians not because we have faith in God like the faith in God which Jesus Himself had, but because we have faith in Him.

One fearful doubt, however, still assails us. It comes from the nothingness of human life, the thought of the infinite abyss which is all about us as we walk upon this earth. It cannot be denied that man is imprisoned on one of the smaller of the planets, that he is enveloped by infinity on all sides, and that he lives but for a day in what seems to be a pitiless procession. The things in which he is interested, the whole of his world, form but an imperceptible oasis in the desert of immensity. It cannot be denied: man is a finite creature. From one point of view he is very much like the beasts that perish.

But that is not the whole truth. Man is not only finite: for he knows that he is finite, and that knowledge brings him into connection with infinity. He lives in a finite world, but he knows, at least, that it is not the totality of things. He lives in a procession of phenomena, but he cannot help searching for a first cause; in the midst of his trivial life, there rises in his mind the thought of God, an inscrutable power. In the presence of it man is helpless, but more unhappy -- unhappy because of fear. With what assurance can we meet the infinite power? Its works in nature, despite all nature's beauty, are horrible in the infliction of suffering. And what if physical suffering should not be all; what of the sense of guilt; what if the condemnation of

conscience should be but the foretaste of judgment; what if contact with the infinite should be contact with a dreadful infinity of holiness; what if the inscrutable cause of all things should be, after all, a righteous God?

Can Jesus help us? Make Him as great as you will, and still He may seem to be insufficient. Extend the domains of His power far beyond our ken, and still there may seem to be a shelving brink with the infinite beyond. And still we are subject to fear. The mysterious power that explains the world still, we say, will sweep in and overwhelm us and our Savior alike. We are of all men most miserable; we had trusted in Christ; He carried us a little on our way, and then left us, helpless as before, on the brink of eternity. There is for us no hope; we stand defenseless at length in the presence of unfathomed mystery, unless our Savior were Himself the eternal God.

Then comes the full, rich consolation of God's Word -- the mysterious sentence in Philippians: "who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God" (Philippians 2:6); the strange cosmology of Colossians: "who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature: for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist" (Colossians 1:15-17); the majestic prologue of the Fourth Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1); the mysterious consciousness of Jesus: "All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him" (Matthew 11:27).

These things have been despised as idle speculation, but in reality they are the very breath of our Christian lives. They are, indeed, the battle ground of theologians; the church hurled anathemas at those who held that Christ, though great, was less than God. But those anathemas were beneficent and right. That difference of opinion was no trifle; there is no such thing as "almost God." The next thing less than the infinite is infinitely less. If Christ be the greatest of infinite creatures, then still our hearts are restless, still we are mere seekers. But now is Christ, our Savior (the One who says, "Thy sins are forgiven thee"), revealed as God. There is now for us no awful Beyond of mystery and fear. We cannot, indeed, explain the world; to us it is all unknown, but it contains no mysteries for our Savior; He is on the throne; He is at the center; He is ground and explanation of all things; He pervades the remotest bounds; by Him all things consist. The world is full of dread, mysterious powers; they touch us already in a thousand woes. But from all of them we are safe. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:35-39)

**Sinners Welcome to Come to Jesus Christ**

**Archibald Alexander**



Alexander (1772-1851) was the founding professor of Princeton Theological Seminary.

Our blessed Lord knew how prone convinced sinners are to unbelief as it regards the reception which he is disposed to give them if they come to him, and therefore he graciously uttered, and has left on record this precious encouragement, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." No, though your sins are very great, the kind Redeemer will not cast you out; even if that were true which you sometimes think, that you are the greatest sinner who ever lived upon earth, he will not cast you out. "His blood cleanseth from all sin." It is as easy for him to save a great as a small sinner. No one was ever saved because his sins were small; no one was ever rejected on account of the greatness of his sins. Where sin abounded, grace shall much more abound. If your guilt is very enormous, the greater honor will redound to that Deliverer who plucks such a brand from the burning. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

But is there not one sin which never has pardon, neither in this world nor in that which is to come? There is; but no one who committed that sin ever desires to come to Christ; and even that sin would not be unpardonable, if the sinner who is burdened with its guilt should come to him. It is not unpardonable because the blood of Christ has not adequate efficacy to remove it, but because the miserable blasphemer is abandoned by the Spirit of God to his own malignity, and therefore never does nor can desire to believe on Christ.

Christ will not cast you off because you have long continued to sin against God, though it be even to gray hairs and the decrepitude of old age. It is indeed a wicked thing to continue one day in rebellion against the King of heaven; and no one can calculate the debt of guilt

incurred by spending a long life in continued acts of transgression. But however long you may have continued in rebellion, and how ever black and long the catalog of your sins, yet if you will now turn to God by a sincere repentance, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you shall not be cast out. He that cannot lie hath declared, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." I heard a preacher declare from the pulpit that there was no example in the Bible of anyone being converted in old age; but he was undoubtedly under a mistake. Was not Manasseh, one of the wickedest men who ever lived, brought to repentance in old age? The ages of those converted on the day Pentecost and at other times are not given. It is enough for us to know that the aged no more than the young are excluded from the free invitations of the blessed Savior. He invites all the laboring and heavy-laden, and of course those who are burdened with the infirmities of declining years as well as of unnumbered sins.

Aged sinner, you are not excluded from mercy by any word of God in the whole book of divine revelation. God has set before you an open door which no man has a right or power to shut. If you should be shut out, it will be by your own unbelief, and not for want of a warrant to come. Enter, then, without delay or hesitation. None can less afford to delay than the aged sinner. Now is the time. Now or never. You have, as it were, one foot already in the grave. Your opportunities will soon be over. Strive, then, I entreat you, to enter in at the strait gate.

But do you ask whether a man may not outlive his day of grace, and be given over to judicial blindness before life is ended? Undoubtedly he may; but as I said before, such a one, I believe, is never found inquiring what he must do to be saved. The devil often tempts aged sinners, and others too, to believe that it is now too late for them to repent; that the time of their visitation is gone by, and that there is

no hope for them. And many miserable souls are long held entangled in this snare. He may even quote Scripture to prove that there is a boundary which, when passed, all hope of salvation is to be relinquished. But as long as we are in the body we have the overtures of mercy made to us by the authority of God, and whether we be young or old, "he that cometh," Christ has declared, shall not be cast out. Take him at his word. Venture on him. If you stay away you must perish, and you can but perish if you go. But see, the golden scepter is held out. This affords full assurance that if you draw near and touch it you shall live.

Some are convinced that there is salvation in no other but Christ the Lord, yet they hesitate to come because they feel themselves to be so vile and unworthy. They cannot be persuaded that so great and holy a being as the Son of God will look with favor on creatures so abominably polluted and stained with iniquity. Such feelings as these very naturally arise in the minds of persons made sensible of the sinful defilement of their nature; but they are most unreasonable when we take into view the character of Jesus Christ, and the errand on which he came into the world. If he had become incarnate and had died on the cross only for the benefit of the pure and righteous, then this excuse for not coming to him would have some validity; but when we know that he bears the character of a Savior of sinners, and that his name was called Jesus by the angel who announced his birth, because he should save his people from their sins; when we consider his repeated declaration, that he came to seek and save the lost -- not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, and that he exhibits himself as the Physician, not of the whole, but the sick, we must pronounce this objection most unreasonable.

If you were not a sinful, polluted, helpless, and miserable creature, this Savior would not be suited to you, and you would not be

comprehended in his gracious invitations to the children of men. But the deeper you are sunk in sin and misery, the greater reason you have for coming to one who is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. If you were covered with leprosy, and a fountain was opened for washing away every sort of uncleanness, would you stay away because you were so polluted? Or if deadly sick, would you refuse to apply to the physician? The awakened, convinced sinner is the very one to whom Jesus especially directs his attention. And it is a preposterous thing for such to delay coming, under the delusive hope of making themselves fit. This they never can do, and if they could they would not need a Savior. What, will you wash yourselves in a muddy pool to prepare for being cleansed in a pure fountain?

But some one may be ready to say, "All admit that none ever come to Christ until they experience conviction of sin, but I have no conviction, or none worth mentioning. My mind is so blind that I can perceive nothing clearly, and my heart is so hard that what I do see to be true I cannot feel. O if I could experience some tender relenting -- if I could get this adamant heart broken into contrition -- if I could even feel pungent pain or alarm on account of my sins, my case would not appear so hopeless. But how can I come to Christ with this blind and stupid heart?"

Now, my friend, I beg you to consider that this blindness and unyielding hardness is the very core of your iniquity, and to be convinced that you are thus blind and stupid is true conviction of sin. If you had those feelings which you so much covet, they would not answer the end of conviction, which is, to show you how sinful and helpless your condition is. But if you felt as you wish to feel, you would not think your heart so wicked as you now see it to be. And the truth is, that you are now in a better situation to come to Christ than

you would be if you had less conviction of the hardness and stubbornness of your heart. The use of conviction is to show your need of a Savior, and to set clearly before your mind your utterly helpless and hopeless condition in yourself, and that a holy God would be perfectly just in leaving you to your own fruitless efforts, and in punishing you for ever for your sins.

"Let not conscience make you linger,  
Nor of fitness fondly dream;  
All the fitness he requireth  
Is to feel your need of him."

Take words, therefore, and go immediately and fall down before him, and say, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight, that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." Confess the righteousness of the sentence which condemns you, and accept the punishment of your sins as just. Cry with Peter, when sinking in the sea, "Lord save; I perish." Or with the blind man, "O thou Son of David, have mercy upon me!" Or with the Syrophenician woman, "Lord, help me." Or with the penitent publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Say, like the royal penitent,

"My lips with shame my sins confess  
Against thy law, against thy grace.  
Lord, should thy judgment grow severe,  
I am condemned, but thou art clear.

Yet save a trembling sinner, Lord,  
Whose hope, still hovering round thy word,  
Would light on some sweet promise there,  
Some sure support against despair."

But here is another poor soul, more bowed down than any which have considered. It is an awakened backslider. This man verily thought that he was a true Christian, and under that impression applied for admittance into the church, and was received, and for a season seemed to run well; but by the snares and baits of the world, and the deceitfulness of the riches, and insidious lusts of the flesh, and the pride of life, was by the degrees seduced from the paths of piety. After a while the profession of religion was laid aside as an inconvenient thing; since which time, until lately, he has been sinking deeper and deeper into the spirit of the world which lies in wickedness. But recently, by a sore visitation of affliction, his conscience has been awakened to a consideration of his woeful state, and he inquires with most earnest solicitude whether there is any ground of hope for such a backslider, who has sinned much more egregiously since he made a profession of religion than he ever did before. Now to such a one I feel authorized to say, Christ invites even backsliders like you to come and be saved. I find no clause excluding the returning backslider, guilty as he is in the sight of God. He says in regards to this man as others, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

There is indeed mention made in Scripture of some backsliders who turned back unto perdition, and never can be renewed again unto repentance; these never come to Christ, and never truly desire to come. For them nothing remains "but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation to devour the adversaries."

But we read in Jeremiah of the Lord calling upon his backsliding Israel to return, Jeremiah 3:12; and in Hosea, God says, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely." Hosea 14:4. This is a most gracious and encouraging promise, and we find in fact that God has received great backsliders upon their repentance, and freely

pardoned their enormous sins. I believe that the deplorable backslidings of David, and his subsequent pardon and restoration, were left on record that convinced backsliders might not despair of mercy. And our Lord intimates that Peter, when recovered from his shameful fall, should make it his business "to strengthen his brethren." Some of this class may perhaps allege that they are afraid that they never were truly of the number of the Israel of God. That perhaps is a question which you will never be able to solve in this life. But as to the point in hand it matters not; if you will now come to Christ, you will be received. Come, and he will in no wise cast you out.

It is commonly said that men are forward to believe whatever is connected with their own interest. This in common cases is true; but it is also true, that when some very great and unexpected good news is brought to us, we find it very difficult to credit it. It seems too good to be true. When Jacob's sons returned to their father after Joseph had made himself known to them, and informed him that his son Joseph was alive and governor of all Egypt, the old man could not believe the report until he lifted up his eyes and saw the wagons which had been sent to convey him to Egypt. So the convinced sinner finds it very hard to believe that a free and full salvation is offered to him, and that Christ stands ready to receive him, and not only to pardon all his sins, but give him a sure title to heavenly inheritance. It seems a thing almost impossible that he should be thus highly favored, and therefore, when he should with humble confidence lay hold on eternal life, he stands parleying, hesitating, and demurring. He is prone to think that there must be some mistake in the business, and that this good news cannot be true, at least in relation to himself. But when the truth stands out clearly revealed, he begins to understand what he never did before, the absolute and perfect freeness of salvation, and how it is that Christ receives the coming

sinner just as he is, in all his guilt and vileness. Then, indeed, he cannot but rejoice and wonder at the suitableness of the plan of salvation to his character and necessities; that it comes down to his wretched and helpless circumstances, and takes him out of the horrible pit and miry clay, and sets his feet on a rock, establishes his goings, and puts a new song into his mouth, even praise unto God.

Since awakened, convicted sinners are so prone to unbelief on this point, it will not be a superfluous labor to offer some cogent reasons to convince such that Christ will not cast off any who come to him, whatever may have been their former character or sins.

And I would first mention, that all who come are drawn by the Father. "No man," says Christ, "can come unto me except the Father which sent me draw him." Those who do truly come are such as were given to him by the Father. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." Now this drawing of the Father is the fruit of his everlasting love. "We love him, because he first loved us." And surely Christ will not cast out those whom the Father has loved and given to him, and effectually drawn by his grace.

But you may be ready to reply, "How shall I know that I am of the number given by the Father to the Son?" I answer, that you need no other or better evidence of it than your being willing to come. Surely you know that you did not make yourself willing. If you have come to Christ, or are willing to come, I am sure that you will ascribe it entirely to the grace of God. Others, as good by nature and practice as you, remain in love with the world and under the power of sin. Why is it? You must say with Paul, "By the grace of God I am what I am." The choice did not commence with you, but with him. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." And as Christ concurs with the Father in this drawing, for he says, "And I, if I be lifted up, will



draw all men unto me," he surely will not cast out the poor penitent whom he has drawn to his feet. No, no; never. "Him that cometh he will in no wise cast out."

Again, Christ redeemed, by the shedding of his precious blood, every soul that comes to him, and the impelling motive which induced him to die for sinners was love, unspeakable love: "who loved us, and gave himself for us." Can any one then think or suspect that when Christ sees the travail of his soul coming to him, he will cast them out? It would be like blasphemy to say that he would. No; he delights to see the fruit of his painful suffering even unto death. It was predicted, in connection with the impressive description of his sufferings and death, that he should "see the travail of his soul, and be satisfied."

Again, the Holy Spirit is the agent in convincing men of sin and bringing them to Christ; and this Holy Spirit is sent by the Son as well as the Father to accomplish this work; and when it is effected, when the soul is made willing to bow his neck to the easy yoke of Christ, will he cast him out? Impossible.

But the honor and glory of the Redeemer is concerned in this matter. God is not glorified in any transaction upon earth so much as in the conversion of a sinner. There is joy in heaven at the repentance of one sinner, more than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance. And every redeemed and renewed soul is a jewel in the mediatorial crown.

We may learn the willingness of Jesus Christ to receive sinners, not only by his frequent gracious declarations, but by his conduct in regard to such as applied to him. Christ's personal ministry was confined to people of Israel, and when he sent out the twelve, and afterwards the seventy, their commission was restricted within the

same limits. Yet when a woman of Canaan came to implore his aid, he did not reject her, though she descended from an accursed race. At first, indeed, he seemed to give her repulse, but it was intended only to bring more clearly to view the strength of her faith. And his address to her in the end is truly remarkable: "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee as thou wilt." And when the centurion, another pagan, applied to him to come and heal his child, he did not reject his suit because he was a heathen, but said of him, "Verily, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

When the vilest sinners, as publicans and harlots, came penitently to his feet, he rejected none of them, although his gracious attention to such greatly injured his reputation in the view of the scribes and Pharisees. His condescending behavior towards that woman who was notorious as a sinner, is in the highest degree touching. He was dining in the house of a Pharisee, and this infamous but penitent woman, urged by the strength of her feelings, found her way into the house, and while he was reclining on a couch at dinner, she came up behind him and wept such a flood of tears on his feet, that she is said to have washed his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. This led the Pharisee to entertain a suspicion that Christ could not be a teacher sent from God, or he would have known the infamous character of this woman. Jesus knowing his thoughts, uttered the beautiful parable of the two debtors, and then making the application to the case of the penitent woman, said, "Wherefore I say unto you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven."

When our blessed Lord was hanging on the cross, he was applied to by one of the malefactors crucified with him. This man being one of the two selected from all the prisoners in Jerusalem for public execution on this occasion, was no doubt deeply stained with the guilt of enormous crimes; but was his suit denied? O no; the

response was full of mercy: "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Who can fathom the freeness and riches of the grace of Christ? It is indeed "unsearchable riches."

Paul may with propriety be here introduced. According to his own acknowledgment, he was a murderer and a blasphemer, but he obtained mercy, and was made an apostle, a chief instrument in propagating that gospel which he once attempted to destroy, among the Gentiles. Many of the first converts from among the heathen were notorious for the foulest and vilest crimes, for the apostle in writing to the Corinthians, after giving a black list of crimes which exclude the persons guilt of them from the kingdom of heaven, says, "And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

But perhaps no example of the extent of divine mercy and its sovereign freedom can equal the pardon extended to the very persons who had imbrued their hands in Christ's own blood. The blood which they shed procured their salvation. And Christ seems to have had special compassion for the bloody city of Jerusalem. Before his death he wept over it and lamented its doom; and after his resurrection, when he met his disciples in a body, he gave direction that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Accordingly, on the day of Pentecost, Peter charges the sin of crucifying the Lord Jesus upon the consciences of those whom he addressed, saying, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Did Peter tell them that as they had committed this

enormous crime, Christ would not pardon them? By no means. He calls upon them to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. And these greatest of sinners were that very day received into the church, and continued steadfast in their attachment to Christ and profession of his name.

Innumerable instances since that day have occurred of the repentance of the greatest sinners, and no true penitent has ever been rejected. If one instance could be produced of any sinner being rejected who ever came to Christ, this might create some doubt in the soul agonized with a sense of guilt. But as there is no such example, the trembling sinner, feeling that he is justly exposed to the wrath of God, need not hesitate nor delay to come at once to Christ, with the assurance that however vile and guilty he may be, he shall meet a welcome reception. O sinner, you are welcome to come to Jesus Christ.

All difficulty as to Christ's willingness to receive returning sinners being, as it is hoped, removed, the only thing which remains to be considered is, what is to be understood by coming to Christ, and what are the steps which the sinner must take to come. It is too obvious to need any remark, that a mere bodily approach is not the thing intended. Many of Christ's bitterest enemies were often near his person, as Judas when he betrayed him with a kiss, the soldiers that bound him, that smote him, that scourged him, that nailed him to the cross; but this kind of approach to Christ did those who came near him no good. The coming to Christ of which we have been treating, is the act of the anxious mind which seeks salvation from the burden of sin, and apprehending that Christ is the only Redeemer, trusts in him. Christ is exhibited in the gospel as the only Mediator by whom we can be reconciled to God, and offers to do for the sinner whatever is requisite to save him from the curse of the law,

and from the blindness and pollution of sin itself; and coming to him is the same as receiving him in that character, or as sustaining those offices which relate to salvation.

There is but one step to be taken, strictly speaking, in coming to Christ, and that is believing in him with all the heart. We are not required to repent and do good works before we come, but to come to him to give us repentance unto life, and to create us anew to good works. But though the act of coming is a single act, yet there are some things which are experienced before this act can be rationally performed. No unawakened, careless sinner, remaining in that state, will come; for the "whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." The sinner who knows nothing of Christ as he is revealed in the Scriptures, cannot come until he is instructed in regard to the character of Christ. Faith therefore comes by hearing the word. A soul perverted by erroneous opinions respecting the fundamental doctrines of religion, cannot come until he is delivered from these errors. That man who believes Christ to be the promised Messiah, but thinks that he is no more than a good man and a prophet, cannot come to Christ until this fundamental error be removed. The soul that truly comes to Christ must be persuaded that he is indeed the Son of God, and possessed of divine perfections.

The soul convinced of its sins first seeks Christ as he is an atoning Priest. That which it wants is the pardon of sin, and reconciliation with an offended God. Christ, as the great High-priest, has offered up himself as an atoning sacrifice for sin; and as a priest he has entered into the holy place made without hands, there to sprinkle, as it were, his life-giving blood, and to intercede for all who come unto him. When in this character he is apprehended by the seeking sinner, confidence in him is produced. It is seen now how God can be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly who believes in Christ. It is seen

that God having accepted Christ's atoning sacrifice, can receive the guilty sinner into favor and adopt the rebel as a child. These views, accompanied by this trust in the Lord Jesus as having made a complete atonement for our sins, is the act of coming to Christ. But as the soul that is regenerated feels sin itself to be a burden, it looks to Christ for a deliverance from all the disorders of the depraved mind. He is therefore received and trusted, to deliver the soul from the deep stains of iniquity, and by the light of his truth to guide it in the right way.

Let it be remembered that this coming to Christ is not a solitary act of believing soul; it is one which must continually repeated. The justified sinner is every moment dependent on his Savior, without whom he can do nothing. As he is at first justified by faith, so he lives by faith, walks by faith, and by faith overcomes all his enemies, and brings forth the fruits of holiness and peace.

But some will be ready to say, "There is no coming to Christ unless we are drawn, and why then are we blamed for not coming?"

This is not the language of the truly convinced sinner, for he sees and feels that he is guilty of the damning sin of unbelief, and that he deserves to be punished for this sin above all others; for it is this which seals the guilt of all others upon his soul. Dead in sin, it is certain that he will perform no holy action, but he is still a rational and accountable being. The law of God does not lose its authority to command because we have become sinful. It will never do to plead sin as an excuse for sin, or to attempt to justify sinful acts by pleading that we have an evil heart. This instead of being a valid apology, is the very ground of our condemnation. If you feel that your heart is thus blinded and depraved, this conviction of your miserable, sinful state should humble you deeply in the dust, and

induce you to cry more earnestly to God for his life-giving Spirit. Often, however, when Christ sends forth his gracious invitation to believe, he enables the soul by the energy of his Spirit accompanying the call to come and receive his grace. He accompanies his word with a quickening efficacy, and "the dead hear the voice of the Son of God and live." Our whole dependence is on the influence of the Holy Spirit. "Paul may plant and Apollos water, but God giveth the increase."

Let us now review the truths which have been inculcated.

1. Christ is an able and willing Savior, who will in no wise cast out any soul that comes to him.
2. The grace of God, through Christ, is perfectly free; that is, he requires no qualification or merit in those who come. They are invited to apply to him in all their guilt and pollution, that they may from his gracious hands receive pardon and renovation.
3. There is no obstacle in the way of any sinner's coming but what exists in himself. The door of mercy cannot be set wider open than it is; the invitations of Christ could not be more kind and full.
4. The whole blame of the sinner's ruin who refuses to come to Christ, will lie at his own door. The only obstacle is his own perverseness and unwillingness. Christ was willing to give life to his greatest enemies if they would come to him; for he complains, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life."
5. The conversion of a single soul is the work of God only. The same power which caused light to shine out of darkness, must shine into our hearts. Creation is a work proper to God only, but conversion is a

"new creation," and requires power as really divine as that by which the worlds were formed.

6. God has directed the gospel to be preached to every creature without discrimination; and every one who hears it has a divine warrant to receive it; and if he does, he has the faithfulness of God pledged for his everlasting salvation.

7. As the efficacy of the word depends on the energy of the Holy Spirit, all Christians should be incessant and fervent in their supplications for this Spirit of grace to be poured out, that sinners may be converted.

8. We have encouragement to hope that the time is coming, and perhaps drawing near, when conversions will be multiplied far beyond the experience of former ages; when the Jews shall, as a nation, obtain mercy of the Lord, and when all the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Amen.

## **Saved by Grace**

**by John Bunyan**

Showing—

I. What it is to be saved. II. What it is to be saved by grace. III. Who they are that are saved by grace. IV. How it appears that they are saved by grace. V. What should be the reason that god should choose to save sinners by grace rather than by any other means.



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## ADVERTISEMENT BY THE EDITOR.

This admirable treatise upon the most important of all subjects, that of the soul's salvation, was first published in a pocket volume, in the year 1675. This has become very rare, but it is inserted in every edition of the author's collected works. Our copy is reprinted from the first edition published after the author's decease, in a small folio volume of his works, 1691. Although it is somewhat encumbered with subdivisions, it is plain, practical, and written in Bunyan's strong and energetic style; calculated to excite the deepest attention, and to fix the mind upon those solemn realities which alone can unite earth and heaven.

How extensive is the meaning of that little sentence. 'Saved by Grace!' It includes in it redemption from the curse of sin, which oppresses the poor sinner with the fears of everlasting burnings; while it elevates the body, soul, and spirit, to an exceeding weight of glory—to the possession of infinite treasures, inconceivable, and that never fade away.

Bunyan, in opening and deeply investigating this subject, shows his master hand in every page. It was a subject which, from his first conviction of sin, while playing a game of cat on a Sunday, had excited his feelings to an intense degree, absorbing all the powers of his soul. It was eminently to him the one thing needful—the sum and substance of human happiness. He felt that it included the preservation and re-structure of the body—raised from filth and vileness—from sickness, pain, and disease—from death and the grave—to be perfected in immortality like the Savior's glorious body. That included in this salvation, is the death of death, and the swallowing up of the grave, to be seen no more forever. The soul will be perfect,

and, reunited with the body, be filled 'with bliss and glory, as much as ever it can hold;' all jars and discord between soul and body will be finished, and the perfect man be clothed with righteousness; in a word, be like Christ and with him. All this is the work of grace, performed by the ever-blessed Trinity.

In displaying the feelings and experience of the enquiring, alarmed, quickened sinner, we are instructed by a continual illustration of the Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners. He manifests profound knowledge of the devices of Satan—the workings of unbelief—the difficulties thrown by the wicked one in the way of the sinner, to prevent his approach to Christ. He fastens conviction upon conviction—gives blow upon blow to human pride; proving that there can be found nothing in our fallen nature to recommend the sinner to God—all is of grace—from the foundation to the top-stone of a sinner's salvation. And above all, he clearly shows that salvation by grace is the most sin-killing doctrine in the world, as well as the most consoling tidings that can be brought to a sin-sick soul. 'O, when a God of grace is upon a throne of grace, and a poor sinner stands by and begs for grace, and that in the name of a gracious Christ, in and by the help of the Spirit of grace, can it be otherwise but that such a sinner must obtain mercy and grace to help in time of need? O, then, COME BOLDLY!' p. 33.

But I must not detain the reader from entering upon this solemn subject; only for a moment, when I quote another passage conceived in all the ardour of Bunyan's feelings:—'O Son of God! Grace was in all thy tears—grace came out where the whip smote thee, where the thorns pricked thee, where the nails and spear pierced thee! O blessed Son of God! Here is grace indeed! Unsearchable riches of grace! Grace to make angels wonder, grace to make sinners happy,

grace to astonish devils! And what will become of them that trample under foot this Son of God?'

Reader, may this searching, comforting, reviving subject be blessed to our well-grounded consolation.

GEO. OFFOR.

TO THE READER,

COURTEOUS READER,

In this little book thou art presented with a discourse of the GRACE of God, and of salvation by that grace. In which discourse, thou shalt find how each Person in the Godhead doth his part in the salvation of the sinner. I. The Father putteth forth his grace, thus. II. The Son putteth forth his grace, thus. III. And the Spirit putteth forth his grace, thus. Which things thou shalt find here particularly handled. Thou shalt also find, in this small treatise, the way of God with the sinner, as to his CONVERSATION,<sup>1</sup> and the way of the sinner with God in the same; where[in] the grace of God, and the wickedness of the sinner, do greatly show themselves. If thou findest me short in things, impute that [to] my love to brevity. If thou findest me besides the truth in aught, impute that to mine infirmity. But if thou findest anything here that serveth to thy furtherance and joy of faith, impute that to the mercy of God bestowed on thee and me. Thine to serve thee with that little I have, J.B. 1 General course of manners, behaviour, deportment, especially as it regards morals (see Phil 1:27, 1 Peter 1:15).

## SAVED BY GRACE.

"BY GRACE YE ARE SAVED."—EPHESIANS 2:5.

In the first chapter, from the fourth to the twelfth verse, the apostle is treating of the doctrine of election, both with respect to the act itself, the end, and means conducing thereto. The act, he tells us, was God's free choice of some (verse 4,5,11). The end was God's glory in their salvation (verse 6,14). The means conducing to that end was Jesus Christ himself—"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (verse 7). This done, he treateth of the subjection of the Ephesians to the faith, as it was held forth to them in the Word of the truth of the gospel, as also of their being sealed by the Holy Spirit of God unto the day of redemption (verse 12-14). Moreover, he telleth them how he gave thanks to God for them, making mention of them in his prayers, even that he would make them see "what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead," &c. (verse 15-20).

And lest the Ephesians, at the hearing of these their so many privileges, should forget how little they deserved them, he tells them that in time past they were dead in trespasses and sins, and that then they walked in them "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph 2:2,3).

Having thus called them back to the remembrance of themselves—to wit, what they were in their state of unregeneracy, he proceedeth to show them that their first quickening was by the resurrection of

Christ their Head, in whom they before were chosen, and that by him they were already set down in heavenly places, (verse 5,6); inserting, by the way, the true cause of all this blessedness, with what else should be by us enjoyed in another world; and that is, the love and grace of God: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ [by grace ye are saved]." These last words seen to be the apostle's conclusion rightly drawn from the premises; as who should say, If you Ephesians were indeed dead in trespasses and sins; if indeed you were by nature the children of wrath, even as others, then you deserve no more than others.

Again, if God hath chosen you, if God hath justified and saved you by his Christ, and left others as good as you by nature to perish in their sins, then the true cause of this your blessed condition is, the free grace of God. But just thus it is, therefore by grace ye are saved; therefore all the good which you enjoy more than others, it is of mere goodwill.

"BY GRACE YE ARE SAVED."

The method that I shall choose to discourse upon these words shall be this—I will propound certain questions upon the words, and direct particular answers to them; in which answers I hope I shall answer also, somewhat at least, the expectation of the godly and conscientious reader, and so shall draw towards a conclusion.

THE QUESTIONS ARE—

I. What is it to be saved?

II. What is it to be saved by grace?

III. Who are they that are saved by grace?

IV. How it appears that they that are saved, are saved by grace?

V. What might be the reasons which prevailed with God to save us by grace, rather than by any other means?

Now the reason why I propound these five questions upon the words, it is, because the words themselves admit them; the first three are grounded upon the several phrases in the text, and the two last are to make way for demonstration of the whole.

QUEST. I.—WHAT IS IT TO BE SAVED?

This question supposeth that there is such a thing as damnation due to man for sin; for to save supposeth the person to be saved to be at present in a sad condition; saving, to him that is not lost, signifies nothing, neither is it anything in itself. "To save, to redeem, to deliver," are in the general terms equivalent, and they do all of them suppose us to be in a state of thralldom and misery; therefore this word "saved," in the sense that the apostle here doth use it, is a word of great worth, forasmuch as the miseries from which we are saved is the misery of all most dreadful.

The miseries from which they that shall be saved shall by their salvation be delivered, are dreadful; they are no less than sin, the curse of God, and flames of hell for ever. What more abominable than sin? What more insupportable than the dreadful wrath of an angry God? And what more fearful than the bottomless pit of hell? I say, what more fearful than to be tormented there for ever with the devil and his angels? Now, to "save," according to my text, is to deliver the sinner from these, with all things else that attend them. And although sinners may think that it is no hard matter to answer

this question, yet I must tell you there is no man, that can feelingly know what it is to be saved, that knoweth not experimentally something of the dread of these three things, as is evident, because all others do even by their practice count it a thing of no great concern, when yet it is of all other of the highest concern among men; "For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Matt 16:26).

But, I say, if this word "saved" concludeth our deliverance from sin, how can he tell what it is to be saved that hath not in his conscience groaned under the burden of sin? yea, it is impossible else that he should ever cry out with all his heart, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"—that is, do to be saved (Acts 2:37). The man that hath no sores or aches cannot know the virtue of the salve; I mean, not know it from his own experience, and therefore cannot prize, nor have that esteem of it, as he that hath received cure thereby. Clap a plaster to a well place, and that maketh not its virtue to appear; neither can he to whose flesh it is so applied, by that application understand its worth. Sinners, you, I mean, that are not wounded with guilt, and oppressed with the burden of sin, you cannot—I will say it again—you cannot know, in this senseless condition of yours, what it is to be saved.

Again; this word "saved," as I said, concludeth deliverance from the wrath of God. How, then, can he tell what it is to be saved that hath not felt the burden of the wrath of God? He—he that is astonished with, and that trembleth at, the wrath of God—he knows best what it is to be saved (Acts 16:29).

Further, this word "saved," it concludeth deliverance from death and hell. How, then, can he tell what it is to be saved that never was sensible of the sorrows of the one, nor distressed with the pains of the other? The Psalmist says, "The sorrows of death compassed me,

and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord"—(mark, then), "then called I upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul,"—then, in my distress. When he knew what it was to be saved, then he called, because, I say, then he knew what it was to be saved (Psa 18:4,5; 116:3,4). I say, this is the man, and this only, that knows what it is to be saved. And this is evident, as is manifest by the little regard that the rest have to saving, or the little dread they have of damnation. Where is he that seeks and groans for salvation? I say, where is he that hath taken his flight for salvation, because of the dread of the wrath to come? "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Matt 3:7). Alas! do not the most set light by salvation?—as for sin, how do they love it, embrace it, please themselves with it, hide it still within their mouth, and keep it close under their tongue. Besides, for the wrath of God, they feel it not, they fly not from it; and for hell, it is become a doubt to many if there be any, and a mock to those whose doubt is resolved by atheism.

But to come to the question—What is it to be saved? To be saved may either respect salvation in the whole of it, or salvation in the parts of it, or both. I think this text respecteth both—to wit, salvation completing, and salvation completed; for "to save" is a work of many steps; or, to be as plain as possible, "to save" is a work that hath its beginning before the world began, and shall not be completed before it is ended.

First, then, we may be said to be saved in the purpose of God before the world began. The apostle saith that "he saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Tim 1:9). This is the beginning of salvation, and



according to this beginning all things concur and fall out in conclusion—"He hath saved us according to his eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus." God in thus saving may be said to save us by determining to make those means effectual for the blessed completing of our salvation; and hence we are said "to be chosen in Christ to salvation." And again, that he hath in that choice given us that grace that shall complete our salvation. Yea, the text is very full, "He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world" (Eph 1:3,4).

Second. As we may be said to be saved in the purpose of God before the foundation of the world, so we may be said to be saved before we are converted, or called to Christ. And hence "saved" is put before "called"; "he hath saved us, and called us"; he saith not, he hath called us, and saved us; but he puts saving before calling (2 Tim 1:9). So again, we are said to be "preserved in Christ and called"; he saith not, called and preserved (Jude 1). And therefore God saith again, "I will pardon them whom I reserve"—that is, as Paul expounds it, those whom I have "elected and kept," and this part of salvation is accomplished through the forbearance of God (Jer 50:20; Rom 11:4,5). God beareth with his own elect, for Christ's sake, all the time of their unregeneracy, until the time comes which he hath appointed for their conversion. The sins that we stood guilty of before conversion, had the judgment due to them been executed upon us, we had not now been in the world to partake of a heavenly calling. But the judgment due to them hath been by the patience of God prevented, and we saved all the time of our ungodly and unconverted state, from that death, and those many hells, that for our sins we deserved at the hands of God.

And here lies the reason that long life is granted to the elect before conversion, and that all the sins they commit and all the judgments they deserve, cannot drive them out of the world before conversion. Manasseh, you know, was a great sinner, and for the trespass which he committed he was driven from his own land, and carried to Babylon; but kill him they could not, though his sins had deserved death ten thousand times. But what was the reason? Why, he was not yet called; God had chosen him in Christ, and laid up in him a stock of grace, which must be given to Manasseh before he dies; therefore Manasseh must be convinced, converted, and saved. That legion of devils that was in the possessed, with all the sins which he had committed in the time of his unregeneracy, could not take away his life before his conversion (Mark 5). How many times was that poor creature, as we may easily conjecture, assaulted for his life by the devils that were in him, yet could they not kill him, yea, though his dwelling was near the sea-side, and the devils had power to drive him too, yet could they not drive him further than the mountains that were by the sea-side; yea, they could help him often to break his chains and fetters, and could also make him as mad as a bedlam, they could also prevail with him to separate from men, and cut himself with stones, but kill him they could not, drown him they could not; he was saved to be called; he was, notwithstanding all this, preserved in Christ, and called. As it is said of the young lad in the gospel, he was by the devil cast oft into the fire, and oft into the water, to destroy him, but it could not be; even so hath he served others, but they must be "saved to be called" (Mark 9:22). How many deaths have some been delivered from and saved out of before conversion! Some have fallen into rivers, some into wells, some into the sea, some into the hands of men; yea, they have been justly arraigned and condemned, as the thief upon the cross, but must not die before they have been converted. They were preserved in Christ, and called.

Called Christian, how many times have thy sins laid thee upon a sick-bed, and, to thine and others' thinking, at the very mouth of the grave? yet God said concerning thee, Let him live, for he is not yet converted. Behold, therefore, that the elect are saved before they are called. God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins," hath preserved us in Christ, and called us (Eph 2:4,5).

Now this "saving" of us arises from six causes. 1. God hath chosen us unto salvation, and therefore will not frustrate his own purposes (1 Thess 5:9). 2. God hath given us to Christ; and his gift, as well as his calling, is without repentance (Rom 11:29; John 6:37). 3. Christ hath purchased us with his blood (Rom 5:8,9). 4. They are, by God, counted in Christ before they are converted (Eph 1:3,4). 5. They are ordained before conversion to eternal life; yea, to be called, to be justified, to be glorified, and therefore all this must come upon them (Rom 8:29,30). 6. For all this, he hath also appointed them their portion and measure of grace, and that before the world began; therefore, that they may partake of all these privileges, they are saved and called, preserved in Christ, and called.

Third. To be saved is to be brought to, and helped to lay hold on, Jesus Christ by faith. And this is called saving by grace through faith. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Eph 2:8).

1. They must be brought unto Christ, yea, drawn unto him; for "no man," saith Christ, "can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44). Men, even the elect, have too many infirmities to come to Christ without help from heaven; inviting will not do. "As they called them, so they went from them," therefore he "drew them with cords" (Hosea 11:2,4).

2. As they must be brought to, so they must be helped to lay hold on Christ by faith; for as coming to Christ, so faith, is not in our own power; therefore we are said to be raised up with him "through the faith of the operation of God." And again, we are said to believe, "according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead" (Col 2:12; Eph 1:19,20). Now we are said to be saved by faith, because by faith we lay hold of, venture upon, and put on Jesus Christ for life. For life, I say, because God having made him the Saviour, hath given him life to communicate to sinners, and the life that he communicates to them is the merit of his flesh and blood, which whoso eateth and drinketh by faith, hath eternal life, because that flesh and blood hath merit in it sufficient to obtain the favour of God. Yea, it hath done so [since] that day it was offered through the eternal Spirit a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour to him; wherefore God imputeth the righteousness of Christ to him that believeth in him, by which righteousness he is personally justified, and saved from that just judgment of the law that was due unto him (John 5:26, 6:53-58; Eph 4:32; 5:2; Rom 4:23-25).

"Saved by faith." For although salvation beginneth in God's purpose, and comes to us through Christ's righteousness, yet is not faith exempted from having a hand in saving of us. Not that it meriteth aught, but is given by God to those which he saveth, that thereby they may embrace and put on that Christ by whose righteousness they must be saved. Wherefore this faith is that which here distinguisheth them that shall be saved from them that shall be damned. Hence it is said, "He that believeth not, shall be damned"; and hence again it is that the believers are called "the children, the heirs, and the blessed with faithful Abraham;" that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe (Gal 3:6-9,26; Rom 4:13,14).

And here let Christians warily distinguish betwixt the meritorious and the instrumental cause of their justification. Christ, with what he hath done and suffered, is the meritorious cause of our justification; therefore he is said to be made to us of God, "wisdom and righteousness;" and we are said to be "justified by his blood, and saved from wrath through him," for it was his life and blood that were the price of our redemption (1 Cor 1:30; Rom 5:9,10). "Redeemed," says Peter, "not with corruptible things, as silver and gold," alluding to the redemption of money under the law, "but with the precious blood of Christ." Thou art, therefore, as I have said, to make Christ Jesus the object of thy faith for justification; for by his righteousness thy sins must be covered from the sight of the justice of the law. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "For he shall save his people from their sins" (Acts 16:31; Matt 1:21).

Fourth. To be saved is to be preserved in the faith to the end. "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt 24:13). Not that perseverance is an accident in Christianity, or a thing performed by human industry; they that are saved "are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation" (1 Peter 1:3-6).

But perseverance is absolutely necessary to the complete saving of the soul, because he that falleth short of the state that they that are saved are possessed of, as saved, cannot arrive to that saved state. He that goeth to sea with a purpose to arrive at Spain, cannot arrive there if he be drowned by the way; wherefore perseverance is absolutely necessary to the saving of the soul, and therefore it is included in the complete saving of us—"Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end" (Isa 45:17). Perseverance is here made absolutely necessary to the complete saving of the soul.

But, as I said, this part of salvation dependeth not upon human power, but upon him that hath begun a good work in us (Phil 1:6). This part, therefore, of our salvation is great, and calleth for no less than the power of God for our help to perform it, as will be easily granted by all those that consider—

1. That all the power and policy, malice and rage, of the devils and hell itself are against us. Any man that understandeth this will conclude that to be saved is no small thing. The devil is called a god, a prince, a lion, a roaring lion; it is said that he hath death and the power of it, &c. But what can a poor creature, whose habitation is in flesh, do against a god, a prince, a roaring lion, and the power of death itself? Our perseverance, therefore, lieth in the power of God; "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

2. All the world is against him that shall be saved. But what is one poor creature to all the world, especially if you consider that with the world is terror, fear, power, majesty, laws, jails, gibbets, hangings, burnings, drownings, starvings, banishments, and a thousand kinds of deaths? (1 John 5:4,5; John 16:33).

3. Add to this, that all the corruptions that dwell in our flesh are against us, and that not only in their nature and being, but they lust against us, and war against us, to "bring us into captivity to the law of sin and death" (Gal 5:17; 1 Peter 2:11; Rom 7:23).

4. All the delusions in the world are against them that shall be saved, many of which are so cunningly woven, so plausibly handled, so rarely polished with Scripture and reason, that it is ten thousand wonders that the elect are not swallowed up with them; and swallowed up they would be, were they not elect, and was not God himself engaged, either by power to keep them from falling, or by

grace to pardon if they fall, and to lift them up again (Matt 24:24; Eph 4:14; Rom 3:12).

5. Every fall of the saved is against the salvation of his soul; but a Christian once fallen riseth not but as helped by Omnipotent power—"O Israel, thou hast fallen by thine iniquity," "but in me is thy help," says God (Hosea 13:9; 14:1; Psa 37:23).

Christians, were you awake, here would be matter of wonder to you, to see a man assaulted with all the power of hell, and yet to come off a conqueror! Is it not a wonder to see a poor creature, who in himself is weaker than the moth, to stand against and overcome all devils, all the world, all his lusts and corruptions? (Job 4:19). Or if he fall, is it not a wonder to see him, when devils and guilt are upon him, to rise again, stand upon his feet again, walk with God again, and persevere after all this in the faith and holiness of the gospel? He that knows himself, wonders; he that knows temptation, wonders; he that knows what falls and guilt mean, wonders; indeed, perseverance is a wonderful thing, and is managed by the power of God; for he only "is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24). Those of the children of Israel that went from Egypt, and entered the land of Canaan, how came they thither? Why, the text says, that "as an eagle spreadeth abroad her wings, so the Lord alone did lead them." And again, "he bore them, and carried them all the days of old" (Deu 32:11,12; Isa 63:9). David also tells us that mercy and goodness should follow him all the days of his life, and so he should dwell in the house of the Lord for ever (Psa 23:6).

Fifth. To be saved calls for more than all this; he that is saved, must, when this world can hold him no longer, have a safe-conduct to heaven, for that is the place where they that are saved must to the full

enjoy their salvation. This heaven is called "the end of our faith," because it is that which faith looks at; as Peter says, "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." And again, "But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul" (1 Peter 1:9; Heb 10:39). For, as I said, heaven is the place for the saved to enjoy their salvation in, with that perfect gladness that is not attainable here. Here we are saved by faith and hope of glory; but there, we that are saved shall enjoy the end of our faith and hope, even the salvation of our souls. There is "Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the general assembly and church of the firstborn;" there is the "innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect;" there is "God the judge of all, and Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant;" there shall our soul have as much of heaven as it is capable of enjoying, and that without intermission; wherefore, when we come there we shall be saved indeed! But now for a poor creature to be brought hither, this is the life of the point. But how shall I come hither? there are heights and depths to hinder (Rom 8:38,39).

Suppose the poor Christian is now upon a sick-bed, beset with a thousand fears, and ten thousand at the end of that; sick-bed fears! and they are sometimes dreadful ones; fears that are begotten by the review of the sin, perhaps, of forty years' profession; fears that are begotten by dreadful and fearful suggestions of the devil, the sight of death, and the grave, and it may be of hell itself; fears that are begotten by the withdrawing and silence of God and Christ, and by, it may be, the appearance of the devil himself; some of these made David cry, "O spare me" a little, "that I may recover strength before I go hence, and be no more" (Psa 39:13).

"The sorrows of death," said he, "compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me; I found trouble and sorrow" (Psa 116:3).



These things, in another place, he calls the bands that the godly have in their death, and the plagues that others are not aware of. "They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men" (Psa 73:9). But now, out of all these, the Lord will save his people; not one sin, nor fear, nor devil shall hinder; nor the grave nor hell disappoint thee. But how must this be? Why, thou must have a safe-conduct to heaven? What conduct? A conduct of angels: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb 1:14).

These angels, therefore, are not to fail them that are the saved; but must, as commissioned of God, come down from heaven to do this office for them; they must come, I say, and take the care and charge of our soul, to conduct it safely into Abraham's bosom. It is not our meanness in the world, nor our weakness of faith, that shall hinder this; nor shall the loathsomeness of our diseases make these delicate spirits shy of taking this charge upon them. Lazarus the beggar found this a truth; a beggar so despised of the rich glutton that he was not suffered to come within his gate; a beggar full of sores and noisome putrefaction; yet, behold, when he dies, the angels come from heaven to fetch him thither: "And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16:22). True, sick-bed temptations are oftentimes the most violent, because then the devil plays his last game with us, he is never to assault us more; besides, perhaps God suffereth it thus to be, that the entering into heaven may be the sweeter, and ring of this salvation the louder! O it is a blessed thing for God to be our God and our guide even unto death, and then for his angels to conduct us safely to glory; this is saving indeed. And he shall save Israel "out of all his troubles;" out of sick-bed troubles as well as others (Psa 25:22; 34:6; 48:14).

Sixth. To be saved, to be perfectly saved, calls for more than all this; the godly are not perfectly saved when their soul is possessed of heaven. True, their spirit is made perfect, and hath as much of heaven as at present it can hold, but man, consisting of body and soul, cannot be said to be perfectly saved so long as but part of him is in the heavens; his body is the price of the blood of Christ as well as his spirit; his body is the temple of God, and a member of the body, and of the flesh, and of the bones of Christ; he cannot, then, be completely saved until the time of the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 6:13-19; Eph 5:30). Wherefore, when Christ shall come the second time, then will he save the body from all those things that at present make it incapable of the heavens. "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change" this "our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Phil 3:20,21). O what a great deal of good God hath put into this little word "saved"! We shall not see all the good that God hath put into this word "saved" until the Lord Jesus comes to raise the dead. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be" (1 John 3:2). But till it appears what we shall be, we cannot see the bottom of this word "saved." True, we have the earnest of what we shall be, we have the Spirit of God, "which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession" (Eph 1:14). The possession is our body—it is called "a purchased possession," because it is the price of blood; now the redemption of this purchased possession is the raising of it out of the grave, which raising is called the redemption of our body (Rom 8:23). And when this vile body is made like unto his glorious body, and this body and soul together possessed of the heavens, then shall we be every way saved.

There are three things from which this body must be saved—1. There is that sinful filth and vileness that yet dwells in it, under which we

groan earnestly all our days (2 Cor 5:1-3). 2. There is mortality, that subjecteth us to age, sickness, aches, pains, diseases, and death. 3. And there is the grave and death itself, for death is the last enemy that is to be destroyed. "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor 15:54). So then, when this comes to pass, then we shall be saved; then will salvation, in all the parts of it, meet together in our glory; then we shall be every way saved—saved in God's decree, saved in Christ's undertakings, saved by faith, saved in perseverance, saved in soul, and in body and soul together in the heavens, saved perfectly, everlastingly, gloriously.

[Of the state of our body and soul in heaven.]

Before I conclude my answer to the first question, I would discourse a little of the state of our body and soul in heaven, when we shall enjoy this blessed state of salvation.

First. Of the soul; it will then be filled in all the faculties of it with as much bliss and glory as ever it can hold.

1. The understanding shall then be perfect in knowledge—"Now we know but in part;" we know God, Christ, heaven, and glory, but in part; "but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away" (1 Cor 13:10). Then shall we have perfect and everlasting visions of God, and that blessed one his Son Jesus Christ, a good thought of whom doth sometimes so fill us while in this world, that it causeth "joy unspeakable and full of glory." 2. Then shall our will and affections be ever in a burning flame of love to God and his Son Jesus Christ; our love here hath ups and downs, but there it shall be always perfect with that perfection which is not possible in this world to be enjoyed. 3. Then will our conscience have

that peace and joy that neither tongue nor pen of men or angels can express. 4. Then will our memory be so enlarged to retain all things that happened to us in this world, so that with unspeakable aptness we shall call to mind all God's providences, all Satan's malice, all our own weaknesses, all the rage of men, and how God made all work together for his glory and our good, to the everlasting ravishing of our hearts.

Second. For our body; it shall be raised in power, in incorruption, a spiritual body and glorious (1 Cor 15:44). The glory of which is set forth by several things—1. It is compared to "the brightness of the firmament," and to the shining of the stars "for ever and ever" (Dan 12:3; 1 Cor 15:41,42). 2. It is compared to the shining of the sun—"Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matt 13:43). 3. Their state is then to be equally glorious with angels; "But they which shall be counted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage; neither can they die any more, for they are equal unto the angels" (Luke 20:35,36). 4. It is said that then this our vile body shall be like the glorious body of Jesus Christ (Phil 3:20,21; 1 John 3:2,3). 5. And now, when body and soul are thus united, who can imagine what glory they both possess? They will now be both in capacity, without jarring, to serve the Lord with shouting thanksgivings, and with a crown of everlasting joy upon their head.

In this world there cannot be that harmony and oneness of body and soul as there will be in heaven. Here the body sometimes sins against the soul, and the soul again vexes and perplexes the body with dreadful apprehensions of the wrath and judgment of God. While we be in this world, the body oft hangs this way, and the soul the quite contrary; but there, in heaven, they shall have that perfect union as

never to jar more; but now the glory of the body shall so suit with the glory of the soul, and both so perfectly suit with the heavenly state, that it passeth words and thoughts.

Third. Shall I now speak of the place that this saved body and soul shall dwell in?

Why, 1. It is a city (Heb 11:16; Eph 2:19,22). 2. It is called heaven (Heb 10:34). 3. It is called God's house (John 14:1-3). 4. It is called a kingdom (Luke 12:32). 5. It is called glory (Col 3:4; Heb 2:10). 6. It is called paradise (Rev 2:7). 7. It is called everlasting habitations (Luke 16:9).

Fourth. Shall I speak of their company?

Why, 1. They shall stand and live in the presence of the glorious God, the Judge of all (Heb 12:23). 2. They shall be with the Lamb, the Lord Jesus. 3. They shall be with an innumerable company of holy angels (Heb 12:22). 4. They shall be with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of heaven (Luke 13:28).

Fifth. Shall I speak of their heavenly raiment?

1. It is salvation; they shall be clothed with the garment of salvation (Psa 132:16; 149:4; Isa 61:10). 2. This raiment is called white raiment, signifying their clean and innocent state in heaven. "And they," says Christ, "shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy" (Rev 3:4; 19:8; Isa 57:2). 3. It is called glory—"When he shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory" (Col 3:4). 4. They shall also have crowns of righteousness, everlasting joy and glory (Isa 35:10; 2 Tim 4:8; 1 Peter 5:4).

Sixth. Shall I speak of their continuance in this condition?

1. It is for ever and ever. "And they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads; and they shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev 22:4,5). 2. It is everlasting. "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life" (John 6:40,47). 3. It is life eternal. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life" (John 10:27,28). 4. It is world without end. "But Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation; ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end" (Isa 45:17; Eph 3:20,21).

O sinner! what sayest thou? How dost thou like being saved? Doth not thy mouth water? Doth not thy heart twitter at being saved? Why, come then: "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev 22:17).

#### QUEST. II.—WHAT IS IT TO BE SAVED BY GRACE?

Now I come to the second question—to wit, What is it to be saved by grace? For so are the words of the text, "By grace ye are saved." But,

First. I must touch a little upon the word GRACE, and show you how diversely it is taken. Sometimes it is taken for the goodwill and favour of men (Esth 2:17: Ruth 2:2: 1 Sam 1:18: 2 Sam 16:4). Sometimes it is taken for those sweet ornaments that a life according to the Word of God putteth about the neck (Prov 1:9; 3:22). Sometimes it is taken for the charity of the saints, as 2 Corinthians 9:6-8.

But "grace" in the text is taken for God's goodwill, "the goodwill of him that dwelt in the bush;" and is expressed variously. Sometimes it is called "his good pleasure." Sometimes, "the good pleasure of his

will," which is all one with "the riches of his grace" (Eph 1:7). Sometimes it is expressed by goodness, pity, love, mercy, kindness, and the like (Rom 2:4; Isa 63:9; Titus 3:4,5). Yea, he styles himself, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty" (Exo 34:6,7).

Second. As the word "grace" signifieth all these, so it intimates to us that all these are free acts of God, free love, free mercy, free kindness; hence we have other hints in the Word about the nature of grace, as, 1. It is an act of God's will, which must needs be free; an act of his own will, of the good pleasure of his will; by each of these expressions is intimated that grace is a free act of God's goodness towards the sons of men. 2. Therefore it is expressly said—"Being justified freely by his grace" (Rom 3:24). 3. "And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both" (Luke 7:42). 4. And again, "Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you" (Eze 36:32; Deu 9:5). 5. And therefore "grace," and the deservings of the creature, are set in flat opposition one to another—"And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work" (Rom 11:6).

The word "grace," therefore, being understood, doth most properly set forth the true cause of man's happiness with God, not but that those expressions, love, mercy, goodness, pity, kindness, &c., and the like, have their proper place in our happiness also. Had not God loved us, grace had not acted freely in our salvation; had not God been merciful, good, pitiful, kind, he would have turned away from us when he saw us in our blood (Eze 16).

So then, when he saith, "By grace ye are saved," it is all one as if he had said, By the goodwill, free mercy, and loving-kindness of God ye are saved; as the words conjoined with the text do also further manifest: "But God," saith Paul, "who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ [by grace ye are saved]."

[Third.] The words thus understood admit us these few conclusions—1. That God, in saving of the sinner, hath no respect to the sinner's goodness; hence it is said he is frankly forgiven, and freely justified (Luke 7:42; Rom 3:24). 2. That God doth this to whom and when he pleases, because it is an act of his own good pleasure (Gal 1:15,16). 3. This is the cause why great sinners are saved, for God pardoneth "according to the riches of his grace" (Eph 1:7). 4. This is the true cause that some sinners are so amazed and confounded at the apprehension of their own salvation; his grace is unsearchable; and by unsearchable grace God oft puzzles and confounds our reason (Eze 16:62,63; Acts 9:6). 5. This is the cause that sinners are so often recovered from their backslidings, healed of their wounds that they get by their falls, and helped again to rejoice in God's mercy. Why, he will be gracious to whom he will be gracious, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion (Rom 9:15).

[Fourth.] But I must not here conclude this point. We are here discoursing of the grace of God, and that by it we are saved; saved, I say, by the grace of God.

Now, God is set forth in the Word unto us under a double consideration—1. He is set forth in his own eternal power and Godhead; and as thus set forth, we are to conceive of him by his attributes of power, justice, goodness, holiness, everlastingness, &c. 2. But then, we have him set forth in the Word of truth as consisting



of Father, Son, and Spirit; and although this second consideration containeth in it the nature of the Godhead, yet the first doth not demonstrate the persons in the Godhead. We are saved by the grace of God—that is, by the grace of the Father, who is God; by the grace of the Son, who is God; and by the grace of the Spirit, who is God.

Now, since we are said to be "saved by grace," and that the grace of God; and since also we find in the Word that in the Godhead there are Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, we must conclude that it is by the grace of the Father, Son, and Spirit that we are saved; wherefore grace is attributed to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost distinctly. 1. Grace is attributed to the Father, as these scriptures testify; Romans 7:25, 1 Corinthians 1:3, 2 Corinthians 1:2, Galatians 1:3, Ephesians 1:2, Philippians 1:2, Colossians 1:2, 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 2 Thessalonians 1:2, 1 Timothy 1:2, 2 Timothy 1:2, Titus 1:4, Philemon 3. 2. Grace is also attributed to the Son, and I first manifest it by all those texts above-mentioned, as also by these that follow: 2 Corinthians 8:9, 13:14, Galatians 6:18, Philippians 4:23, 1 Thessalonians 5:28, 2 Thessalonians 3:18, Philemon 25, Revelation 22:21. 3. It is also attributed to the Holy Ghost. Now, he is here called the Spirit of grace, because he is the author of grace as the Father, and the Son (Zech 12:10; Heb 10:29).

So then, it remaineth that I show you, FIRST, How we are saved by the grace of the Father. SECOND, How we are saved by the grace of the Son. And, THIRD, How we are saved by the grace of the Spirit.

Of the Father's grace.

FIRST. How we are saved by the grace of the Father. Now this will I open unto you thus—

1. The Father by his grace hath bound up them that shall go to heaven in an eternal decree of election; and here, indeed, as was showed at first, is the beginning of our salvation (2 Tim 1:9). And election is reckoned not the Son's act, but the Father's—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world" (Eph 1:3,4). Now this election is counted an act of grace—"So then, at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom 11:5).

2. The Father's grace ordaineth and giveth the Son to undertake for us our redemption. The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world—"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Eph 1:7; 2:7; 1 John 4:14; John 3:16; 6:32,33; 12:49).

3. The Father's grace giveth us to Christ to be justified by his righteousness, washed in his blood, and saved by his life. This Christ mentioneth, and tells us it is his Father's will that they should be safe-coming at the last day, and that he had kept them all the days of his life, and they shall never perish (John 6:37-39; 17:2,12).

4. The Father's grace giveth the kingdom of heaven to those that he hath given to Jesus Christ—"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32).

5. The Father's grace provideth and layeth up in Christ, for those that he hath chosen, a sufficiency of all spiritual blessings, to be communicated to them at their need, for their preservation in the faith, and faithful perseverance through this life; "not according to

our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Tim 1:9; Eph 1:3,4).

6. The Father's grace saveth us by the blessed and effectual call that he giveth us to the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ (1 Col 1:9; Gal 1:15).

7. The Father's grace saveth us by multiplying pardons to us, for Christ's sake, day by day—"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph 1:7).

8. The Father's grace saves us by exercising patience and forbearance towards us all the time of our unregeneracy (Rom 3:24).

9. The Father's grace saveth us by holding of us fast in his hand, and by keeping of us from all the power of the enemy—"My Father," said Christ, "that gave them me, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:29).

10. What shall I say? The Father's grace saveth us by accepting of our persons and services, by lifting up the light of his countenance upon us, by manifesting of his love unto us, and by sending of his angels to fetch us to himself, when we have finished our pilgrimage in this world.

Of the grace of the Son.

SECOND. I come now to speak of the grace of the Son; for as the Father putteth forth his grace in the saving of the sinner, so doth the Son put forth his—"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,

that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor 8:9).

Here you see also that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is brought in as a partner with the grace of his Father in the salvation of our souls. Now this is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; he was rich, but for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich.

To inquire, then, into this grace, this condescending grace of Christ, and that by searching out how rich Jesus Christ was, and then how poor he made himself, that we through his poverty might have the riches of salvation.

First. How rich was Jesus Christ? To which I answer—1. Generally; 2. Particularly.

1. Generally. He was rich as the Father—"All things that the Father hath," saith he, "are mine." Jesus Christ is the Lord of all, God over all, blessed for ever. "He thought it not robbery to be equal with God," being naturally and eternally God, as the Father, but of his Godhead he could not strip himself (John 10:30; 16:15; Acts 10:36; Phil 2:6; Rom 9:4,5).

2. Particularly. Jesus Christ had glory with the Father; yea, a manifold glory with him, which he stripped himself of.

(1.) He had the glory of dominion, he was Lord of all the creatures; they were under him upon a double account—(a) as he was their Creator (Col 1:16); (b) as he was made the heir of God (Heb 1:2).

(2.) Therefore the glory of worship, reverence, and fear from all creatures, was due unto him; the worship, obedience, subjection, and

service of angels were due unto him; the fear, honour, and glory of kings, and princes, and judges of the earth were due unto him; the obedience of the sun, moon, stars, clouds, and all vapours, were due unto him; all dragons, deeps, fire, hail, snow, mountains and hills, beasts, cattle, creeping things, and flying fowls, the service of them all, and their worship, were due unto him (Psa 148).

(3.) The glory of the heavens themselves was due unto him; in a word, heaven and earth were his.

(4.) But above all, the glory of communion with his Father was his; I say, the glory of that unspeakable communion that he had with the Father before his incarnation, which alone was worth ten thousand worlds, that was ever his.

(5.) But again; as Jesus Christ was possessed with this, so, besides, he was Lord of life; this glory also was Jesus Christ's: "In him was life," therefore he is called the Prince of it; because it was in him originally as in the Father (Acts 3:15). He gave to all life and breath, and all things; angels, men, beasts, they had all their life from him.

(6.) Again, as he was Lord of glory, and Prince of life, so he was also Prince of peace, (Isa 9:6); and by him was maintained that harmony and goodly order which were among things in heaven and things on earth.

Take things briefly in these few particulars—(a.) The heavens were his, and he made them. (b.) Angels were his, and he made them. (c.) The earth was his, and he made it. (d.) Man was his, and he made him.

[Second. How poor he made himself.] Now this heaven he forsook for our sakes—"He came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim 1:15).

[1.] He was made lower than the angels, for the suffering of death (Heb 2:9). When he was born, he made himself, as he saith, a worm, or one of no reputation; he became the reproach and byword of the people; he was born in a stable, laid in a manger, earned his bread with his labour, being by trade a carpenter (Psa 22:6; Phil 2:7; Luke 2:7; Mark 6:3). When he betook himself to his ministry, he lived upon the charity of the people; when other men went to their own houses, Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Hark what himself saith for the clearing of this—"Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." He denied himself of this world's good (Luke 8:2,3; 9:58; John 7:35; 8:1).

[2.] Again, as he was Prince of life, so he for our sakes laid down that also; for so stood the matter, that he or we must die; but the grace that was in his heart wrought with him to lay down his life: "He gave his life a ransom for many." He laid down his life that we might have life; he gave his flesh and blood for the life of the world; he laid down his life for his sheep.

[3.] Again; he was Prince of peace, but he forsook his peace also. (1.) He laid aside peace with the world, and chose upon that account to be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and therefore was persecuted from his cradle to his cross, by kings, rulers, &c. (2.) He laid aside his peace with his Father, and made himself the object of his Father's curse, insomuch that the Lord smote, struck, and afflicted him; and, in conclusion, hid his face from him (as he expressed, with great crying) at the hour of his death.

[Object.] But perhaps some may say, What need was there that Jesus Christ should do all this? Could not the grace of the Father save us without this condescension of the Son?

Answ. As there is grace, so there is justice in God; and man having sinned, God concluded to save him in a way of righteousness; therefore it was absolutely necessary that Jesus Christ should put himself into our very condition, sin only excepted. 1. Now by sin we had lost the glory of God, therefore Jesus Christ lays aside the glory that he had with the Father (Rom 3:23; John 17:5). 2. Man by sin had shut himself out of an earthly paradise, and Jesus Christ will leave his heavenly paradise to save him (Gen 3:24; 1 Tim 1:15; John 6:38,39). 3. Man by sin had made himself lighter than vanity, and this Lord God, Jesus Christ, made himself lower than the angels to redeem him (Isa 40:17; Heb 2:7). 4. Man by sin lost his right to the creatures, and Jesus Christ will deny himself of a whole world to save him (Luke 9:58). 5. Man by sin had made himself subject to death; but Jesus Christ will lose his life to save him (Rom 6:23). 6. Man by sin had procured to himself the curse of God; but Jesus Christ will bear that curse in his own body to save him (Gal 3:13). 7. Man by sin had lost peace with God; but this would Jesus Christ lose also, to the end man might be saved. 8. Man should have been mocked of God, therefore Christ was mocked of men. 9. Man should have been scourged in hell; but, to hinder that, Jesus was scourged on earth. 10. Man should have been crowned with ignominy and shame; but, to prevent that, Jesus was crowned with thorns. 11. Man should have been pierced with the spear of God's wrath; but, to prevent that, Jesus was pierced both by God and men. 12. Man should have been rejected of God and angels; but, to prevent that, Jesus was forsaken of God, and denied, hated, and rejected of men (Isa 48:22; Prov 1:24-26; Matt 27:26,39,46; Psa 9:17; 11:6; 22:7; Dan 12:2; John 19:2-5,37; Num 24:8; Zech 12:10; Luke 9:22).

I might thus enlarge, and that by authority from this text—"He became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." All the riches he stripped himself of, it was for our sakes; all the sorrows he

underwent, it was for our sakes; to the least circumstance of the sufferings of Christ there was necessity that so it should be, all was for our sakes: "For our sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

And you see the argument that prevailed with Christ to do this great service for man, the grace that was in his heart; as also the prophet saith, "In his love and in his pity he redeemed them." According to this in the Corinthians, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ"; both which agree with the text, "By grace ye are saved."

I say, this was the grace of the Son, and the exercise thereof. The Father therefore shows his grace one way, and the Son his another. It was not the Father, but the Son, that left his heaven for sinners; it was not the Father, but the Son, that spilt his blood for sinners. The Father indeed gave the Son, and blessed be the Father for that; and the Son gave his life and blood for us, and blessed be the Son for that.

But methinks we should not yet have done with this grace of the Son. Thou Son of the Blessed, what grace was manifest in thy condescension! Grace brought thee down from heaven, grace stripped thee of thy glory, grace made thee poor and despicable, grace made thee bear such burdens of sin, such burdens of sorrow, such burdens of God's curse as are unspeakable. O Son of God! grace was in all thy tears, grace came bubbling out of thy side with thy blood, grace came forth with every word of thy sweet mouth (Psa 45:2; Luke 4:22). Grace came out where the whip smote thee, where the thorns pricked thee, where the nails and spear pierced thee. O blessed Son of God! Here is grace indeed! Unsearchable riches of grace! Unthought-of riches of grace! Grace to make angels wonder, grace to make sinners happy, grace to astonish devils. And what will become of them that trample under foot this Son of God?



Of the grace of the Spirit. THIRD. I come now to speak of the grace of the Spirit; for he also saveth us by his grace. The Spirit, I told you, is God, as the Father and the Son, and is therefore also the author of grace; yea, and it is absolutely necessary that he put forth his grace also, or else no flesh can be saved. The Spirit of God hath his hand in saving of us many ways; for they that go to heaven, as they must be beholding to the Father and the Son, so also to the Spirit of God. The Father chooseth us, giveth us to Christ, and heaven to us, and the like. The Son fulfills the law for us, takes the curse of the law from us, bears in his own body our sorrows, and sets us justified in the sight of God. The Father's grace is showed in heaven and earth; the Son's grace is showed on the earth, and on the cross; and the Spirit's grace must be showed in our souls and bodies, before we come to heaven.

Quest. But some may say, Wherein doth the saving grace of the Spirit appear?

Answ. In many things.

In taking possession of us for his own, in his making of us his house and habitation, so that though the Father and the Son have both gloriously put forth gracious acts in order to our salvation, yet the Spirit is the first that makes seizure of us (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; Eph 2:21,22). Christ, therefore, when he went away, said not that he would send the Father, but the Spirit, and that he should be in us for ever—"If I depart," said Christ, "I will send him, the Spirit of truth, the Comforter" (John 14:16; 16:7,13).

The Holy Spirit coming into us, and dwelling in us, worketh out many salvations for us now, and each of them in order also to our being saved for ever.

1. He saveth us from our darkness by illuminating of us; hence he is called "the Spirit of revelation," because he openeth the blind eyes, and so consequently delivereth us from that darkness which else would drown us in the deeps of hell (Eph 1:17,19).
2. He it is that convinceth us of the evil of our unbelief, and that shows us the necessity of our believing in Christ; without the conviction of this we should perish (John 16:9).
3. This is that finger of God by which the devil is made to give place unto grace, by whose power else we should be carried headlong to hell (Luke 11:20-22).
4. This is he that worketh faith in our hearts, without which neither the grace of the Father nor the grace of the Son can save us, "For he that believeth not, shall be damned" (Mark 16:16; Rom 15:13).
5. This is he by whom we are born again; and he that is not so born can neither see nor inherit the kingdom of heaven (John 3:3-7).
6. This is he that setteth up his kingdom in the heart, and by that means keepeth out the devil after he is cast out, which kingdom of the Spirit, whoever wanteth, they lie liable to a worse possession of the devil than ever (Matt 12:43-45; Luke 11:24,25).
7. By this Spirit we come to see the beauty of Christ, without a sight of which we should never desire him, but should certainly live in the neglect of him, and perish (John 16:14; 1 Cor 2:9-13; Isa 53:1,2).
8. By this Spirit we are helped to praise God acceptably, but without it, it is impossible to be heard unto salvation (Rom 8:26; Eph 6:18; 1 Cor 14:15).

9. By this blessed Spirit the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, and our hearts are directed into the love of God (Rom 5:5; 2 Thess 2:13).

10. By this blessed Spirit we are led from the ways of the flesh into the ways of life, and by it our mortal body, as well as our immortal soul, is quickened in the service of God (Gal 5:18,25; Rom 8:11).

11. By this good Spirit we keep that good thing, even the seed of God, that at the first by the Word of God was infused into us, and without which we are liable to the worst damnation (1 John 3:9; 1 Peter 1:23; 2 Tim 1:14).

12. By this good Spirit we have help and light against all the wisdom and cunning of the world, which putteth forth itself in its most cursed sophistications to overthrow the simplicity that is in Christ (Matt 10:19,20; Mark 13:11; Luke 12:11,12).

13. By this good Spirit our graces are maintained in life and vigour, as faith, hope, love, a spirit of prayer, and every grace (2 Cor 4:13; Rom 15:13; 2 Tim 1:7; Eph 6:18; Titus 3:5).

14. By this good Spirit we are sealed to the day of redemption (Eph 1:14).

15. And by this good Spirit we are made to wait with patience until the redemption of the purchased possession comes (Gal 5:5).

Now all these things are so necessary to our salvation, that I know not which of them can be wanting; neither can any of them be by any means attained but by this blessed Spirit. And thus have I in few words showed you the grace of the Spirit, and how it putteth forth itself towards the saving of the soul. And verily, Sirs, it is necessary

that you know these things distinctly—to wit, the grace of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the grace of the Holy Ghost; for it is not the grace of one, but of all these three, that saveth him that shall be saved indeed.

The Father's grace saveth no man without the grace of the Son; neither doth the Father and the Son save any without the grace of the Spirit; for as the Father loves, the Son must die, and the Spirit must sanctify, or no soul must be saved. Some think that the love of the Father, without the blood of the Son, will save them, but they are deceived; for "without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb 9:22).

Some think that the love of the Father and blood of the Son will do, without the holiness of the Spirit of God; but they are deceived also; for "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his"; and again, "without holiness no man shall see the Lord" (Rom 8:9; Heb 12:14).

There is a third sort, that think the holiness of the Spirit is sufficient of itself; but they (if they had it) are deceived also; for it must be the grace of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the grace of the Spirit, jointly, that must save them.

But yet, as these three do put forth grace jointly and truly in the salvation of a sinner, so they put it forth, as I also have showed you before, after a diverse manner. The Father designs us for heaven, the Son redeems from sin and death, and the Spirit makes us meet for heaven; not by electing, that is the work of the Father; not by dying, that is the work of the Son; but by his revealing Christ, and applying Christ to our souls, by shedding the love of God abroad in our hearts, by sanctifying of our souls, and taking possession of us as an earnest of our possession of heaven.

### QUEST. III.—WHO ARE THEY THAT ARE TO BE SAVED BY GRACE?

I come now to the third particular—namely, to show you who they are that are to be saved by grace.

[Who are not saved.]

First. Not the self-righteous, not they that have no need of the physician. "The whole have no need of the physician," saith Christ. "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Mark 2:17). And again, "He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away" (Luke 1:53). Now when I say not the self-righteous nor the rich, I mean not that they are utterly excluded; for Paul was such an one; but he saveth not such without he first awaken them to see they have need to be saved by grace.

Second. The grace of God saveth not him that hath sinned the unpardonable sin. There is nothing left for him "but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, - which shall devour the adversaries" (Heb 10:26,27).

Third. That sinner that persevereth in final impenitency and unbelief shall be damned (Luke 13:3,5; Rom 2:2-5; Mark 16:15,16).

Fourth. That sinner whose mind the god of this world hath blinded, that the glorious light of the gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, can never shine into him, is lost, and must be damned (2 Cor 4:3,4).

Fifth. The sinner that maketh religion his cloak for wickedness, he is a hypocrite, and, continuing so, must certainly be damned (Psa 125:5; Isa 33:14; Matt 24:50,51).

Sixth. In a word, every sinner that persevereth in his wickedness, shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven—"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." "Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience" (1 Cor 6:9-12; Eph 5:5,6).

[Who are saved.] Question. But what kind of sinners shall then be saved?

Answ. Those of all these kinds that the Spirit of God shall bring [to] the Father by Jesus Christ; these, I say, and none but these, can be saved, because else the sinners might be saved without the Father, or without the Son, or without the Spirit.

Now, in all that I have said, I have not in the least suggested that any sinner is rejected because his sins, in the nature of them, are great; Christ Jesus came into the world to save the chief of sinners. It is not, therefore, the greatness of, but the continuance in, sins that indeed damneth the sinner. But I always exclude him that hath sinned against the Holy Ghost. That it is not the greatness of sin that excludeth the sinner is evident—

1. From the words before the text, which doth give an account of what kind of sinners were here saved by grace, as namely, they that were dead in trespasses and sins, those that walked in these sins, "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of

the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Eph 2:2,3).

2. It is evident also from the many sinners that we find to be saved, by the revealed will of God. For in the Word we have mention made of the salvation of great sinners, where their names and their sins stand recorded for our encouragement; as, (1.) You read of Manasseh, who was an idolater, a witch, a persecutor, yea, a rebel against the word of God, sent unto him by the prophets; and yet this man was saved (2 Chron 33:2-13; 2 Kings 21:16). (2.) You read of Mary Magdalene, in whom were seven devils; her condition was dreadful, yet she was saved (Luke 8:2; John 20). (3.) You read of the man that had a legion of devils in him. O how dreadful was his condition! and yet by grace he was saved (Mark 5:1-10). (4.) You read of them that murdered the Lord Jesus, and how they were converted and saved (Acts 2:23). (5.) You read of the exorcists, how they closed with Christ, and were saved by grace (Acts 19:13). (6.) You read of Saul the persecutor, and how he was saved by grace (Acts 9:15).

Object. But, thou sayest, I am a backslider.

Answ. So was Noah, and yet he found grace in the eyes of the Lord (Gen 9:21,22). So was Lot, and yet God saved him by grace (Gen 19:35; 2 Peter 2:7-9). So was David, yet by grace he was forgiven his iniquities (2 Sam 12:7-13). So was Solomon, and a great one too; yet by grace his soul was saved (Psa 89:28-34). So was Peter, and that a dreadful one; yet by grace he was saved (Matt 26:69-74; Mark 16:7; Acts 15:7-11). Besides, for further encouragement, read Jeremiah 3, 33:25,26, 51:5, Ezekiel 36:25, Hosea 14:1-4; and stay thyself, and wonder at the riches of the grace of God.

Quest. But how should we find out what sinners shall be saved? All, it seems, shall not. Besides, for aught can be gathered by what you have

said, there is as bad saved as damned, set him that hath sinned the unpardonable sin aside.

Answ. True, there are as bad saved as damned; but to this question: They that are effectually called, are saved. They that believe on the Son of God shall be saved. They that are sanctified and preserved in Christ shall be saved. They that take up their cross daily, and follow Christ, shall be saved.

Take a catalogue of them thus: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Mark 16:16; Acts 16:31). "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead thou shalt be saved" (Rom 10:9). Be justified by the blood of Christ, and thou shalt be saved (Rom 5:9). Be reconciled to God by the death of his Son, and thou shalt be saved by his life (Rom 5:10). "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21).

See some other scriptures. "He shall save the humble person" (Job 22:29). "Thou wilt save the afflicted people" (Psa 18:27). "He shall save the children of the needy" (Psa 72:4). "He shall save the souls of the needy" (Psa 72:13). "O thou, my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee" (Psa 86:2). "He will fulfill the desire of them that fear him, he also will hear their cry, and will save them" (Psa 145:19).

[Caution.] But, sinner, if thou wouldst indeed be saved, beware of these four things—

1. Beware of delaying repentance; delays are dangerous and damnable; they are dangerous, because they harden the heart; they are damnable, because their tendency is to make thee outstand the time of grace (Psa 95:7; Heb 3-12).



2. Beware of resting in the word of the kingdom, without the spirit and power of the kingdom of the gospel; for the gospel coming in word only saves nobody, for the kingdom of God or the gospel, where it comes to salvation, is not in word but in power (1 Thess 1:4-6; 1 Cor 4:19).

3. Take heed of living in a profession, a life that is provoking to God; for that is the way to make him cast thee away in his anger.

4. Take heed that thy inside and outside be alike;, and both conformable to the Word of his grace; labour to be like the living creatures which thou mayest read of in the book of the prophet Ezekiel, whose appearance and themselves were one (Eze 10:22).

In all this, I have advertised you not to be content without the power and Spirit of God in your hearts, for without him you partake of none of the grace of the Father or Son, but will certainly miss of the salvation of the soul.

QUEST. IV.—HOW IT APPEARS THAT THEY THAT ARE SAVED, ARE SAVED BY GRACE?

This fourth question requireth that some demonstration be given of the truth of this doctrine—to wit, that they that are saved are saved by grace.

What hath been said before hath given some demonstration of the truth; wherefore, first repeating in few words the sum of what hath been said already, I shall come to further proof. 1. That this is true, the Scriptures testify, because God chose them to salvation before they had done good (Rom 9:11). 2. Christ was ordained to be their Saviour before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4; 1 Peter 1:19- 21). 3. All things that concur and go to our salvation were also in the

same laid up in Christ, to be communicated in the dispensation of the fullness of times, to them that shall be saved (Eph 1:3,4; 2 Tim 1:9; Eph 1:10; 3:8-11; Rom 8:30).

[That salvation is by grace appears in its contrivance.] Again, as their salvation was contrived by God, so, as was said, this salvation was undertaken by one of the three; to wit, the Son of the Father (John 1:29; Isa 48:16).

Had there been a contrivance in heaven about the salvation of sinners on earth, yet if the result of that contrivance had been that we should be saved by our own good deeds, it would not have been proper for an apostle, or an angel, to say, "By grace ye are saved." But now, when a council is held in eternity about the salvation of sinners in time, and when the result of that council shall be, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost will themselves accomplish the work of this salvation, this is grace, this is naturally grace, grace that is rich and free; yea, this is unthought-of grace. I will say it again, this is unthought-of grace; for who could have thought that a Saviour had been in the bosom of the Father, or that the Father would have given him to be the Saviour of men, since he refused to give him to be the Saviour of angels? (Heb 2:16,17).

[Grace appears in the Son's undertaking this work.] Again; could it have been thought that the Father would have sent his Son to be the Saviour, we should, in reason, have thought also that he would never have taken the work wholly upon himself, especially that fearful, dreadful, soul-astonishing, and amazing part thereof! Who could once have imagined that the Lord Jesus would have made himself so poor as to stand before God in the nauseous rags of our sins, and subject himself to the curse and death that were due to our sin? but thus he did to save us by grace.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved; in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph 1:3-7).

[Grace appears in the terms and conditions on which salvation is made over.] Again; if we consider the terms and conditions upon which this salvation is made over to them that are saved, it will further appear we are saved by grace.

1. The things that immediately concern our justification and salvation, they are offered, yea, given to us freely, and we are commanded to receive them by faith. Sinner, hold up thy lap. God so loved the world, that he giveth his Son, that he giveth his righteousness, that he giveth his Spirit, and the kingdom of heaven (John 3:16; Rom 5:17; 2 Cor 1:21,22; Luke 12:32).

2. He also giveth repentance, he giveth faith, and giveth everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace (Acts 5:30,31; Phil 1:29; 2 Thess 2:16).

3. He giveth pardon, and giveth more grace, to keep us from sinking into hell, than we have sin to sink us in thither (Acts 5:31; Prov 3:34; John 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5).

4. He hath made all these things over to us in a covenant of grace. We call it a covenant of grace, because it is set in opposition to the covenant of works, and because it is established to us in the doings of

Christ, founded in his blood, established upon the best promises made to him, and to us by him. "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, to the glory of God by us" (2 Cor 1:20).

But to pass these, and to come to some other demonstrations for the clearing of this—

Let us a little consider,

What man is, upon whom the Father, the Son, and the Spirit bestows this grace.

1. [An enemy to God.] By nature he is an enemy to God, an enemy in his mind. "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom 8:7; Col 1:21).

2. [A slave to sin.] So that the state of man was this—he was not only over persuaded on a sudden to sin against God, but he drank this sin, like water, into his very nature, mingled it with every faculty of his soul and member of his body; by the means of which he became alienated from God, and an enemy to him in his very heart; and wilt thou, O Lord, as the Scripture hath it, "And dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one?" (Job 14:3). Yea, open thy heart, and take this man, not into judgment, but into mercy with thee?

3. [In covenant with death and hell.] Further, man by his sin had not only given himself to be a captive slave to the devil, but, continuing in his sin, he made head against his God, struck up a covenant with death, and made an agreement with hell; but for God to open his eyes upon such an one, and to take hold of him by riches of grace, this is amazing (Isa 28:16- 18).

See where God found the Jew when he came to look upon him to save him—"As for thy nativity," says God, "in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live. - Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness; yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine." Sinner, see further into the chapter, Ezekiel 16. All this is the grace of God; every word in this text smells of grace.

But before I pass this, let us a little take notice of

The carriage of God to man, and again of man to God, in his conversion.

FIRST. OF GOD'S CARRIAGE TO MAN. He comes to him while he is in his sins, in his blood; he comes to him now, not in the heat and fire of his jealousy, but "in the cool of the day," in unspeakable gentleness, mercy, pity, and bowels of love; not in clothing himself with vengeance, but in a way of entreaty, and meekly beseecheth the sinner to be reconciled unto him (2 Cor 5:19,20).

It is expected among men that he which giveth the offence should be the first in seeking peace; but, sinner, betwixt God and man it is not so; not that we loved God, not that we chose God; but "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." God is the first that seeketh peace; and, as I

said, in a way of entreaty he bids his ministers pray you in Christ's stead; "as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." O sinner, wilt thou not open? Behold, God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ stand both at the door of thy heart, beseeching there for favour from thee, that thou wilt be reconciled to them, with promise, if thou wilt comply, to forgive thee all thy sins. O grace! O amazing grace! To see a prince entreat a beggar to receive an alms would be a strange sight; to see a king entreat the traitor to accept of mercy would be a stranger sight than that; but to see God entreat a sinner, to hear Christ say, "I stand at the door and knock," with a heart full and a heaven full of grace to bestow upon him that opens, this is such a sight as dazzles the eyes of angels. What sayest thou now, sinner? Is not this God rich in mercy? Hath not this God great love for sinners? Nay, further, that thou mayest not have any ground to doubt that all this is but complementing, thou hast also here declared that God hath made his Christ "to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." If God would have stuck at anything, he would have stuck at the death of his Son; but he "delivered him up for us" freely; "how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom 8:32).

But this is not all. God doth not only beseech thee to be reconciled to him, but further, for thy encouragement, he hath pronounced, in thy hearing, exceeding great and precious promises; "and hath confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" (Heb 6:18,19; Isa 1:18; 55:6,7; Jer 51:5).

SECOND. OF MAN'S CARRIAGE TO GOD. Let us come now to the carriage of these sinners to God, and that from the first day he

beginneth to deal with their souls, even to the time that they are to be taken up into heaven. And,

First. To begin with God's ordinary dealing with sinners, when at first he ministereth conviction to them by his Word, how strangely do they behave themselves! They love not to have their consciences touched; they like not to ponder upon what they have been, what they are, or what is like to become of them hereafter; such thoughts they count unmanly, hurtful, disadvantageous; therefore "they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear" (Zech 7,11). And now they are for anything rather than the Word; an alehouse, a whorehouse, a playhouse, sports, pleasures, sleep, the world, and what not so they may stave off the power of the word of God.

Second. If God now comes up closer to them, and begins to fasten conviction upon the conscience, though such conviction be the first step to faith and repentance, yea, and to life eternal, yet what shifts will they have to forget them, and wear them off! Yea, although they now begin to see that they must either turn or burn, yet oftentimes even then they will study to wave a present conversion: they object, they are too young to turn yet; seven years hence time enough, when they are old, or come upon a sick-bed. O what an enemy is man to his own salvation! I am persuaded that God hath visited some of you often with his Word, even twice and thrice, and you have thrown water as fast as he hath by the Word cast fire upon your conscience.

Christian, what had become of thee if God had taken thy denial for an answer, and said, Then will I carry the word of salvation to another, and he will hear it? Sinner, turn, says God. Lord, I cannot tend it, says the sinner. Turn or burn, says God. I will venture that, says the sinner. Turn, and be saved, says God. I cannot leave my

pleasures, says the sinner: sweet sins, sweet pleasures, sweet delights, says the sinner. But what grace is it in God thus to parley with the sinner! O the patience of God to a poor sinner! What if God should now say, Then get thee to thy sins, get thee to thy delights, get thee to thy pleasures, take them for thy portion, they shall be all thy heaven, all thy happiness, and all thy portion?

Third. But God comes again, and shows the sinner the necessity of turning now; now or not at all; yea, and giveth the sinner this conviction so strongly, that he cannot put it off. But behold, the sinner has one spark of enmity still. If he must needs turn now, he will either turn from one sin to another, from great ones to little ones, from many to few, or from all to one, and there stop. But perhaps convictions will not thus leave him. Why, then, he will turn from profaneness to the law of Moses, and will dwell as long as God will let him upon his own seeming goodness. And now observe him, he is a great stickler for legal performance; now he will be a good neighbour, he will pay every man his own, will leave off his swearing, the alehouse, his sports, and carnal delights; he will read, pray, talk of Scripture, and be a very busy one in religion, such as it is; now he will please God, and make him amends for all the wrong he hath done him, and will feed him with chapters, and prayers, and promises, and vows, and a great many more such dainty dishes as these, persuading himself that now he must needs be fair for heaven, and thinks besides that he serveth God as well as any man in England can.

But all this while he is as ignorant of Christ as the stool he sits on, and no nearer heaven than was the blind Pharisee; only he has got in a cleaner way to hell than the rest of his neighbours are in—"There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness" (Prov 30:12).



Might not God now cut off this sinner, and cast him out of his sight; might he not leave him here to his own choice, to be deluded by, and to fall in his own righteousness, because he "trusteth to it, and commits iniquity"? (Eze 33:13). But grace, preventing grace, preserves him. It is true, this turn of the sinner, as I said, is a turning short of Christ; but,

Fourth. God in this way of the sinner will mercifully follow him, and show him the shortness of his performances, the emptiness of his duties, and the uncleanness of his righteousness (Isa 28:20; 64:6). Thus I speak of the sinner, the salvation of whose soul is graciously intended and contrived of God; for he shall by gospel light be wearied out of all; he shall be made to see the vanity of all, and that the personal righteousness of Jesus Christ, and that only, is it which of God is ordained to save the sinner from the due reward of his sins. But behold, the sinner now, at the sight and sense of his own nothingness, falleth into a kind of despair; for although he hath it in him to presume of salvation, through the delusiveness of his own good opinion of himself, yet he hath it not in himself to have a good opinion of the grace of God in the righteousness of Christ; wherefore he concludeth, that if salvation be alone of the grace of God, through the righteousness of Christ, and that all of a man's own is utterly rejected, as to the justification of his person with God, then he is cast away. Now the reason of this sinking of heart is the sight that God hath given him, a sight of the uncleanness of his best performance; the former sight of his immoralities did somewhat distress him, and make him betake himself to his own good deeds to ease his conscience, wherefore this was his prop, his stay; but behold, now God hath taken this from under him, and now he falls; wherefore his best doth also now forsake him, and flies away like the morning dew, or a bird, or as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind, and the smoke out of a chimney (Hosea 9:11; 13:3). Besides, this revelation of

the emptiness of his own righteousness, brings also with it a further discovery of the naughtiness of his heart, in its hypocrisies, pride, unbelief, hardness of heart, deadness, and backwardness to all gospel and new-covenant obedience, which sight of himself lies like millstones upon his shoulders, and sinks him yet further into doubts and fears of damnation. For, bid him now receive Christ, he answers he cannot, he dares not. Ask him why he cannot, he will answer he has no faith, nor hope in his heart. Tell him that grace is offered him freely, he says, but I have no heart to receive it; besides, he finds not, as he thinks, any gracious disposition in his soul, and therefore concludes he doth not belong to God's mercy, nor hath an interest in the blood of Christ, and therefore dares not presume to believe; wherefore, as I said, he sinks in his heart, he dies in his thoughts, he doubts, he despairs, and concludes he shall never be saved.

Fifth. But behold, the God of all grace leaveth him not in this distress, but comes up now to him closer than ever; he sends the Spirit of adoption, the blessed Comforter, to him, to tell him, "God is love," and therefore not willing to reject the broken in heart; bids him cry and pray for an evidence of mercy to his soul, and says, "Peradventure you may be hid in the day of the Lord's anger." At this the sinner takes some encouragement, yet he can get no more than that which will hang upon a mere probability, which by the next doubt that ariseth in the heart is blown quite away, and the soul left again in his first plight, or worse, where he lamentably bewails his miserable state, and is tormented with a thousand fears of perishing, for he hears not a word from heaven, perhaps for several weeks together. Wherefore unbelief begins to get the mastery of him, and takes off the very edge and spirit of prayer, and inclination to hear the Word any longer; yea, the devil also claps in with these thoughts, saying that all your prayers, and hearing, and reading, and godly company which you frequent, will rise up in judgment against you at

last; therefore better it is, if you must be damned, to choose as easy a place in hell as you can. The soul at this, being quite discouraged, thinks to do as it hath been taught, and with dying thoughts it begins to faint when it goeth to prayer or to hear the word; but behold, when all hope seems to be quite gone, and the soul concludes, I DIE, I PERISH, in comes, on a sudden, the Spirit of God again, with some good word of God, which the soul never thought of before, which word of God commands a calm in the soul, makes unbelief give place, encourageth to hope and wait upon God again; perhaps it gives some little sight of Christ to the soul, and of his blessed undertaking for sinners. But behold, so soon as the power of things does again begin to wear off the heart, the sinner gives place to unbelief, questions God's mercy, and fears damning again; he also entertains hard thoughts of God and Christ, and thinks former encouragements were fancies, delusions, or mere think-so's. And why doth not God now cast the sinner to hell for his thus abusing his mercy and grace. O no! "He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion"; wherefore "goodness and mercy shall follow him all the days of his life, that he may dwell in the house of the Lord for ever" (Psa 23:6).

Sixth. God, therefore, after all these provocations, comes by his Spirit to the soul again, and brings sealing grace and pardon to the conscience, testifying to it that its sins are forgiven, and that freely, for the sake of the blood of Christ; and now has the sinner such a sight of the grace of God in Christ as kindly breaks his heart with joy and comfort; now the soul knows what it is to eat promises; it also knows what it is to eat and drink the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ by faith; now it is driven by the power of his grace to its knees, to thank God for forgiveness of sins and for hopes of an inheritance amongst them that are sanctified by faith which is in Christ; now it

hath a calm and sunshine; now "he washeth his steps with butter, and the rock pours him out rivers of oil" (Job 29:6).

Seventh. But after this, perhaps the soul grows cold again, it also forgets this grace received, and waxeth carnal, begins again to itch after the world, loseth the life and savour of heavenly things, grieves the Spirit of God, woefully backslides, casteth off closet duties quite, or else retains only the formality of them, is a reproach to religion, grieves the hearts of them that are awake, and tender of God's name, &c. But what will God do now? Will he take this advantage to destroy the sinner? No. Will he let him alone in his apostasy? No. Will he leave him to recover himself by the strength of his now languishing graces? No. What then? Why, he will seek this man out till he finds him, and bring him home to himself again: "For thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among the sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered. - I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick" (Eze 34:11,16).

Thus he dealt with the man that went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves; and thus he dealt with the prodigal you read of also (Luke 10:30-35; 15:20).

Of God's ordinary way of fetching the backslider home I will not now discourse—namely, whether he always breaketh his bones for his sins, as he broke David's; or whether he will all the days of their life, for this, leave them under guilt and darkness; or whether he will kill them now, that they may not be damned in the day of judgment, as he dealt with them at Corinth (1 Cor 11:30-32). He is wise, and can

tell how to embitter backsliding to them he loveth. He can break their bones, and save them; he can lay them in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deep, and save them; he can slay them as to this life, and save them. And herein again appears wonderful grace, that "Israel is not forsaken, nor Judah of his God, though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel" (Jer 51:5).

Eighth. But suppose God deals not either of these ways with the backslider, but shines upon him again, and seals up to him the remission of his sins a second time, saying, "I will heal their backslidings, and love them freely," what will the soul do now? Surely it will walk humbly now, and holily all its days. It will never backslide again, will it? It may happen it will not, it may happen it will; it is just as his God keeps him; for although his sins are of himself, his standing is of God; I say, his standing, while he stands, and his recovery, if he falls, are both of God; wherefore, if God leaves him a little, the next gap he finds, away he is gone again. "My people," says God, "are bent to backsliding from me." How many times did David backslide; yea, Jehoshaphat and Peter! (2 Sam 11,24; 2 Chron 19:1-3; 20:1-5; Matt 26:69-71; Gal 2:11-13). As also in the third of Jeremiah it is said, "But thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet return unto me, saith the Lord" (verse 1). Here is grace! So many time as the soul backslides, so many times God brings him again—I mean, the soul that must be saved by grace—he renews his pardons, and multiplies them. "Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man" (Job 33:29).

Ninth. But see yet more grace. I will speak here of heart-wanderings, and of daily miscarriages—I mean, of these common infirmities that are incident to the best of saints, and that attend them in their best performances; not that I intend, for I cannot, mention them particularly, that would be a task impossible; but such there are,

worldly thoughts, unclean thoughts, too low thoughts of God, of Christ, of the Spirit, words, ways, and ordinances of God, by which a Christian transgresses many times; may I not say, sometimes many hundred times a day; yea, for aught I know, there are some saints, and them not long-lived either, that must receive, before they enter into life, millions of pardons from God for these; and every pardon is an act of grace, through the redemption that is in Christ's blood.

Seventy times seven times a day we sometimes sin against our brother; but how many times, in that day, do we sin against God? Lord, "who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults" [sins], said David. And again, "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared" (Matt 18:21,22; Psa 19:12; 130:3,4).

But to mention some of them. Sometimes they question the very being of God, or foolishly ask how he came to be at first; sometimes they question the truth of his Word, and suspect the harmony thereof, because their blind hearts and dull heads cannot reconcile it; yea, all fundamental truths lie open sometimes to the censure of their unbelief and atheism; as, namely, whether there be such an one as Christ, such a thing as the day of judgment, or whether there will be a heaven or hell hereafter, and God pardons all these by his grace. When they believe these things, even then they sin, by not having such reverent, high, and holy thoughts of them as they ought; they sin also by having too, too good thoughts of themselves, of sin, and the world; sometimes, let me say, often, they wink too much at known sin, they bewail not, as they should, the infirmities of the flesh; the itching inclinations which they find in their hearts after vanity go too often from them unrepented of. I do not say but they repent them in the general. But all these things, O how often doth God forgive, through the riches of his grace!

They sin by not walking answerably to mercies received; yea, they come short in their thanks to God for them, even then when they most heartily acknowledge how unworthy they are of them; also, how little of the strength of them is spent to his praise, who freely poureth them into their bosoms; but from all these sins are they saved by grace. They sin in their most exact and spiritual performance of duties; they pray not, they hear not, they read not, they give not alms, they come not to the Lord's table, or other holy appointments of God, but in and with much coldness, deadness, wanderings of heart, ignorance, misapprehensions, &c. They forget God while they pray unto him; they forget Christ while they are at his table; they forget his Word even while they are reading of it.

How often do they make promises to God, and afterwards break them! Yea, or if they keep promise in show, how much doth their heart even grudge the performing of them; how do they shuck at the cross; and how unwilling are they to lose that little they have for God, though all they have was given them to glorify him withal!

All these things, and a thousand times as many more, dwell in the flesh of man; and they may as soon go away from themselves as from these corruptions; yea, they may sooner cut the flesh from their bones than these motions of sin from their flesh; these will be with them in every duty—I mean, some or other of them; yea, as often as they look, or think, or hear, or speak. These are with them, especially when the man intends good in so doing: "When I would do good," says Paul, "evil is present with me." And God himself complains that "every imagination of the thoughts of the heart of man is only evil," and that "continually" (Rom 7:21; Gen 6:5).

By these things, therefore, we continually defile ourselves, and every one of our performances—I mean, in the judgment of the law—even

mixing iniquity with those things which we hallow unto the Lord. "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness; all these evil things come from within, and defile the man" (Mark 7:21-23). Now what can deliver the soul from these but grace? "By grace ye are saved."

QUEST. V.—WHAT MIGHT BE THE REASON MOVED GOD TO ORDAIN AND CHOOSE TO SAVE THOSE THAT HE SAVETH BY HIS GRACE, RATHER THAN BY ANY OTHER MEANS?

I come now to answer the fifth question; namely, to show why God saveth those that he saveth by grace, rather than by any other means.

First. God saveth us by grace, because since sin is in the world, he can save us no other way; sin and transgression cannot be removed but by the grace of God through Christ; sin is the transgression of the law of God, who is perfectly just. Infinite justice cannot be satisfied with the recompence that man can make; for if it could, Christ Jesus himself needed not to have died; besides, man having sinned, and defiled himself thereby, all his acts are the acts of a defiled man; nay, further, the best of his performances are also defiled by his hands; these performances, therefore, cannot be a recompence for sin. Besides, to affirm that God saveth defiled man for the sake of his defiled duties—for so, I say, is every work of his hand—what is it but to say, God accepteth of one sinful act as a recompence and satisfaction for another? (Hag 2:14). But God, even of old, hath declared how he abominates imperfect sacrifices, therefore we can by no means be saved from sin but by grace (Rom 3:24).

Second. To assert that we may be saved any other way than by the grace of God, what is it but to object against the wisdom and



prudence of God, wherein he aboundeth towards them whom he hath saved by grace? (Eph 1:5-8). His wisdom and prudence found out no other way, therefore he chooseth to save us by grace.

Third. We must be saved by grace, because else it follows that God is mutable in his decrees, for so hath he determined before the foundation of the world; therefore he saveth us not, nor chooseth to save us by any other way, than by grace (Eph 1:3,4; 3:8-11; Rom 9:23).

Fourth. If man should be saved any other way than by grace, God would be disappointed in his design to cut off boasting from his creature; but God's design to cut off boasting from his creature cannot be frustrated or disappointed; therefore he will save man by no other means than by grace; he, I say, hath designed that no flesh should glory in his presence, and therefore he refuseth their works; "Not of works, lest any man should boast." "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith" (Eph 2:8,9; Rom 3:24-28).

Fifth. God hath ordained that we should be saved by grace, that he might have the praise and glory of our salvation; that we should be "to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved" (Eph 1:6). Now God will not lose his praise, and his glory he will not give to another; therefore God doth choose to save sinners but by his grace.

Sixth. God hath ordained, and doth choose to save us by grace, because, were there another way apparent, yet this is the way that is safest, and best secureth the soul. "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise [the promise of eternal inheritance, (Heb 9:14-16)] might be sure to all the seed" (Rom 4:16). No other way could have been sure. This is evident in Adam, the

Jews, and, I will add, the fallen angels, who being turned over to another way than grace, you see in short time what became of them.

To be saved by grace supposeth that God hath taken the salvation of our souls into his own hand; and to be sure it is safer in God's hand than ours. Hence it is called the salvation of the Lord, the salvation of God, and salvation, and that of God.

When our salvation is in God's hand, himself is engaged to accomplish it for us. 1. Here is the mercy of God engaged for us (Rom 9:15). 2. Here is the wisdom of God engaged for us (Eph 1:7,8). 3. Here is the power of God engaged for us (1 Peter 1:3-5). 4. Here is the justice of God engaged for us (Rom 3:24,25). 5. Here is the holiness of God engaged for us (Psa 89:30-35). 6. Here is the care of God engaged for us, and his watchful eye is always over us for our good (1 Peter 5:7; Isa 27:1-3).

What shall I say? Grace can take us into favour with God, and that when we are in our blood (Eze 16:7,8). Grace can make children of us, though by nature we have been enemies to God (Rom 9:25,26). Grace can make them God's people which were not God's people (1 Peter 2:9,10). Grace will not trust our own salvation in our own hands—"He putteth no trust in his saints" (Job 15:15). Grace can pardon our ungodliness, justify us with Christ's righteousness; it can put the spirit of Jesus Christ within us, it can help us up when we are down, it can heal us when we are wounded, it can multiply pardons, as we, through frailty, multiply transgressions.

What shall I say? Grace and mercy are everlasting. They are built up for ever. They are the delight of God. They rejoice against judgment. And therefore it is the most safe and secure way of salvation, and therefore hath God chosen to save us by his grace and mercy rather

than any other way (Isa 43:25; Rom 3:24,25; Isa 44:2,4; Psa 37:23; Luke 10:33,34; Isa 55:7,8; Psa 136; 89:2; Mal 3:18; James 2:13).

Seventh. We must be saved by the grace of God, or else God will not have his will. They that are saved are "predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace" (Eph 1:5,6).

1. But if it be his will that men should be saved by grace, then to think of another way is against the will of God. Hence they that seek to establish their own righteousness are such as are accounted to stand out in defiance against, and that do not submit to, the righteousness of God—that is, to the righteousness that he hath willed to be that through which alone we are saved by grace (Rom 10:3).

2. If it be his will that men should be saved through grace, then it is his will that men should be saved by faith in that Christ who is the contrivance of grace; therefore they that have sought to be justified another way have come short of, and perished notwithstanding, that salvation that is provided of God for men by grace (Rom 9:31-33).

3. God is not willing that faith should be made void, and the promise of none effect; therefore they of the righteousness of the law are excluded: "for if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise, but God gave it to Abraham by promise" (Rom 4:14 Gal 3:18).

4. God is not willing that men should be saved by their own natural abilities; but all the works of the law which men do to be saved by, they are the works of men's natural abilities, and are therefore called the work of the flesh, but God is not willing that men should be saved

by these, therefore no way but by his grace (Rom 4:1; Gal 3:1-3; Phil 3:3).

Eighth. We must be saved by grace, or else the main pillars and foundations of salvation are not only shaken, but overthrown—to wit, election, the new covenant, Christ, and the glory of God; but these must not be overthrown; therefore we must be saved by grace.

1. Election, which layeth hold of men by the grace of God, God hath purposed that that shall stand—the election of God standeth sure; therefore men must be saved by virtue of the election of grace (Rom 9:11; 2 Tim 2:19).

2. The covenant of grace, that must stand—"Brethren, I speak after the manner of men. Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed [as this is, by the death of the testator, (Heb 9:16,17)] no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto"; therefore man must be saved by virtue of a covenant of grace (Gal 3:15).

3. Christ, who is the gift of the grace of God to the world, he must stand, because he is a sure foundation, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever"; therefore men must be saved by grace, through the redemption that is in Christ (Isa 28:16; Heb 13:8).

4. God's glory, that also must stand; to wit, the glory of his grace; for that he will not give to another; therefore men must so be saved from the wrath to come, that in their salvation praise may redound to the glory of his grace.

Ninth. There can be but one will the master in our salvation; but that shall never be the will of man, but of God; therefore man must be saved by grace (John 1:13; Rom 9:16).

Tenth. There can be but one righteousness that shall save a sinner; but that shall never be the righteousness of men, but of Christ (therefore men must be saved by grace), that imputeth this righteousness to whom he will.

Eleventh. There can be but one covenant by which men must be saved; but that shall never be the covenant of the law, for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof; therefore men must be saved by the covenant of grace, by which God will be merciful to our unrighteousnesses, and our sins and iniquities will remember no more (Heb 8:6-13).

#### POSTSCRIPT.

A few words by way of use, and so I shall conclude.

#### THE FIRST USE.

First. Is the salvation of the sinner by the grace of God? Then here you see the reason why God hath not respect to the personal virtues of men in the bringing of them to glory. Did I say, personal virtues? How can they have any to Godward that are enemies to him in their minds by wicked works? Indeed, men one to another seem to be, some better, some worse, by nature, but to God they are all alike, dead in trespasses and sins.

We will, therefore, state it again—Are men saved by grace? Then here you may see the reason why conversion runs at that rate among the sons of men, that none are converted for their good deeds, nor rejected for their bad, but even so many of both, and only so many, are brought home to God as grace is pleased to bring home to him.

1. None are received for their good deeds; for then they would not be saved by grace, but by works. Works and grace, as I have showed, are in this matter opposite each to other; if he be saved by works, then not by grace; if by grace, then not by works (Rom 11). That none are received of God for their good deeds is evident, not only because he declares his abhorrence of the supposition of such a thing, but hath also rejected the persons that have at any time attempted to present themselves to God in their own good deeds for justification. This I have showed you before.

2. Men are not rejected for their bad deeds. This is evident by Manasseh, by the murderers of our Lord Jesus Christ, by the men that you read of in the nineteenth of the Acts, with many others, whose sins were of as deep a dye as the sins of the worst of men (2 Chron 33:2,13; Acts 2:23,41; 19:19).

Grace respecteth, in the salvation of a sinner, chiefly the purpose of God; wherefore those that it findeth under that purpose, those it justifies freely, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. At Saul's conversion, Ananias of Damascus brought in a most dreadful charge against him to the Lord Jesus Christ, saying, "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem; and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name." But what said the Lord unto him? "Go thy way, for he is a chosen vessel unto me" (Acts 9:13- 15). This man's cruelty and outrage must not hinder his conversion, because he was a chosen vessel. Men's good deeds are no argument with God to convert them; men's bad deeds are no argument with him to reject them. I mean, those that come to Christ, by the drawings of the Father; besides, Christ also saith, "I will in no wise cast" such "out." (John 6:37-44).

Second. Is the salvation of the sinner by the grace of God? Then here you see the reason why some sinners, that were wonderfully averse to conversion by nature, are yet made to stoop to the God of their salvation. Grace takes them to do, because grace hath designed them to this very thing. Hence some of the Gentiles were taken from among the rest; God granted them repentance unto life, because he had taken them from among the rest, both by election and calling, for his name (Acts 11:18; 15:14). These men that were not a people, are thus become the people of God; these men that were not beloved for their works, were yet beloved by the grace of God. "I will call them my people which were not my people; and her beloved which was not beloved." But their minds are averse. But are they the people on whom God doth magnify the riches of his grace? Why, then, they shall be, in the day of his power, made willing, and be able to believe through grace (Psa 110:3; Rom 9:25; Acts 18:27). But doth the guilt and burden of sin so keep them down that they can by no means lift up themselves? Why, God will, by the exceeding greatness of that power by which he raised Christ from the dead, work in their souls also by the Spirit of grace, to cause them to believe and to walk in his ways (Eph 1:18-20).

Paul tells us, in that epistle of his to the Corinthians, that it was by grace he was what he was—"By the grace of God I am what I am," says he, "and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain" (1 Cor 15:10). This man kept always in his mind a warm remembrance of what he was formerly by nature, and also how he had added to his vileness by practice; yea, moreover, he truly concluded in his own soul, that had not God, by unspeakable grace, put a stop to his wicked proceedings, he had perished in his wickedness; hence he lays his call and conversion at the door of the grace of God—"When it pleased God," says he, "who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his

Son in me" (Gal 1:15,16). and hence it is, again, that he saith, "He obtained grace and apostleship"; grace to convert his soul, and the gifts and authority of an apostle, to preach the gospel of the grace of God.

This blessed man ascribes all to the grace of God. 1. His call he ascribes to the grace of God. 2. His apostleship he ascribes to the grace of God. 3. And all his labour in that charge he also ascribes to the grace of God.

This grace of God it was that which saved from the beginning. 1. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and was therefore converted and preserved from the flood (Gen 6:8). 2. Abraham found grace in the sight of the Lord, and therefore he was called out of his country (Gen 12:1,2). 3. Moses found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and therefore he must not be blotted out of God's book (Exo 33:12,17).

Neither may it be imagined that these men were, before grace laid hold on them, better than other men; for then they would not have been saved by grace; grace should not have had the dominion and glory of their salvation. But, as Paul says of himself, and of those that were saved by grace in his day, "What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise; for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles that they are all under sin" (Rom 3:9). So it may be said of these blessed ones; for indeed this conclusion is general, and reacheth all the children of men, Christ Jesus alone only excepted. But,

Third. Is the salvation of the sinner by the grace of God? Then here you may see the reason why one backslider is recovered, and another left to perish in his backsliding.



There was grace for Lot, but none for his wife; therefore she was left in her transgression, but Lot was saved notwithstanding. There was grace for Jacob, but none for Esau; therefore Esau was left in his backsliding, but Jacob found mercy notwithstanding. There was grace for David, but none for Saul; therefore David obtained mercy, and Saul perished in his backsliding. There was grace for Peter, but none for Judas; therefore Judas is left to perish in his backsliding, and Peter is saved from his sin. That text stands good to none but those that are elect by grace—"Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Rom 6:14).

It will be said, repentance was found in one, but not in the other. Well, but who granted and gave the one repentance; The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter; he did not turn and look upon Judas; yea, the Lord told Peter before he fell that he should follow him to the kingdom of heaven, but told him that he should deny him first; but withal told him also he should not let his heart be troubled, that is, utterly dejected, for he would go and prepare a place for him, and come again and receive him to himself (John 13:36-38; 14:1-3). That is a blessed word of God, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand" (Psa 37:23,24).

## THE SECOND USE.

My second use shall be to them that are dejected in their souls at the sight and sense of their sins.

First. Are they that are saved, saved by grace? Then they that would have their guilty consciences quieted, they must study the doctrine of grace.

It is Satan's great design either to keep the sinner senseless of his sins, or if God makes him sensible of them, then to hide and keep from his thoughts the sweet doctrine of the grace of God, by which alone the conscience getteth health and cure; "for everlasting consolation, and good hope" is given "through grace" (1 Thess 2:16). How then shall the conscience of the burdened sinner be rightly quieted, if he perceiveth not the grace of God?

Study, therefore, this doctrine of the grace of God. Suppose thou hast a disease upon thee which is not to be cured but by such or such medicines, the first step to thy cure is to know the medicines. I am sure this is true as to the case in hand; the first step to the cure of a wounded conscience is for thee to know the grace of God, especially the grace of God as to justification from the curse in his sight.

A man under a wounded conscience naturally leaneth to the works of the law, and thinks God must be pacified by something that he should do, whereas the Word says, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Matt 9:13).

Wherefore thou must study the grace of God. "It is a good thing," saith the apostle, "that the heart be established with grace"; thereby insinuating that there is no establishment in the soul that is right but by the knowledge of the grace of God (Heb 13:9).

I said, that when a man is wounded in his conscience, he naturally leaneth to the works of the law; wherefore thou must therefore be so much the more heedful to study the grace of God; yea, so to study it as rightly, not only in notion, but in thy practices, to distinguish it from the law. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). Study it, I say, so as to distinguish it,

and that, not only from the law, but from all those things that men blasphemously call this grace of God.

There are many things which men call the grace of God, that are not.

1. The light and knowledge that are in every man.
2. That natural willingness that is in man to be saved.
3. That power that is in man by nature to do something, as he thinketh, towards his own salvation.

I name these three; there are also many other which some will have entitled the grace of God. But do thou remember that the grace of God is his goodwill and great love to sinners in his Son Jesus Christ; "by the which" good "will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb 10:10).

Again; when thou hast smelt out this grace of God, and canst distinguish it from that which is not, then labour to strengthen thy soul with the blessed knowledge of it. "Thou therefore, my son," said Paul, "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim 2:1). Fortify thy judgment and understanding; but especially labour to get down all into thy conscience, that that may be "purged from dead works, to serve the living God."

[Second.] And to enforce this use upon thee yet further, consider, a man gets yet more advantage by the knowledge of, and by growing strong in, this grace of God.

1. It ministereth to him matter of joy; for he that knows this grace aright, he knows God is at peace with him, because he believeth in Jesus Christ, who by grace tasted death for every man; "by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom 5:2). And indeed what joy

or what rejoicing is like rejoicing here? To rejoice in hope of the glory of God, it is to rejoice in hope to enjoy him for ever, with that eternal glory that is in him.

2. As it manifesteth matter of joy and rejoicing, so it causeth much fruitfulness in all holiness and godliness. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world" (Titus 2:11,12). Yea, it so naturally tendeth this way, that it can no sooner appear to the soul, but it causeth this blessed fruit in the heart and life. "We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared"—what then? Why then, he that believeth, being justified by his grace, and expecting to be an heir according to the hope of eternal life, is "careful to maintain good works" (Titus 3:3-8). See also that in Paul's epistle to the Colossians—"We give thanks," says he, "to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth" (Col 1:3-6).

3. The knowledge of, and strength that comes by, the grace of God is a sovereign antidote against all, and all manner of delusions that are or may come into the world. Wherefore Peter, exhorting the believers to take heed that they were not carried away with the errors of the wicked, and so fall from their own steadfastness, adds, as their only

help, this exhortation—"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

(1.) Suppose it should be urged, that man's own righteousness saveth the sinner; why, then, we have this at hand—God "hath saved us, and called us, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ" &c. (2 Tim 1:9).

(2.) Suppose it should be urged, that by the doctrine of free grace we must not understand God's extending free forgiveness as far as we have or do sin; the answer is—"But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness," through the justice of God being satisfied by his Son, "unto eternal life" (Rom 5:20,21).

(3.) Suppose it should be urged, that this is a doctrine tending to looseness and lasciviousness; the answer is ready—"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" for the doctrine of free grace believed is the most sin-killing doctrine in the world (Rom 6:1,2).

(4.) Suppose men should attempt to burden the church of God with unnecessary ceremonies, and impose them, even as the false apostles urged circumcision of old, saying, Unless you do these things, ye cannot be saved; why, the answer is ready—"Why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the necks of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they" (Acts 15:1,10,11). But not to enlarge,

[Third.] This doctrine, "By grace ye are saved," it is the only remedy against despairing thoughts at the apprehension of our own

unworthiness; as,

1. Thou criest out, O cursed man that I am! my sins will sink me into hell.

Answ. Hold, man; there is a God in heaven that is "the God of all grace" (1 Peter 5:10). Yet thou art not the man of all sin. If God be the God of all grace, then if all the sins in the world were thine, yet the God of all grace can pardon, or else it should seem that sin is stronger in a man penitent, to damn, than the grace of God can be to save.

2. But my sins are of the worst sort— blasphemy, adultery, covetousness, murder, &c.

Answ. "All manner of sins and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, wherewithsoever they shall blaspheme.—Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Matt 12:31; Mark 3:28; Isa 55:7,8).

3. But I have a stout and rebellious heart, a heart that is far from good.

Answ. "Hearken unto me," saith God, "ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness: I bring near my righteousness"; that is, the righteousness of Christ, by which stout-hearted sinners are justified, though ungodly (Isa 46:12,13; Phil 3:7,8; Rev 4:5).

4. But I have a heart as hard as any stone.

Answ. "A new heart also will I give you," says God, "and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh" (Eze 36:26).

5. But I am as blind as a beetle; I cannot understand anything of the gospel.

Answ. "I will bring the blind by a way that they know not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them" (Isa 42:16).

6. But my heart will not be affected with the sufferings and blood of Christ.

Answ. "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn" (Zech 12:10).

7. But though I see what is like to become of me if I find not Christ, yet my spirit, while I am thus, will be running after vanity, foolishness, uncleanness, wickedness.

Answ. "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you" (Eze 36:25).

8. But I cannot believe in Christ.

Answ. But God hath promised to make thee believe. "I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord." And again, "There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in him shall the Gentiles trust" (Zeph 3:12; Rom 15:12).

9. But I cannot pray to God for mercy.

Answ. But God hath graciously promised a spirit of prayer—"Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord.—They shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God" (Zech 8:22; 12:10; 13:9).

10. But I cannot repent.

Answ. "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:30,31).

Thus might I enlarge, for the holy Bible is full of this exceeding grace of God. O these words, "I will" and "you shall"! they are the language of a gracious God; they are promises by which our God has engaged himself to do that for poor sinners which would else be left undone for ever.

### THE THIRD USE.

Are they that are saved, saved by grace? Then let Christians labour to advance God's grace. FIRST. In heart. SECOND. In life.

FIRST. In heart; and that in this manner—

First. Believe in God's mercy through Jesus Christ, and so advance the grace of God; I mean, venture heartily, venture confidently, for there is a sufficiency in the grace of God. Abraham magnified the grace of God when "he considered not his own body now dead, - neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: he staggered not at the



promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God" (Rom 4:19,20).

Second. Advance it by heightening of it in thy thoughts. Have always good and great thoughts of the grace of God; narrow and slender thoughts of it are a great disparagement to it.

And to help thee in this matter, consider—1. This grace is compared to a sea—"And thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19). Now a sea can never be filled by casting into it.

2. This grace is compared to a fountain, to an open fountain—"In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." Now a fountain can never be drawn dry (Zech 12:1). 3. The Psalmist cries out concerning the grace and mercy of God, "It endureth for ever"; he says so twenty-six times in one psalm. Surely he saw a great deal in it, surely he was taken a great deal with it (Psa 136). 4. Paul says the God of all grace can do more than "we ask or think" (Eph 3:20). 5. Therefore as God's Word says, so thou shouldst conclude of the grace of God.

Third. Come boldly to the throne of grace by hearty prayer; for this is the way also to magnify the grace of God. This is the apostle's exhortation, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb 4:16). See here a little, and wonder.

We have been all this while discoursing of the grace of God; and now we are come to his throne, as Job says, "even to his seat"; and behold, "that is a throne of grace." O, when a God of grace is upon a throne of grace, and a poor sinner stands by and begs for grace, and that in the name of a gracious Christ, in and by the help of the Spirit

of grace, can it be otherwise but such a sinner must obtain mercy and grace to help in time of need? But not to forget the exhortation, "Come boldly." Indeed, we are apt to forget this exhortation; we think, seeing we are such abominable sinners, we should not presume to come boldly to the throne of grace; but yet so we are bidden to do; and to break a commandment here is as bad as to break it in another place.

You may ask me, What is it to come boldly? [I] answer—

1. It is to come confidently—"Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb 10:22).

2. To come boldly, it is to come frequently—"At morning, at noon, and at night, will I pray." We use to count them bold beggars that come often to our door.

3. To come boldly, it is to ask for great things when we come. That is the bold beggar that will not only ask, but also choose the thing that he asketh.

4. To come boldly, it is to ask for others as well as ourselves, to beg mercy and grace for all the saints of God under heaven as well as for ourselves—"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit - for all saints" (Eph 6:18).

5. To come boldly, it is to come and take no nay; thus Jacob came to the throne of grace—"I will not let thee go except thou bless me" (Gen 32:26).

6. To come boldly, it is to plead God's promises with him both in a way of justice and mercy, and to take it for granted God will give us—

because he hath said it—whatever we ask in the name of his Son.

Fourth. Labour to advance God's grace in thy heart, by often admiring, praising, and blessing God in secret for it; God expects it—"Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me," says he. "By Jesus Christ therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually; that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name" (Psa 50:23; Heb 13:15).

SECOND. [In life.] But again; as we should advance this grace in our hearts, so we should do it in our life. We should in our conversation adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. It is a great word of the apostle, "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ," which is the gospel of the grace of God (Phil 1:27). God expecteth that there should in our whole life be a blessed tang of the gospel, or that in our life among men there should be preached to them the grace of the gospel of God. The gospel shows us that God did wonderfully stoop and condescend for our good; and to do accordingly, it is to stoop and condescend to others.

The gospel shows us that there was abundance of pity, love, bowels, and compassion in God towards us; and accordingly we should be full of bowels, pity, love, and compassion to others.

The gospel shows us that in God there is a great deal of willingness to do good to others.

The gospel shows us that God acteth towards us according to his truth and faithfulness, and so should we be in all our actions one to another.

By the gospel, God declares that he forgiveth us ten thousand talents, and we ought likewise to forgive our brother the hundred pence.

And now, before I conclude this use, let me give you a few heart-endearing considerations to this so good and so happy a work.

[Heart-endearing Considerations.]

First. Consider, God hath saved thee by his grace. Christian, God hath saved thee, thou hast escaped the lion's mouth, thou art delivered from wrath to come; advance the grace that saves thee, in thy heart and life.

Second. Consider, God left millions in their sins that day he saved thee by his grace; he left millions out, and pitched upon thee; it may be hundreds also, yea, thousands, were in the day of thy conversion lying before him under the preaching of the word as thou wert, yet he took thee. Considerations of this nature affected David much; and God would have them affect thee, to the advancing of his grace in thy life and conversation (Psa 78:67-72; Deu 7:7).

Third. Consider, perhaps the most part of those that God refused that day that he called thee by his grace were, as to conversation, far better than ever thou wert—I was a blasphemer, I was a persecutor, I was an injurious person, but I obtained mercy! O this should affect thy heart, this should engage thy heart to study to advance this grace of God (1 Tim 1:14,15).

Fourth. Perhaps in the day of thy conversion thou wast more unruly than many. Like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, hardly tamed, thou wast brought home by strong hands; thou wouldst not drive, the Lord Jesus must take thee up, lay thee upon his shoulder, and carry thee home to his Father's house. This should engage thy heart to study to advance the grace of God (Luke 15:1-6).

Fifth. It may be many did take even offence at God in his converting and saving of thee by his grace, even as the elder son was offended with his father for killing the fatted calf for his brother, and yet that did not hinder the grace of God, nor make God abate his love to thy soul. This should make thee study to advance the grace of God in thy heart and life (Luke 15:21- 32).

Sixth. Consider again, that God hath allowed thee but a little time for this good work, even the few days that thou hast now to live—I mean, for this good work among sinful men, and then thou shalt go to receive that wages that grace also will give thee for thy work to thy eternal joy.

Seventh. Let this also have some place upon thy heart—every man shows subjection to the god that he serveth; yea, though that god be none other but the devil and his lusts; and wilt not thou, O man! saved of the Lord, be much more subject "to the Father of spirits, and live"?

Alas! they are pursuing their own damnation, yet they sport it, and dance all the way they go. They serve that "god" (Satan) with cheerfulness and delight, who at last will plunge them into the everlasting gulf of death, and torment them in the fiery flames of hell; but thy God is the God of salvation, and to God thy Lord belong the issues from death. Wilt not thou serve him with joyfulness in the enjoyment of all good things, even him by whom thou art to be made blessed for ever?

Object. This is that which kills me—honour God I cannot; my heart is so wretched, so spiritless, and desperately wicked, I cannot.

Answ. What dost thou mean by cannot? 1. If thou meanest thou hast no strength to do it, thou hast said an untruth, for "greater is he that

is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). 2. If thou meanest thou hast no will, then thou art out also; for every Christian, in his right mind, is a willing man, and the day of God's power hath made him so (Psa 110:3). 3. If thou meanest that thou wantest wisdom, that is thine own fault—"If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not" (James 1:5).

Object. I cannot do things as I would.

Answ. No more could the best of the saints of old—"To will is present with me," said Paul; "but how to perform that which is good I find not." And again, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Rom 7:18; Gal 5:17).

And here indeed lies a great discovery of this truth, "ye are saved by grace"; for the children of God whilst here, notwithstanding their conversion to God, and salvation by Christ through grace, are so infirm and weak by reason of a body of death that yet remaineth in them, that should even the sin that is in the best of their performances be laid to their charge, according to the tenor of a covenant of works, they would find it impossible ever to get into glory. But why do I talk thus? It is impossible that those that are saved by grace should have their infirmities laid to their charge as afore, "for they are not under the law"; they are included by the grace of God in the death and blood of the Son of God, who ever liveth to make intercession for them at the right hand of God; whose intercession is so prevalent with the Father as to take away the iniquity of our holy things from his sight, and to present us holy, and unreprouable, and unblamable in his sight. To him, by Christ Jesus, through the help of the blessed Spirit of grace, be given praise, and

thanks, and glory, and dominion, by all his saints, now and for ever.  
Amen.

## **THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT**

### **The Day of Judgment**

#### **Archibald Alexander**

Alexander (1772-1851) was the founding professor of Princeton Theological Seminary.

That a just God will render to every man according to his character and works, is a dictate of reason. Conscience also intimates to every man, when he sins, that he deserves to be punished; and when we see or hear of great crimes committed by others, such as murders, perjuries, robbery, or treachery, we feel something within us demanding that such should receive condign punishment. But we see that the wicked are not always punished in this world according to their evil deeds; it seems reasonable, therefore, to expect that there will be a judgment after death.

We are not left, however, to the mere dictates of reason on this subject: God, in his word, has revealed in the clearest manner that there will be a day of reckoning at the end of the world. This day is appointed, and will certainly come. It is not so certain that we shall ever see the sun rise again, as it is that we shall see the day of

judgment. The Lord Jesus Christ is also appointed to act as Judge on that day: "because he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge that world in righteousness, by that man whom he that ordained." Acts 17:31. "For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." 2 Corinthians 5:10.

When this awful day will arrive is a profound secret, not revealed to any creature in the universe. But we know that it will come suddenly and unexpectedly on those who shall then be on the earth. As it was in the days of Noah and of Lot, so will it be in the day of judgment. Men will be pursuing their common worldly business and amusements, without apprehension of danger, when the sound of the last trump shall be heard -- for the trumpet shall sound -- and the Son of man shall be seen coming in the clouds of heaven.

The race of man shall not cease from the earth until that day comes. There will then be a generation of living inhabitants, probably very numerous, in the world. These will never die as other men, but they will undergo a change equivalent to death and a resurrection; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, they shall be changed. But all they that are in their graves shall hear the voice of God, and shall come forth, great and small. No sooner shall the trumpet sound, than the scattered dust of unnumbered millions shall resume its proper place in every man. No matter where it lies, or how widely it may have been scattered, one word of the Almighty God is sufficient to bring it to its place, and animate it with new life. The multitude which will then start up into life cannot be conceived, it will be so great. There will stand Adam and all his posterity; there will stand those who lived before the flood, and those who have lived since; there will be seen the ancient patriarchs, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and



Jacob, and the inspired prophets and apostles; there will appear kings, emperors, nobles, and their subjects; the learned philosopher and the ignorant multitude; ministers and their congregations, parents and their children, masters and their servants -- all, all coming forward to the grand tribunal. Not one of our whole race will be absent from this great assembly. There, reader, shall you and I stand, trembling or rejoicing.

It is useless to inquire where room can be found for so great a multitude to stand, for this will be a day of miracles. All the wonders ever exhibited before will be nothing to the wonders of that day. Indeed, all that is natural will end on that day, and everything will be miraculous. The sun will no longer rise and set, the moon no longer give her light, and the stars shall no longer appear in the firmament. Heaven will appear to have come down to earth, for the King of kings and Lord of heaven will be visible to all, with his own glory and that of his Father. And all the holy angels will appear in attendance, standing round his throne, ready to execute his orders, whether of justice or of mercy.

When all things are prepared -- when the Judge has taken his seat on the tribunal and all men are brought before him, the judicial process will begin; "and the books will be opened." What books these are, except one, which is "the book of life," we are not informed; but we may be sure that one is the book of God's law, and another the record of human actions which is in the "book of" God's "remembrance." It is not necessary to think of more. These contain all that is necessary for conducting the trial of every man. The one contains the law, and the other the testimony. But every thing will be conducted with the most perfect equity. Every man will be judged for his own deeds, and according to that knowledge of the law which he had opportunity of acquitting. The omniscience of the Judge will enable him to estimate

with perfect exactness all the circumstances of every action; every thing which aggravated guilt, and every thing which palliates it, will have due consideration. They who lived under the patriarchal dispensation, will be judged according to the light and advantages then enjoyed; they who lived under the Mosaical economy, will be judged by the law of Moses; and they who enjoyed the clear light of the gospel, will be dealt with in a manner accordant to their advantages; while they who enjoyed no external revelation, will be judged by that law written on the hearts of all men.

The things which shall be brought under the eye of the Judge, and exhibited to the view of the universe, are, all deeds done in the body - - whatsoever a man hath done, whether good or bad. Every secret thing. "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Ecclesiastes 12:14. Every idle word. "I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give a account thereof in the day of judgment." Matthew 12:36. The thoughts of the heart shall also be made manifest. Every unholy desire; every proud, envious, or malicious thought; every secret purpose of iniquity; every unhallowed temper; every rebellious and discontented and ungrateful feeling towards God and his government, will be brought into judgment.

And the inquiry will extend not only to positive acts; but also to omissions of duty. Great as is the number of the acts of wickedness, the catalogue of omissions will be greater, and not less criminal. The first sin of this sort which will claim the attention of the Judge, will be the omission to entertain and cherish right sentiments towards God. No more heavy charge will be brought against any individual on that day, than that he neglected to love the Lord his God with all his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. This is the total violation of the first and greatest command, and the fountain of all other

iniquities. The neglect to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ when he was offered to us a complete Saviour in the gospel, will, to the unfruitful hearers of the word, be an accusation of the highest kind. The heinousness and enormity of unbelief which now affects the consciences of men so little, will on that day appear in a glaring light. It will not be strange if it should call forth reproaches upon the unhappy culprit, from devils who never had a Saviour provided, and from heathen who never had a Saviour offered to them. In that account which our Lord has given of the process of the judgment, in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, the neglect of kindness to the saints, by visiting, comforting, and aiding them, is the only thing mentioned. Whatever else, then, may be noticed, we are sure this will not be forgotten. The whole passage is so solemn and interesting, that it deserves our deepest attention: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was a hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee a hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire,

prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was a hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee a hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." Matthew 25:31-46.

And let it be well considered, that most of the sins which are mentioned in the discourses of Christ as the ground of condemnation, are sins of omission. The slothful servant, who prepares not himself, is the wicked servant, who wrapped his talent in a napkin and buried it, is condemned out of his own mouth. For "to him that knoweth to do good," of any kind, "and doeth it not, to him it is sin." James 4:17.

Many who prided themselves in their inoffensive lives and harmless behavior, will find, when the books are opened, a catalogue of omissions which will startle them with horror, and overwhelm them with confusion. And as actions externally good will then be examined by One who has a full view of the motives from which they proceeded, and the end which the agent had in view, is it not certain that many religious actions will then appear to have been mere hypocrisy? that many actions, apparently just and benevolent, were mere efforts of pride and selfishness? and that a life civil and blameless in the eyes of men, was a mere cloak which covered a heart full of unclean lusts? Our most intimate friends here will be astonished when they see our secret iniquities and wicked motives exposed to view. Crimes the most detestable will be found in the

skirts of those who passed through life without suspicion. O how many secret murders, perjuries, thefts, blasphemies, and adulteries, will then be brought to light! How much injustice, fraud, cruelty, oppression, pride, malice, revenge! The cries of the injured, the widow, and the orphan always enter into the ears of the Lord, and he now comes to avenge them. Cruel persecutors of God's church and people, though clothed in purple, and almost adored when living in the world, will now be brought to a severe account. The blood of the martyred saints from beneath the altar has been long crying out, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on earth?" Revelation 6:10. And now the day of retribution has arrived.

What will be the length of time occupied with the judgment we know not. It is called a day, but it will differ exceedingly from all other days; and in its duration, probably, as well as in other respects. Our wisdom is to attend to what is revealed, and to repress a vain curiosity in regard to other matters. We may rest assured that the whole process will be wisely conducted, and that complete justice will be done. The Judge of all the earth will do right. He will not condemn the innocent, nor clear the guilty. And his judgment will be most impartial. There will be no respecting of persons. The king and the beggar will stand upon equal ground, and will be judged by the same rule. Those who in this world were reviled and slandered, and had no opportunity of clearing up their character, will then be vindicated, and lies and reproaches will have effect no more.

But here a serious difficulty occurs. It may be said, "If the law of God is the rule of judgment, and if all sins are brought into judgment, then certainly every human being must be condemned; 'for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.'" According to this view, none can be saved." To remove this difficulty, let it be remembered,

that besides the book of the law, there is another book which will be produced there, written from the foundation of the world. This is called the Book of Life. This contains the names -- and they shall never be blotted out -- of all those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. These he has undertaken to present to God without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. They will appear on that day clothed with the righteousness of the Redeemer. The Judge on the throne is their covenanted Surety. He answers to every accusation made against them. But notwithstanding "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus;" notwithstanding none can "lay any thing to the charge of God's elect;" yet they also shall be brought into judgment. When all things are prepared, and the whole assembly is collected before the august tribunal, a separation will be made of the great congregation into two parts, the righteous, and the wicked. The former will be placed on the right hand of the Judge, and with them he will commence. But no sooner shall their numerous sins be brought to view, that it will be made to appear that they are pardoned through the blood of Christ. When the books are opened, a long account will appear against them; but on the other hand, it will be seen that the whole is freely forgiven through the riches of grace in Christ Jesus. But a most exact account will be taken of all their good works; and they will be mentioned to their honor, and rewarded as though no imperfection had cleaved to them. The least act of kindness done to any of Christ's followers will be magnified and rewarded as if done to Christ himself. Even the giving a cup of cold water to a disciple, in the name of a disciple, shall not lose its reward. Persons in the lowest state, servants and slaves, who performed their duty faithfully, shall not be forgotten in that day, for "whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free." Ephesians 6:8. But they who suffered persecution and death for righteousness' sake, will be most highly distinguished, and most signally rewarded. "Blessed

are ye when me shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad; for great is your reward in heaven." Matthew 5:11,12. They also who have labored much in promoting the Redeemer's kingdom, will receive a reward proportioned to their works of faith and labors of love. But none who have done good shall fail of their reward. Every one shall receive according to what he hath done; and every one will be satisfied; for the lowest place in glory is a situation too dazzling for our present conceptions, and the whole is a matter of pure grace. These works, considered in themselves, deserve no reward. But it is the will of God that every holy desire, every good word and work, in the members of Christ's body, should receive a mark of his favor, to the honor and glory of him who is their Head, and who died for their salvation.

When the gracious sentence, "Come, ye blessed, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." is pronounced, the righteous shall be caught up to the Lord, and shall be seated by his side, and be united with him in the remaining transactions of that great day; for it is written, "The saints shall judge the world," and, "Know ye not that ye shall judge angels?"

The case of the righteous being disposed of, then will come the awful transaction of pronouncing sentence on the wicked. They will, indeed, have anticipated the sentence. By this time they will be certain of their doom; but the scene itself will far exceed all apprehensions before entertained. To behold the face of inflexible justice turned toward them -- to hear the irreversible sentence of condemnation, and that too from the mouth of the benevolent Son of God -- to feel in the inmost soul the justice of the sentence -- to be as certain of everlasting damnation as they are of existence -- are things concerning which we can speak now, but of which we can form but

very feeble conceptions, compared with the dreadful reality. In all his existence there will probably be no moment in which the sinner's anguish will be so poignant as in this, when the Judge shall say, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Matthew 25:41. Every word in this tremendous denunciation will pierce through the soul with more insufferable pain than the thousand daggers. It is reasonable to think that every person against whom it is pronounced, will endure as much misery at that moment as in the nature of things is possible. And if this were all, the prospect would be appalling; but to be doomed to endless misery in fire, with the devil and his angels! -- who can bear the thought without horror and dismay? Yet, as sure as God is true, will this sentence be executed on every impenitent sinner. Men may reason and cavil now, but then every mouth shall be stopped. That the cry of despair and horror will be heard through the great multitude, is certain -- such a great and bitter cry as was never heard before. But it is all in vain; repentance comes too late. The day of grace is for ever past. The gospel dispensation is ended. This is the consummation of all things. No change in condition can ever be expected. They that are saved, have their salvation secured by the oath and promise of God; and they who are lost, have their damnation sealed for ever and ever by a judicial sentence which can never be revoked. And from this sentence there is no appeal. There is no higher tribunal to which the cause may be transferred. Neither can any resistance be made to the execution of the sentence. They who are now bold and daring in their blasphemies and rebellion, will then find that they are in the hands of a sin-avenging God. It will belong to the holy angels, who are mighty in power, to execute the sentence of the Judge. "So shall it be," said our blessed Saviour, "at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Matthew 13:49,50.



And it will be as impossible to escape as to resist. The rocks and mountains will not cover them. They cannot cease to exist. Go where they will, God is there to execute deserved wrath upon them. They will therefore be obliged "to go away into everlasting punishment." Matthew 25:46.

The devil and his angels will also be judged on that day; but of the particular nature of the trial we are not informed. All that we know is, that "the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." Jude, ver. 6. They are now miserable, but their cup is not full; therefore they cried out when they saw Jesus, "Art thou come to torment us before the time?" Matthew 8:29. At the breaking up of this great assembly, the present system of the world will be destroyed. For "the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." 2 Peter 3:7.

Reader, deeply fix in your mind the certainty and importance of the transactions of this last, great day. Meditate upon it as a reality in which you have a momentous interest. Let every other day, as it passes, put you in mind of this in which all others will end. Consider also that is draws near. Every moment bears us on towards the great tribunal. Mockers may say, Where is the promise of his coming? "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works therein, shall be burned up." 2 Peter 3:10.

O reader, whoever thou art, let me entreat you to inquire without delay, whether you are prepared for the scrutiny and judgment of

this coming day. Have you made you peace with God? Have you repented of all your sins? Are you in union with Christ by faith? Have you any clear scriptural evidence that your sins are pardoned? What says conscience to these inquiries? Be assured, if your own heart condemns you, God, who is greater than your heart, and knoweth all things, will much more condemn you. But your situation is not like that of them whose day of grace is ended. You are yet in the place of reconciliation. You have yet a little time before you -- God only knows how much. Now, then, hear the voice of warning -- hear the voice of mercy. Now "strive to enter in at the strait gate." Now forsake your sins, and live. Accept the offered grace -- "lay hold on eternal life."

Let no consideration induce you to delay your conversion. The importance of salvation -- the uncertainty of life -- the danger of provoking the Holy Spirit to abandon you -- the example of thousands who have perished by procrastination -- should urge you to lose no time, but to fall in with the gracious invitation of the gospel. But if you will refuse, then prepare to meet an angry God. Harden yourself against the terrors of the Almighty; summon all your fortitude to hear your dreadful doom from the Judge of quick and dead. But I forbear -- there is no fortitude or patience in hell.

Reader, art thou advanced in years? Let thy gray hairs and pains and wrinkles admonish thee that thou art near to judgment; for what if death intervene, yet after death all preparation is impossible. Just as death finds us, so will judgment. "In the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be." Ecclesiastes 11:3. Consider also that the number of your sins is in proportion to the number of your days. Long life will prove a dreadful curse to those who die in their sins.

But if thou art in youth, or in the vigor of manhood, remember that thy life is a vapor; that most men do not live out half their days: and that of those who shall appear before the judgment-seat, comparatively few will have finished their course of threescore years and ten. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." Ecclesiastes 12:1 "Behold, the Judge standeth before the door." James 5:9. Others have been suddenly taken away from your side. They also intend to make preparation hereafter; but while they were pleasing themselves with the prospect of many years, and were saying, "Soul, take thine ease, thou hast much goods laid up for many years" God said, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee. Be ye therefore ready also, for at such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh." "Behold, the axe is laid at the root of the tree," and now perhaps thou art spared, on account of the prayer of some kind intercessor, for one year. This, for aught thou knowest, may be thy last year. If so, it behooves you to make good use of your time and privileges. Let the idea of the judgment be ever before your mind. There you must appear -- there you must stand and render up your account -- there you must be filled with overwhelming shame and terror -- there you must hear the awful final sentence, which will fix your doom irreversibly, unless by a speedy repentance, and by faith in Jesus Christ, you flee from the wrath to come.

May God, of his infinite mercy, cause the truths which you have read in this tract to sink deeply into your mind; and by the light of his Holy Spirit lead you to just views of your own condition, and to saving views of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only Redeemer of lost sinners. Amen.

# SINNERS IN THE HANDS OF AN ANGRY GOD

**Jonathan Edwards**

*This is the classic sermon preached by Jonathan Edwards on July 8, 1741 in Enfield, Massachusetts (now Connecticut).*

## **SERMON VI.**

*“...their foot shall slide in due time:” -Deuteronomy 32:35*

In this verse is threatened the vengeance of God on the wicked unbelieving Israelites, who were God's visible people, and who lived under the means of grace; but who, notwithstanding all God's wonderful works towards them, remained (as vers 28.) void of counsel, having no understanding in them. Under all the cultivations of heaven, they brought forth bitter and poisonous fruit; as in the two verses next preceding the text. -- The expression I have chosen for my text, their foot shall slide in due time, seems to imply the following things, relating to the punishment and destruction to which these wicked Israelites were exposed.

1. That they were always exposed to destruction; as one that stands or walks in slippery places is always exposed to fall. This is implied in the manner of their destruction coming upon them, being represented by their foot sliding. The same is expressed, Psalm 72:18. *"Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction."*

2. It implies, that they were always exposed to sudden unexpected destruction. As he that walks in slippery places is every moment liable to fall, he cannot foresee one moment whether he shall stand

or fall the next; and when he does fall, he falls at once without warning: Which is also expressed in Psalm 73:18,19. *"Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction: How are they brought into desolation as in a moment!"*

3. Another thing implied is, that they are liable to fall of themselves, without being thrown down by the hand of another; as he that stands or walks on slippery ground needs nothing but his own weight to throw him down.

4. That the reason why they are not fallen already and do not fall now is only that God's appointed time is not come. For it is said, that when that due time, or appointed time comes, their foot shall slide. Then they shall be left to fall, as they are inclined by their own weight. God will not hold them up in these slippery places any longer, but will let them go; and then, at that very instant, they shall fall into destruction; as he that stands on such slippery declining ground, on the edge of a pit, he cannot stand alone, when he is let go he immediately falls and is lost.

The observation from the words that I would now insist upon is this. -- "There is nothing that keeps wicked men at any one moment out of hell, but the mere pleasure of God." -- By the mere pleasure of God, I mean his sovereign pleasure, his arbitrary will, restrained by no obligation, hindered by no manner of difficulty, any more than if nothing else but God's mere will had in the least degree, or in any respect whatsoever, any hand in the preservation of wicked men one moment. -- The truth of this observation may appear by the following considerations.

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1. There is no want of power in God to cast wicked men into hell at any moment. Men's hands cannot be strong, when God raises up. The strongest have no power to resist Him, nor can any deliver out of His hands. He is not only able to cast wicked men into hell, but he can most easily do it. Sometimes an earthly prince meets with a great deal of difficulty in subduing a rebel, who has found means to fortify himself, and has made himself strong by the number of his followers. But it is not so with God. There is no fortress that is any defense from the power of God. Though hand join in hand, and a vast multitude themselves, they are easily broken in pieces. They are as great heaps of light chaff before the whirlwind; or large quantities of dry stubble before devouring flames. We find it easy to tread on and crush a worm that we see crawling on the earth; so it is for us to cut or singe a slender thread that anything hangs by: thus easy is it for God when He pleases, to cast His enemies down to hell. What are we, that we should think to stand before Him, at whose rebuke the earth trembles, and before whom the rocks are thrown down?

2. They deserve to be cast into hell; so that divine justice never stands in the way; it makes no objection against Gods using His power at any moment to destroy them. Yea, on the contrary, justice calls aloud for an infinite punishment of their sins. Divine justice says of the tree that brings forth such grapes of Sodom, “. . . cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?”—Luke 13:7. The sword of divine justice is every moment brandished over the hand of arbitrary mercy, and Gods mere will that holds it back.

3. They are already under a sentence of condemnation to hell. They do not only justly deserve to be cast down thither, but the sentence of the law of God, that eternal and immutable rule of righteousness that God has fixed between Him and mankind, is gone out against them, and stands against them; so that they are bound over already to hell. John 3:18—“. . .he that believeth not is condemned already,” So that every unconverted man properly belongs to hell; that is his place; from thence he is. John 8:23—“. . .Ye are from beneath;” and thither he is bound; it is the place that justice, and God’s Word, and sentence of His unchangeable law, assign to him.

4. They are now the objects of that very same anger and wrath of God, that is expressed in the torments of hell; and the reason why they do not go down to hell at each moment, is not because God, in whose power they are, is not at present very angry with them; as he is with many miserable creatures now tormented in hell, who there feel and bear the fierceness of His wrath. Yea, God is a great deal more angry with great numbers that are now on earth, yea doubtless with some who may be hearing me speak now, who, it may be are at ease, than he is with many of those that are now in the flames of hell. So it is not because God is unmindful of their wickedness, and does not resent it, that he does not let loose His hand, and cut them off. God is not altogether such a one as themselves, though they may imagine Him to be so. The wrath of God burns against them, their damnation does not slumber; the pit is prepared, the fire is made ready, the furnace is now hot, ready to receive them; the flames do now rage and glow. The glittering sword is whetted, and held over them, and the pit hath opened its mouth under them.

5. The devil stands ready to fall upon them, and seize them as his own, at what moment God shall permit him. They belong to him; he has their souls in his possession, and under his dominion. The

Scripture represents them as his goals—Luke 11:21. The devils watch them; they are ever by them, at their right hand; they stand waiting for them; like greedy hungry lions, that see their prey, and expect to have it, but are for the present kept back. If God should withdraw His hand, by which they are restrained, they would in one moment fly upon their poor souls. The old Serpent is gaping for them; hell opens its mouth wide to receive them; and if God should permit it, they would be hastily swallowed up and lost.

6. There are in the souls of wicked men those hellish principles reigning, that would presently kindle and flame out into hell fire, if it were not for God's restraints. There is laid in the very nature of carnal men, a foundation for the torments of hell. There are those corrupt principles, in reigning power in them, and in full possession of them, that are seeds of hell fire. The principles are active and powerful, exceedingly violent in their nature; and if it were not for the restraining hand of God upon them, they would soon break out; they would flame out after the same manner as the same corruption, the same enmity, does in the hearts of damned souls, and would beget the same torments as they do in them. The souls of the wicked are in Scriptures compared to the troubled sea—Isaiah 57:20. For the present, God restrains their wickedness by His mighty power, as He does the raging waves of the troubled sea, saying "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further," but if God should withdraw that restraining power, it would soon carry all before it. Sin is the ruin and misery of the soul; it is destructive in its nature; and if God should leave it without restraint, there would need nothing else to make the soul perfectly miserable. The corruption of the heart of the man is immoderate and boundless in its fury; and while wicked men live here, it is like fire pent up by the course of nature; and as the heart is now a sink of sin, so, if sin was not restrained, it would immediately turn the soul into a fiery oven, or furnace of fire and brimstone.



7. It is no security to wicked men for one moment, that there are no visible means of death at hand! It is no security to a natural man, that he is now in health, and that he does not see which way he should now immediately go out of the world by any accident, and that there is not visible danger, in any respect, in his circumstances. The manifold and continual experience of the world, in all ages, shows this is no evidence that a man is not on the very brink of eternity and that the next step will not be into another world. The unseen, unthought-of-ways and means of persons going suddenly out of the world are innumerable and inconceivable. Unconverted men walk over the pit of hell on a rotten covering, and there are innumerable places in this covering so weak that they will not bear their weight, and these places are not seen. The arrows of death fly unseen at noon-day; the sharpest sight cannot discern them. God has so many different unsearchable ways of taking wicked men out of the world and sending them to hell, that there is nothing to make it appear that God had need to be at the expense of a miracle, or to go out of the ordinary course of His providence to destroy any wicked man, at any moment. All the means that there are of sinners going out of the world, are so in God's hands, and so universally and absolutely subject to His power and determination, that it does not depend at all the less on the mere will of God, whether sinners shall at any moment go to hell, than if means were never made use of, or at all concerned in the case.

8. Natural men's prudence and care to preserve their own lives, or the care of others to preserve them, do not secure them a moment. To this, divine providence and universal experience do bear testimony. There is this clear evidence that men's own wisdom is no security to them from death; that, if it were otherwise, we should see some difference between the wise and politic men of the world and others, with regard to their liableness to early and unexpected death;

but how is it in fact? “. . .how dieth the wise man? as the fool.”—Ecclesiastes 2:16.

9. All wicked men's pains and contrivances which they use to escape hell, while they continue to reject Christ, and so remain wicked men, do not secure them, from hell one moment. Almost every natural man that hears of hell, flatters himself that he shall escape it; he depends upon himself for his own security; he flatters himself in what he has done, in what he is now doing, or what he intends to do; every one lays out matters in his own mind, how he shall avoid damnation, and flatters himself that he contrives well for himself, and that his schemes will not fail. They hear indeed that there are but few saved, and that the greater part of men that have died heretofore, are gone to hell; but each one imagines that he forms plans to effect his escape better than others have done. He does not intend to go to that place of torment; he says within himself, that he intends to take effectual care, and to order matters so for himself as not to fail. But the foolish children of men miserably delude themselves in their own schemes, and in confidence in their own strength and wisdom; they trust to nothing but shadow. The greater part of those who heretofore have lived under the same means of grace, and are now dead, are undoubtedly gone to hell; and it was not because they were not as wise as those who are now alive, it was not because they did not lay out matters as well for themselves to secure their own escape. If we could come to speak with them, and inquire of them, one by one, whether they expected, when alive, and when they used to hear about hell, ever to be subjects of that misery, we, doubtless, should hear one and another reply, “No, I never intended to come here: I had arranged matters otherwise in my mind; I thought I should contrive well for myself; I thought my scheme good. I intended to take effectual care; but it came upon me unexpectedly; I did not look for it at that time, and in that manner; it came as a thief. Death

outwitted me: God's wrath was too quick for me O my cursed foolishness! I was flattering myself, and pleasing myself with vain dreams of what I would hereafter; and when I was saying peace and safety, then sudden destruction came upon me."

10. God has laid himself under no obligation, by any promise, to keep any natural man out of hell one moment. God certainly has made no promises either of eternal life, or of any deliverance or preservation from eternal death, but what are contained in the covenant of grace, the promises that are given in Christ, in whom all the promises are yea and amen. But surely they have no interest in the promise of the covenant of grace who are not the children of the covenant, who do not believe in any of the promises, and have no interest in the Mediator of the covenant. So that, whatever some have imagined and pretended about promises made to natural men's earnest seeking and knocking, it is plain and manifest, that whatever pains a natural man takes in religion, whatever prayers he makes, till he believes in Christ, God is under no manner of obligation to keep him a moment from eternal destruction. So that thus it is that natural men held in the hand of God over the pit of hell; they have deserved the fiery pit, and are already sentenced to it; and God is dreadfully provoked: His anger is as great towards them as those that are actually suffering the execution of the fierceness of His wrath in hell; and they have done nothing in the least to appease or abate that anger, neither is God in the least bound by any promise to hold them up for one moment. The devil is waiting for them, hell is gaping for them, the flames gather and flash about them, and would fain lay hold on them, and swallow them up; the fire pent up in their own hearts is struggling to break out; and they have no means within reach that can be any security to them. In short they have no refuge, nothing to take hold of; all that preserves them every moment is the mere arbitrary will, and uncovenanted, unobliged forbearance of an incensed God.

## *Application*

The use of this awful subject may be for awakening unconverted persons to a conviction of their danger, this that you have heard is the case of every one out if Christ. That world of misery, that lake of burning brimstone, is extended abroad under you. There is the dreadful pit of the glowing flames of the wrath of God; there is hell's wide gaping mouth open; and you have nothing to stand upon, nor anything between you and hell but the air; it is only the power and mere pleasure of God that holds you up.

You are probably not sensible of this; you find you are kept out of hell, but do not see the hand of God in it, but look at other things, as the good state of your bodily constitution, your care of your own life, and the means you use for your own preservation. But indeed these things are nothing; if God should withdraw His hand, they would avail no more to keep you from falling, than the thin air to hold up a person who is suspended in it.

Your wickedness makes you, as it were, heavy as lead, and to rend downwards with great weight and pressure towards hell, and if God should let you go, you would immediately sink, and swiftly descend and plunge into the bottomless gulf; and your healthy constitution, and your own care and prudence, and best contrivance, and all your righteousness, would have no more influence to uphold you, and keep you out of hell, than a spider's web would have to stop a falling rock. Were it not for the sovereign pleasure of God, the earth would not bear you one moment, for you are a burden to it; the creation groans with you; the creature is made subject to the bondage of your corruption, not willingly; the sun does not willingly shine upon you, to give you light to serve sin and Satan; the earth does not willingly yield her increase, to satisfy your lusts; nor is it willingly to stage for

your wickedness to be acted upon; the air does not willingly serve you for breath to maintain the flame of life in your vitals, while you spend your life in the service of God's enemies. God's creatures are good, and were made for men to serve God with; and do not willingly subserve any other purpose, so directly contrary to their nature and end. And the world would spew you out, were it not for the sovereign hand of Him who hath subject it in hope. There are the black clouds of God's wrath now hanging directly over your heads, full of the dreadful storm, and big with thunder; and were it not for the restraining hand of God they would immediately burst forth upon you. The sovereign pleasure of God, for the present, stays His rough wind, otherwise it would come with fury; and your destruction would come like a whirlwind, and would be like the chaff of the summer threshing-floor.

The wrath of God is like great waters that are restrained for the present; but they increase more and more, and rise higher and higher, till an outlet is given; and the longer the stream is stopped the more rapid and mighty is its course when once it is let loose. It is true, that judgment against your evil works has not been executed hitherto; the floods of God's vengeance have been withheld; but your guilt in the meantime is constantly increasing, and you are every day treasuring up more wrath; the waters are constantly rising and waxing more and more mighty; and there is nothing but the mere pleasure of God that holds the waters back, that are unwilling to be stopped, and press hard to go forward. If God should only withdraw His hand from the flood-gate, it would immediately fly open, and the fiery floods of the fierceness and wrath of God, would rush forth with inconceivable fury, and would come upon you with omnipotent power; and if your strength were ten thousand times greater than the strength of the stoutest, sturdiest devil in hell, it would be nothing to withstand or endure it.

The bow of God's wrath is bent, and the arrow made ready on the string; and justice directs the bow to your heart, and strains at the bow: and it is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any promise or obligation at all, that keeps the arrow one moment from being made drunk with your blood.

Thus all you that never passed under a great change of heart, by the mighty power of the Spirit of God upon your souls; all you that were never born again, and made new creatures, and raised from being dead in sin, to a state of new, and before altogether unexperienced light and life, are in the hands of an angry God. However you may have reformed your life in many things and many have had religious affections, and may keep up a form of religion in your families and closets, and in the house of God, it is nothing but His mere pleasure that keeps you from being this moment swallowed up in everlasting destruction. However unconvinced you may now be of the truth of what you hear, by and by you will be fully convinced of it. Those that are gone from being in the like circumstances with you, see that it was so with them; for destruction came suddenly upon most of them; when they expected nothing of it, and while they were saying, Peace and safety, Now they see, that those things on which they depend for peace and safety, were nothing but thin air and empty shadows.

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much in the same way as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect, over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked; His wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else but to be cast into the fire; He is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in His sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in His eyes than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours. You have offended Him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince; and yet, it is nothing but His hand that holds you from falling into the fire every

moment. It is to be ascribed to nothing else, that you did not go to hell the last night; that you were suffered to awake again in this world, after you closed your eyes to sleep; and there is no other reason to be given, why you have not dropped into hell since you arouse in the morning, but that God's hand has held you up. There is no other reason to be given, but His mercy; yea, no other reason can be given why you do not this very moment drop down into hell.

O sinner, consider the fearful danger you are in! It is a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of the wrath that you are held over in the hand of that God whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you as against many of the damned in hell. You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it asunder; and you have no interest in any Mediator, and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you have done, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment. *And consider here more particularly.*

1. Whose wrath it is. It is the wrath of the infinite God. If it were only the wrath of man, though it were of the most potent prince, it would be comparatively little to be regarded. The wrath of kings is very much dreaded, especially of absolute monarchs, who have the possessions and lives of their subjects wholly in their power, to be disposed of at their mere will. Proverbs 20:2—"The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: whoso provoketh him to anger sinneth against his own soul." The subject who very much enrages an arbitrary prince, is liable to suffer the most extreme torments that human art can invent, or human power can inflict. But the greatest earthly potentates, in their greatest majesty and strength, and when clothed in their greatest terrors are but feeble, despicable worms of

the dust, in comparison with the great and almighty Creator and King of heaven and earth. It is but little that they can do, when most enraged, and when they have exerted the utmost of their fury. All the kings of the earth, before God, are as grasshoppers; they are nothing, and less than nothing: both their love and their hatred are to be despised. The wrath of the great King of kings, is as much more terrible than theirs, as His majesty is greater. “And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.”—Luke 12:4,5.

2. It is the fierceness of His wrath that you are exposed to. We often read of the fury of God; as in Isaiah 59:18 “According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries,” So Isaiah 66:15—“For, behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire.” And so also in many other places. Thus we read of “. . .the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.”—Revelation 19:15. The words are exceedingly terrible. If it had only been said, “the wrath of God,” the words would have implied that which is unspeakably dreadful; but it is said, “the fierceness and wrath of God;” the fury of God! The fierceness of Jehovah! Oh how dreadful must that be! Who can utter or conceive what such expressions carry in them? But it is also, “the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.” As though there would be a very great manifestation of His almighty power in what the fierceness of His wrath should inflict; as though Omnipotence should be, as it were, enraged, and exerted, as men are wont to exert their strength in the fierceness of their wrath. O! Then, what will be the consequence? What will become of the poor worm that shall suffer it? Whose hands can be strong; and whose heart can endure? To what a dreadful



inexpressible, inconceivable depth of misery must the poor creature be sunk, who shall be the subject of this! Consider this, you that yet remain in an unregenerate state. That God will execute the fierceness of His anger, implies, that He will inflict wrath without any pity. When God beholds the ineffable extremity of your case, and sees your torment to be so vastly disproportioned to your strength, and sees how your poor soul is crushed, and sinks down, as it were, into an infinite gloom; He will not forbear the execution of His wrath, or in the least lighten His hand: there shall be no moderation or mercy, nor will God then at all stay His rough wind: He will have no regard to your welfare, nor be at all careful lest you should suffer too much in any other sense, than only that you shall not suffer beyond what strict justice requires: nothing shall be withheld, because it is so hard for you to bear. “Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them.”—Ezekiel 8:18. Now, God stands ready to pity you; this is the day of mercy; you can cry now with some encouragement of obtaining mercy. But when once the day of mercy is passed, your most lamentable and dolorous cries and shrieks will be in vain; you will be wholly lost and thrown away of God, as to any regard to your welfare. God will have no other use to put you to, but to suffer misery; you may be continued in being to no other end! For you will be vessel of wrath fitted to destruction; and there will be no other use of this vessel, but only to be filled full of wrath. God will be so far from pitying you when you cry to Him, that it is said He will only “laugh and mock.” “Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me

early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.”—Proverbs 1:24-32. How awful are those words of the great God. “. . .I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment:”—Isaiah 63:3. It is, perhaps, impossible to conceive of words that carry in them greater manifestations of these three things namely, contempt, hatred, and fierceness of indignation. If you cry to God to pity you, He will be so far from pitying you in your doleful case, or showing you the least reward or favor, that instead of that, He will only tread you under foot: and though He will know that you cannot bear the weight of Omnipotence treading upon you, yet He will not regard that, but He will crush you under His feet without mercy; He will crush out your blood, and make it fly, and it shall be sprinkled on His garments, so as to stain all His raiment. He will not only hate you, but He will have you in the utmost contempt; no place shall be thought fit for you, but under His feet, to be trodden down as the mire of the streets.

3. The misery you are exposed to is that which God will inflict, to the end that He might show what the wrath of Jehovah is. God hath had it on His heart to show to angels and men, both how excellent His love is, and also how terrible His wrath is. Sometimes earthly kings have a mind to show how terrible their wrath is, by the extreme punishments they would execute on those that provoke them. Nebuchadnezzar, that mighty and haughty monarch of the Chaldean empire, was willing to show his wrath, when enraged with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; and accordingly gave order that the burning, fiery furnace should be heated seven times hotter than it

was before; doubtless, it was raised to the utmost degree of fierceness that human art could raise it. But the great God is also willing to show His wrath, and magnify His awful majesty and mighty power in the extreme suffering of His enemies. “What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:”—Romans 9:22. And seeing this is His design, and what He has determined, even to show how terrible the unmixed, unrestrained wrath, the fury and fierceness of Jehovah is, He will do it to effect. There will be something accomplished and brought to pass that will be dreadful with a witness. When the great and angry God hath risen up and executed His awful vengeance on the poor sinner, and the wretch is actually suffering the infinite weight and power of His indignation, then will God call upon the whole universe to behold the awful majesty and mighty power that is to be seen in it. “And the people shall be as the burnings of lime, as thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire. Hear, ye that are far off, what I have done; and, ye that are near, acknowledge my might. The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?”—Isaiah 33:12-14. Thus it will be with you that are in an unconverted state, if you continue in it; the infinite might, and majesty, and terribleness, of the omnipotent God, shall be magnified upon you in the ineffable strength of your torments. You shall be tormented in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and when you shall be in this state of suffering, the glorious inhabitants of heaven shall go forth and look on the awful spectacle, that they may see what the wrath and fierceness of the Almighty is; and when they have seen it, they will fall down and adore that great power and majesty. “And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the

LORD. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.”—Isaiah 66:23,24.

It is everlasting wrath. It would be dreadful to suffer this fierceness and wrath of Almighty God one moment; but you must suffer it to all eternity. There will be no end to this exquisite horrible misery. When you look forward, you shall see a long forever, a boundless duration, before you, which will swallow up your thoughts, and amaze your souls; and you will absolutely despair of ever having any deliverance's, and end, any mitigation, any rest at all; you will know certainly that you must wear out long ages, millions of millions of ages, in wrestling and conflicting with this almighty merciless vengeance; and then when you have so done, when many ages have actually been spent by you in this manner, you will know that all is but a point to what remains. So that your punishment will indeed be infinite. O, what can express what the state of a soul in such circumstances is! All that we can possibly say about it, gives but a very feeble, faint representation of it; it is inexpressible and inconceivable: for, “Who knoweth the power of God’s anger?” How dreadful is the state of those who are daily and hourly in danger of this great wrath and infinite misery! But this is the dismal case of every soul that has not been born again, however moral and strict, sober and religious, they may otherwise be. O that you would consider it, whether you be young or old! There is reason for fear that there are many who will hear this glorious Gospel, who will actually be the subjects of this very misery to all eternity. We know not who they are, or what thoughts they now have. It may be they are now at ease, and hear all these things without much disturbance, and are now flattering themselves that they are not the persons, promising themselves that they shall escape. If we knew that there was one

person, and but one, of those that we know, that was to be the subject of this misery, what an awful thing would it be to think of! If we knew who it was, what an awful sight would it be to see such a person! How might every Christian lift up a lamentable and bitter cry over him! But alas! instead of one, how many is it likely will remember these solemn reflections in hell! And some may be in hell in a very short time, before this year is out. And it would be no wonder if some hearers, who are now in health, and quiet and secure, may be there before tomorrow morning. Those of you who finally continue in a natural condition who may keep out of hell longest, will be there in a little time! Your damnation does not slumber; it will come swiftly, and, in all probability, very suddenly, upon many of you. You have reason to wonder that you are not already in hell. It is doubtless the case of some whom you have seen and known, that never deserved hell more than you, and that heretofore appeared as likely to have been now alive as you. Their case is past all hope. They are crying in extreme misery and perfect despair; but here you are in the land of the living, blessed with Bibles and Sabbaths, and ministers, and have an opportunity to obtain salvation. What would not those poor damned, hopeless souls give for one day's opportunity such as you now enjoy? And now you have an extraordinary opportunity, a day wherein Christ has thrown the door of mercy wide open, and stands calling, and crying with a loud voice to poor sinners, a day wherein many are flocking to him, and pressing into the kingdom of God; many are daily coming from the east, west, north, and south; many that were very lately in the same miserable condition that you are in are now in a happy state with their hearts filled with love to Him who has loved them, and washed them from their sins in His own blood, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. How awful is it to be left behind at such a day to see so many others feasting, while you are pining and perishing! To see so many rejoicing and singing for joy of heart, while you have cause to mourn

for sorrow of heart, and to howl for vexation of spirit! How can you rest one moment in such a condition? Are not your souls as precious as the souls of those who are flocking from day to day to Christ? Are there not many who have lived long in the world, who are not to this day born again, and so are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and have done nothing ever since they have lived, but treasure up wrath against the day of wrath? O sirs! Your case, in an especial manner, is extremely dangerous. Your guilt and hardness of heart are extremely great. Do not you see how generally persons of your years are passed over and left, in the dispensations of God's mercy? You had need to consider yourselves, and wake thoroughly out of sleep: you cannot bear the fierceness and wrath of the infinite God. And you, young man, and young woman, will you neglect this precious season which you now enjoy, when so many others of your age are renouncing all youthful vanities, and flocking to Christ? You especially have now an opportunity, but if you neglect it, it will soon be with you as it is with those persons who spent all the precious days of youth in sin, and are now come to such a dreadful pass in blindness and hardness. And you children, who are unconverted, do not you know that you are going down to hell, to bear the dreadful wrath of that God, who is now angry with you every day and every night? Will you be content to be the children of the devil, when so many of the children of the land are converted, and are becoming the holy and happy children of the King of kings? And let every one that is yet out of Christ, and hanging over the pit of hell, whether they be old men and women, or middle aged, or young people, or little children, now hearken to the loud calls of God's word and providence. This acceptable year of the Lord, a day of great mercy to some, will doubtless be a day of as remarkable vengeance to others. Men's hearts harden, and their guilt increases apace at such a day as this, if they neglect their souls. Never was there a period when so many means were employed for the salvation of souls, and if you

entirely neglect them, you will eternally curse the day of your birth. Now, undoubtedly it is, as it was in the days of John the Baptist, the axe is laid at the root of the trees, and every tree which brings not forth good fruit, may be hewn down, and cast into the fire. Therefore, let every one that is out of Christ, now awake and flee from the wrath to come. The wrath of Almighty God is now undoubtedly hanging over every unregenerate sinner. Let every one flee out of Sodom: “Escape for your lives, Look not behind you, escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed.”

# **PART TWO:**

## **BOOKLETS TRACTS AND ESSAYS ON THE GOSPEL**

### **God's Way of Peace**

**by Horatius Bonar (1808-1889)**

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Horatius Bonar (1808 - 1889) was a Scottish churchman and poet.



The son of James Bonar, Solicitor of Exchequer for Scotland, he was born and educated in Edinburgh. He entered the Ministry of the Church of Scotland, and settled at Kelso. He joined the Free Church at the time of the "Disruption" in 1843, and in 1867 was moved to Edinburgh. In 1853 he was made D.D. of Aberdeen. He was a voluminous and highly popular author, and in addition to many books and tracts wrote a number of hymns, many of which, e.g., "I heard the voice of Jesus say," became known all over the English-speaking world. A selection of these was published as *Hymns of Faith and Hope* (3 series). His last volume of poetry was *My Old Letters*.

His brother Andrew Bonar was also a well-known Christian writer and minister of the Free Church of Scotland.

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## **Chapter I - God's Testimony Concerning Man**

God knows us. He knows what we are; he knows also what he meant us to be; and upon the difference between these two states he founds his testimony concerning us.

He is too loving to say anything needlessly severe; too true to say anything untrue; nor can he have any motive to misrepresent us; for he loves to tell of the good, not of the evil, that may be found in any of the works of his hands. He declares, them "good", "very good", at first; and if he does not do so now, it is not because he would not, but because he cannot; for "all flesh has corrupted its way upon the earth."

God's testimony concerning man is, that he is a sinner. He bears witness against him, not for him, and testifies that "there is none righteous, no, not one;" that there is "none that doeth good;" none "that understandeth;" none that even seeketh after God, and still

more none that loveth him. God speaks of man kindly, but severely; as one yearning over a lost child, yet as one who will make no terms with sin, and will "by no means clear the guilty." He declares man to be a lost one, a stray one, a rebel, nay a "hater of God;" not a sinner occasionally, but a sinner always; not a sinner in part, with many good things about him; but wholly a sinner, with no compensating goodness; evil in heart as well as life, "dead in trespasses and sins;" an evil doer, and therefore under condemnation; an enemy of God, and therefore "under wrath;" a breaker of the righteous law, and therefore under "the curse of the law."

Man has fallen! Not this man or that man, but the whole race. In Adam all have sinned; in Adam all have died. It is not that a few leaves have faded or been shaken down, but the tree has become corrupt, root and branch. The "flesh," or "old man" - that is, each man as he is born into the world, a son of man, a fragment of humanity, a unit in Adam's fallen body, - is "corrupt." He not merely brings forth sin, but he carries it about with him, as his second self; nay, he is a "body" or mass of sin, a "body of death," subject not to the law of God, but to "the law of sin." The Jew, educated under the most perfect of laws, and in the most favorable circumstances, was the best type of humanity, - of civilized, polished, educated humanity; the best specimen of the first Adam's sons; yet God's testimony concerning him is that he is "under sin," that he has gone astray, and that he has "come short of the glory of God."

The outer life of a man is not the man, just as the paint on a piece of timber is not the timber, and as the green moss upon the hard rock is not the rock itself. The picture of a man is not the man; it is but a skillful arrangement of colors which look like the man. The man that loves God with all his heart is in a right state; the man that does not love him thus is in a wrong one. He is a sinner; because his heart is

not right with God. He may think his life a good one, and others may think the same; but God counts him guilty, worthy of death and hell. The outward good cannot make up for the inward evil. The good deeds done to his fellow man cannot be set off against his bad thoughts of God. And he must be full of these bad thoughts so long as he does not love this infinitely lovable and infinitely glorious Being with all his strength.

God's testimony then concerning man is, that he does not love God with all his heart; nay, that he does not love him at all. Not to love our neighbor is sin; not to love a parent is greater sin; but not to love God, our divine parent, is greater sin still.

Man need not try to say a good word for himself, or to plead "not guilty," unless he can show that he loves, and has always loved God with his whole heart and soul. If he can truly say this, he is all right, he is not a sinner, and does not need pardon. He will find his way to the kingdom without the cross and without a Saviour. But, if he cannot say this, "his mouth is stopped," and he is "guilty before God." However favorably a good outward life may dispose himself and others to look upon his case just now, the verdict will go against him hereafter. This is man's day, when man's judgments prevail; but God's day is coming, when the case shall be strictly tried upon its real merits. Then the Judge of all the earth shall do right, and the sinner be put to shame.

There is another and yet worse charge against him. He does not believe on the name of the Son of God, nor love the Christ of God. This is his sin of sins. That his heart is not right with God is the first charge against him. That his heart is not right with the Son of God is the second. And it is this second that is the crowning crushing sin, carrying with it more terrible damnation than all other sins together.

"He that believeth not is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." "He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record which God gave of his Son." "He that believeth not shall be damned." Hence it was that the apostles preached "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." And hence it is that the first sin which the Holy Spirit brings home to a man is unbelief; "when he is come he will reprove the world of sin, because they believe not on me."

Such is God's condemnation of man. Of this the whole Bible is full. That great love of God which his word reveals is based on this condemnation. It is love to the condemned. God's testimony to his own grace has no meaning, save as resting on or taking for granted his testimony to man's guilt and ruin. Nor is it against man as merely a being morally diseased or sadly unfortunate that he testifies; but as guilty of death, under wrath, sentenced to the eternal curse; for that crime of crimes, a heart not right with God, and not true to his Incarnate Son.

This is a divine verdict, not a human one. It is God, not man, who condemns, and God is not a man that he should lie. This is God's testimony concerning man, and we know that this witness is true.

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## **Chapter II - Man's Own Character, No Ground of Peace**

If God testify against us, who can testify for us? If God's opinion of man's sinfulness, his judgment of man's guilt, and his declaration of sin's evil be so very decided, there can be no hope of acquittal for us on the ground of personal character of goodness, either of heart or life. That which God sees in us furnishes only matter for condemnation, not for pardon.

It is vain to struggle or murmur against God's judgment. He is the Judge of all the earth; and he is right as well as sovereign in his judgment. He must be obeyed; his law is inexorable; it cannot be broken without making the breaker of it (even in one jot or tittle) worthy of death.

When the Holy Spirit opens the eyes of the soul it sees this. Conviction of sin is just the sinner seeing himself as he is, and as God has all along seen him. Then every fond idea of self-goodness, either in whole or in part, vanishes away. The things in him that once seemed good appear so bad, and the bad things so very bad, that every self-prop falls from beneath him, and all hope of being saved, in consequence of something in his own character, is then taken away. He sees that he cannot save himself; nor help God to save him. He is lost, and he is helpless. Doings, feelings, strivings, prayings, givings, abstainings, and the life, are found to be no relief from a sense of guilt, and, therefore, no resting-place for a troubled heart. If sin were but a disease or a misfortune, these apparent good things might relieve him, as being favorable symptoms of returning health; but when sin is guilt even more than disease; and when the sinner is not merely sick, but condemned by the righteous Judge; then none of these goodnesses in himself can reach his case, for they cannot assure him of a complete and righteous pardon, and, therefore, cannot pacify his roused and wounded conscience.

He sees God's unchangeable hatred of sin, and the coming revelation of his wrath against the sinner; and he cannot but tremble. An old writer thus describes his own case; "I had a deep impression of the things of God; a natural condition and sin appeared worse than hell itself; the world and vanities thereof terrible and exceeding dangerous; it was fearful to have ado with it, or to be rich; I saw its day coming; Scripture expressions were weighty; a Saviour was a big

thing in mine eyes; Christ's agonies were earnest with me; I thought that all my days I was in a dream till now, or like a child in jest; and I thought the world was sleeping."

The question, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?" is not one which can be decided by an appeal to personal character, or goodness of life, or prayers, or performances of religion. The way of approach is not for us to settle. God has settled it; and it only remains for us to avail ourselves of it. He has fixed it on grounds altogether irrespective of our character; or rather on grounds which take for granted simply that we are sinners, and that therefore the element of goodness in us, as a title, or warrant, or recommendation, is *altogether inadmissible, either in whole or in part*.

To say, as some inquiring ones do at the outset of their anxiety, I will set myself to pray, and after I have prayed a sufficient length of time, and with tolerable earnestness, I may approach and count upon acceptance, is not only to build upon the quality and quantity of our prayers, but is to overlook the real question before the sinner, "How am I to approach God in order to pray?" All prayers are approaches to God, and the sinner's anxious question is, "How may I approach God?" God's explicit testimony to man is, "You are unfit to approach me;" and it is a denial of the testimony to say, "I will pray myself out of this unfitness into fitness; I will work myself into a right state of mind and character for drawing near to God." Anxious spirit! Were you from this moment to cease from sin, and do nothing but good all the rest of your life, it would not do. Were you to begin praying now, and do nothing else but pray all your days, it would not do! Your own character cannot be your way of approach, nor your ground of confidence toward God. No amount of praying, or working, or feeling, can satisfy the righteous law, or pacify a guilty conscience, or

quench the flaming sword that guards the access into the presence of the infinitely Holy One.

That which makes it safe for you to draw near to God, and right for God to receive you, must be something altogether away from and independent of yourself; for, yourself and everything pertaining to yourself God has already condemned; and no condemned thing can give you any warrant for going to him, or hoping for acceptance. Your liberty of entrance must come *from something which he has accepted*; not from something which he has condemned.

I knew an awakened soul who, in the bitterness of his spirit, thus set himself to work and pray in order to get peace. He doubled the amount of his devotions, saying to himself, "Surely God will give me peace." But the peace did not come. He set up family worship, saying, "Surely God will give me peace." But the peace came not. At last he bethought himself of having a prayer meeting in his house as a certain remedy. He fixed the night; called his neighbors; and prepared himself for conducting the meeting, by writing a prayer and learning it by heart. As he finished the operation of learning it, preparatory to the meeting, he threw it down on the table saying, "Surely that will do, God will give me peace now." In that moment, a still small voice seemed to speak in his ear, saying, "No, that will not do; but Christ will do." Straightway the scales fell from his eyes, and the burden from his shoulders. Peace poured in like a river. "Christ will do," was his watchword for life.

Very clear is God's testimony against man, and man's doings, in this great matter of approach and acceptance. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done," says Paul in one place, [Titus iii.5] and "to him that worketh not," says he in a second; [Rom. iv.4] "not justified by the works of the law," say he in a third. [Gal. ii.16]

The sinner's peace with God is not to come from his own character. No grounds of peace or elements of reconciliation can be extracted from himself, either directly or indirectly. His one qualification for peace is, that he needs it. It is not what he has, but what he lacks of good that draws him to God; and it is the conscienceness of his lack that bids him look elsewhere, for something both to invite and embolden him to approach. It is our sickness, not our health, that fits us for the physician, and casts us upon his skill.

No guilty conscience can be pacified with anything short of that which will make pardon a present, a sure, and a righteous thing. Can our best doings, our best feelings, our best prayers, our best sacrifices, bring this about? Nay; having accumulated these to the utmost, does not the sinner feel that pardon is just as far off and uncertain as before? and that all his earnestness cannot persuade God to admit him to favor, or bribe his own conscience into true quiet even for an hour?

In all false religion, the worshipper rests his hope of divine favor upon something in his own character, or life, or religious duties. The Pharisee did this when he came into the temple, "thanking God that he was not as other men." [Luke xviii 11] So do those in our day who think to get peace by doing, feeling, and praying more than others, or than they themselves have done in time past; and who refuse to take the peace of the free gospel till they have amassed such an amount of this doing and feeling as will ease their consciences, and make them conclude that it would not be fair in God to reject the application of men so earnest and devout as they. The Galatians did this also when they insisted on adding the law of Moses to the gospel of Christ as the ground of confidence toward God. Thus do many act among ourselves. They will not take confidence from God's character or Christ's work, but from their own character and work; though in



reference to all this it is written, "The Lord hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them." [Jer. ii.37] They object to a present confidence, for that assumes that a sinner's resting place is wholly out of himself, - ready-made, as it were, by God. They would have this confidence to be a very gradual thing, in order that they may gain time, and, by a little diligence in religious observances, may so add to their stock of duties, prayers, experiences, devotions, that they may, with some humble hope, as they call it, claim acceptance from God. By this course of devout living they think they have made themselves more acceptable to God than they were before they began this religious process, and much more entitled to expect the divine favor than those who have not so qualified themselves. In all this the attempted resting-place is *self*, - that self which God has condemned. They would not rest upon unpraying, or unworking, or undevout self; but they think it right and safe to rest upon praying, and working, and devout self, and they call this *humility*! The happy confidence of the simple believer who takes God's word at once, and rests on it, they call presumption or fanaticism; their own miserable uncertainty, extracted from the doings of self, they speak of as a *humble hope*.

The sinner's own character, in any form, and under any process of improvement, cannot furnish reasons for trusting God. However amended, it cannot speak peace to his conscience, nor afford him any warrant for reckoning on God's favor; nor can it help to heal the breach between him and God. For God can accept nothing but perfection in such a case, and the sinner has nothing but imperfection to present. Imperfect duties and devotions cannot persuade God to forgive. Besides, be it remembered that the person of the worshipper must be accepted before his services can be acceptable; so that nothing can be of any use to the sinner save that which provides for personal acceptance completely, and at the

outset. The sinner must go to God as he is, or not at all. To try to pray himself into something better than a condemned sinner, in order to win God's favor, is to make prayer an instrument of self-righteousness; so that, instead of its being the act of an accepted man, it is the purchase of acceptance, - the price which we pay to God for favoring us, and the bribe with which we persuade conscience no longer to trouble us with its terrors. No knowledge of self, nor conscientiousness of improvement of self, can soothe the alarms of an awakened conscience, or be any ground for expecting the friendship of God. To take comfort from our good doings, or good feelings, or good plans, or good prayers, or good experiences, is to delude ourselves, and to say peace when there is no peace. No man can quench his thirst with sand, or with water from the Dead Sea; so no man can find rest from his own character however good, or from his own acts however religious. Even were he perfect, what enjoyment could there be in thinking about his own perfection? What profit, then, can there be in thinking about his own imperfection?

Even were there many good things about him, they could not speak peace: for the good things which might speak peace, could not make up for the evil things which speak trouble; and what a poor, self-made peace would that be which arose from his thinking as much good and as little evil of himself as possible. And what a temptation, besides, would this furnish, to extenuate the evil and exaggerate the good about ourselves, - in other words, to deceive our own hearts. Self-deception must always, more or less, be the result of such estimates of our own experiences. Laid open, as we are, in such a case, to all manner of self-blinding influences, it is impossible that we can be impartial judges, or that we can be "without guile," [Psalm xxxii.2] as in the case of those who are freely and at once forgiven.

One man might say, My sins are not very great or many; surely I may take peace. Another might say, I have made up for my sins by my good deeds; I may have peace. Another might say, I have a very deep sense of sin; I may have peace. Another might say, I have repented of my sin; I may have peace. Another might say, I pray much, I work much, I love much, I give much; I may have peace. What temptation in all this to take the most favorable view of self and its doings! But, after all, it would be vain. There could be no real peace; for its foundation would be sand, not rock. The peace or confidence which comes from summing up the good points of our character, and thinking of our good feelings and doings, or about our faith, and love, and repentance, must be made up of pride. Its basis is self-righteousness, or at least self-approbation.

It does not mend the matter to say that we look at these good feelings in us, as the Spirit's work, not our own. In one aspect this takes away boasting, but in another it does not. It still makes our peace to turn upon what is in ourselves, and not on what is in God. Nay, it makes use of the Holy Spirit for purposes of self-righteousness. It says that the Spirit works the change in us, in order that he may thereby furnish us with a ground of peace within ourselves.

No doubt the Spirit's work in us must be accompanied with peace; but not because he has given us something in ourselves to draw our peace from. It is that kind of peace which arises unconsciously from the restoration of spiritual health; but not that which Scripture calls "peace with God." It does not arise from thinking about the change wrought in us, but unconsciously and involuntarily from the change itself. If a broken limb be made whole, we get relief straightway; not by "thinking about the healed member, but simply in the bodily case and comfort which the cure has given. So there is a peace arising out of the change of nature and character wrought by the Spirit; but this

is not reconciliation with God. This is not the peace which the knowledge of forgiveness brings. It accompanies it, and flows from it, but the two kinds of peace are quite distinct from each other. Nor does even the peace which attends restoration of spiritual health come at second hand, from thinking about our change; but directly from the change itself. That change is the soul's new health, and this health is in itself a continual gladness.

Still it remains true, that in ourselves we have no resting place. "No confidence in the flesh" must be our motto, as it is the foundation of God's gospel.

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### **Chapter III - God's Character, Our Resting Place**

We have seen that a sinner's peace cannot come from himself, nor from the knowledge of himself, nor from thinking about his own acts and feelings, nor from the consciousness of any amendment of his old self.

Whence, then, is it to come? How does he get it?

It can only come from God; and it is in knowing God that he gets it. God has written a volume for the purpose of making himself known; and it is in this revelation of his character that the sinner is to find the rest that he is seeking. God himself is the fountainhead of our peace; his revealed truth is the channel through which this peace finds its way into us; and his Holy Spirit is the great interpreter of that truth to us: "Acquaint thyself now with God, and be at peace." [Job xxii.21] Yes, acquaintanceship with God is peace!

Had God told us that he was not gracious, that he took no interest in our welfare, and that he had no intention of pardoning us, we could

have no peace and no hope. In that case our knowing God would only make us miserable. Our situation would be like that of the devils, who "believe and tremble;" [James ii.19] and the more we knew of such a God, we should tremble the more. For how fearful a thing must it be to have the great God that made us, the great Father of Spirits, against us, not for us!

Strange to say, this is the very state of disquietude in which we may find many who profess to believe in a God "merciful and gracious!" With the Bible in their hands, and the cross before their eyes, they wander on in a state of darkness and fear, such as would have arisen had God revealed himself in hatred not in love. They seem to believe the very opposite of what the Bible teaches us concerning God; and to attach a meaning to the Cross, the very opposite of what the gospel declares it really bears. Had God been all frowns, and the Bible all terrors, and Christ all sternness, these men could not have been in a more troubled and uncertain state than that in which they are.

How is this? Have they not misunderstood the Bible? Have they not mistaken the character of God, looking on him as an "austere man" and a "hard master?" Are they not laboring to supplement the grace of God by something on their part, as if they believed that this grace was not sufficient to meet their case, until they had attracted it to themselves by some earnest performances, or spiritual exercises, of their own?

God has declared himself to be gracious. "God is love." He has embodied this grace in the person and work of his beloved Son. He has told us that this grace is for the ungodly, the unholy, the unfit, the stout-hearted, the dead in sin. The more, then, that we know of this God and of his grace, the more will his peace fill us. Nor will the greatness of our sins, and the hardness of our hearts, or the

changeableness of our feelings, discourage or disquiet, however much they may humble us, and make us dissatisfied with ourselves.

Let us study the character of God: - holy, yet loving; the love not interfering with the holiness, nor the holiness with the love; absolutely sovereign, yet infinitely gracious; the sovereignty not straightening the grace, nor the grace the sovereignty; drawing the unwilling, yet not hindering the willing, if any such there be; quickening whom he will, yet having no pleasure in the death of the wicked; compelling some to come in, yet freely inviting all! Let us look at him in the face of Jesus Christ; for He is the express image of his person, and he that hath seen Him hath seen the Father. The knowledge of that gracious character, as interpreted by the cross of Christ, is the true remedy for our disquietness. *insufficient acquaintanceship with God* lies at the root of our fears and gloom. I know that flesh and blood cannot reveal God to you, and that the Holy Spirit alone can enable you to know either the Father or the Son. But I would not have you for a moment suppose that this Spirit is reluctant to do his work in you; nor would I encourage you in the awful thought, that you are willing while he is unwilling; or that the sovereignty of God is a hindrance to the sinner, and a restraint of the Spirit. The whole Bible takes for granted that all this is absolutely impossible. Never can the great truths of divine sovereignty and the Spirit's work land us, as some seem to think they may do, in such a conflict between a willing sinner and an unwilling God. The whole Bible is so written by the Spirit, and the gospel was so preached by the apostles, as never to raise the question of God's willingness, nor to lead to the remotest suspicion of his readiness to furnish the sinner with all needful aid. Hence the great truths of God's eternal election, and Christ's redemption of his Church, as we read them in the Bible, are helps and encouragements to the soul. But interpreted as they are by many, they seem barrier-walls, not ladders for scaling

the great barrier-wall of man's unwillingness; and anxious souls become land-locked in metaphysical questions, out of which there can be no way of extrication save that of taking God at his word.

In the Bible God has revealed himself. In Christ he has done so most expressively. He has done so that there might be no mistake as to it on the part of man.

Christ's person is a revelation of God. Christ's work is a revelation of God. Christ's words are a revelation of God. He is in the Father, and the Father in him. His words and works are the words and works of the Father. In the manger he showed us God. In the synagogue of Nazareth he showed us God. At Jacob's well he showed us God. At the tomb of Lazarus he showed us God. On Olivet, as he wept over Jerusalem, he showed us God. On the cross he showed us God. In the tomb he showed us God. In his resurrection he showed us God. If we say with Philip, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us;" he answers, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." [John xiv. 8,9] This God whom Christ reveals as the God of righteous grace and gracious righteousness, is the God with whom we have to do.

To know his character as thus interpreted to us by Jesus and his cross, is to have peace. It is into this knowledge of the Father that the Holy Spirit leads the soul whom he is conducting, by his almighty power, from darkness to light. For everything that we know of God we owe to this divine Teacher, this Interpreter, this "One among a thousand." [Job xxxiii. 23] But never let the sinner imagine that he is more willing to learn than the Spirit is to teach. Never let him say to himself, "I would fain know God, but I cannot of myself, and the Spirit will not teach me."

It is not enough for us to say to some dispirited one, "It is your unbelief that is keeping you wretched; only believe, and all is well." This is true; but it is only general truth; which, in many cases, is of no use, because it does not show him how it applies to him. On this point he is often at fault; thinking that faith is some great work to be done, which he is to labor at with all his might, praying all the while to God to help him in doing this great work; and that unbelief is some evil principle, requiring to be uprooted before the gospel will be of any use to him.

But what is the real meaning of this faith and this unbelief?

In all unbelief there are these two things, - a good opinion of one's self, and a bad opinion of God. So long as these two things exist, it is impossible for an inquirer to find rest. His good opinion of himself makes him think it quite impossible to win God's favor by his own religious performances; and his bad opinion of God makes him unwilling and afraid to put his case wholly into his hands. The object of the Holy Spirit's work, in convincing of sin, is to alter the sinner's opinion of himself, and so to reduce his estimate of his own character, that he shall think of himself as God does, and so cease to suppose it possible that he can be justified by any excellency of his own. Having altered the sinner's good opinion of himself, the Spirit then alters his evil opinion of God, so as to make him see that the God with whom he has to do is really the God of all grace.

But the inquirer denies that he has a good opinion of himself, and owns himself a sinner. Now a man may say this; but really to know it is something more than saying. Besides, he may be willing to take the name of sinner to himself, in common with his fellow men, and not at all own himself such a sinner as God says he is, - such a sinner as needs a whole Saviour to himself, - such a sinner as needs the cross,



and blood, and righteousness of the Son of God. He may not have quite such a bad opinion of himself as to make him sensible that he can expect nothing from God on the score of personal goodness, or amendment of life, or devout observance of duty, or superiority to others. It takes a great deal to destroy a man's good opinion of himself; and even after he has lost his good opinion of his works, he retains his good opinion of his heart; and even after he has lost that, he holds fast his good opinion of his own religious duties, by means of which he hopes to make up for evil works and a bad heart. Nay, he hopes to be able so to act, and feel, and pray, as to lead God to entertain a good opinion of him, and receive him into favor.

All such efforts spring from thinking well of himself in some measure; and also from his thinking evil of God, as if he would not receive him as he is. If he knew himself as God does, he would no more resort to such efforts than he would think of walking up an Alpine precipice. How difficult it is to make a man think of himself as God does! What but the almightiness of the Divine Spirit can accomplish this?

But the inquirer says that he has not a bad opinion of God. But has he such an opinion of him as the Bible gives or the cross reveals? Has he such an opinion of him as makes him feel quite safe in putting his soul into his gracious hands, and trusting him with its eternal keeping? If not, what is the extent or nature of his good opinion of God? The knowledge of God, which the cross supplies, ought to set all doubt aside, and make distrust appear in the most odious of aspects, as a wretched misrepresentation of God's character and a slander upon his gracious name. Unbelief, then, is the belief of a lie and the rejection of the truth. It obliterates from the cross the gracious name of God, and inscribes another name, the name of an

unknown god, in which there is no peace for the sinner and no rest for the weary.

Accept, then, the character of God as given in the gospel; read aright his blessed name as it is written upon the cross; take the simple interpretation given of his mind toward the ungodly, as you have it at length in the glad tidings of peace. Is not that enough? If that which God has made known of himself be not enough to allay your fears, nothing else will. The Holy Spirit will not give you peace irrespective of your views of God's character. That would be countenancing the worship of a false god, instead of the true God revealed in the Bible. It is in common connection with the truth concerning the true God, "the God of all grace," that the Spirit gives peace. It is the love of the true God that he sheds abroad in the heart.

The object of the Spirit's work is to make us acquainted with the true Jehovah, that in him we may rest; not to produce in us certain feelings, the consciousness of which will make us think better of ourselves, and give us confidence toward God. That which he shows us of ourselves is only evil; that which he shows us of God is only good. He does not enable us to feel or to believe, in order that we may be comforted by our feeling or our faith. Even when working in us most powerfully he turns our eyes away from his own work in us, to fix it on God, and his love in Christ Jesus our Lord. The substance of the gospel is the NAME of the great Jehovah, unfolded in and by Jesus Christ; the character of him in whom we "live and move and have our being," as the "just God, yet the Saviors," [Is. xiv. 21] the Justifier of the ungodly.

Inquiring spirit, turn your eye to the cross and see these two things, - the Crucifiers and the Crucified. See the Crucifiers, the haters of God and his Son. They are yourself. Read in them your own character,

and cease to think of making that a ground of peace. See the Crucified. It is God himself; incarnate love. It is the God who made you, suffering, dying for the ungodly. Can you suspect his grace? Can you cherish evil thoughts of him? Can you ask anything farther to awaken in you the fullest and most unreserved confidence? Will you misinterpret that agony and death by saying that they do not mean grace, or that the grace which they mean is not for you? Call to mind that which is written, - "Hereby perceive we the love of God, that he laid down his life for us." [1 John iii.16] "Herein is LOVE, not that we love God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation of our sins." [1 John iv. 10]

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## **Chapter IV - Righteous Grace**

We have spoken of God's character as "the God of all grace." [1 Pet. v.10] We have seen that it is in "tasting that the Lord is gracious" that the sinner has peace. [1 Pet. ii.3]

But let us keep in mind that this grace is the grace of a righteous God; it is the grace of one who is Judge as well as Father. Unless we see this we shall mistake the gospel, and fail in appreciating both the pardon we are seeking, and the great sacrifice through which it comes to us. No vague forgiveness, arising out of mere paternal love, will do. We need to know what kind of pardon it is; and whether it proceeds from the full recognition of our absolute guiltiness by him who is to "judge the world in righteousness." The right kind of pardon comes not from love alone, but from law; not from good nature, but from righteousness; not from indifference to sin, but from holiness.

The inquirer who is only half in earnest overlooks this. His feelings are moved, but his conscience is not roused. Hence he is content with

very vague ideas of God's mere compassion for the sinner's unhappiness. To him human guilt seems but human misfortune, and God's acquittal of the sinner little more than the overlooking of his sin. He does not trouble himself with asking how the forgiveness comes, or what is the real nature of the love which he professes to have received. He is easily soothed to sleep, because he has never been fully awake. He is, at the best, a stony-ground hearer; soon losing the poor measure of joy that he may have got; becoming a formalist; or perhaps a trifler with sin; or it may be, a religious sentimentalist.

But he whose conscience has been pierced, is not so easily satisfied. He sees that the God, whose favor he is seeking, is holy as well as loving; and that he has to do with righteousness as well as grace. Hence the first inquiry that he makes is as to the righteousness of the pardon which the grace of God holds out. He must be satisfied on this point, and see that the grace is righteous grace, ere he can enjoy it all. The more alive he is to his own unrighteousness, the more does he feel the need of ascertaining the righteousness of the grace which we make known to him.

It does not satisfy him to say, that, since it comes from a righteous God, it must be righteous grace. His conscience wants to see the righteousness of the way by which it comes. Without this it cannot be pacified or "purged;" and the man is not made "perfect as pertaining to the conscience;" [Heb. ix. 9-14] but must always have an uneasy feeling that all is not right; that his sins may one day rise up against him.

That which soothes the heart will not always pacify the conscience. The sight of the grace will do the former; but only the sight of the righteousness of the grace will do the latter. Till the latter is done,

there cannot be real peace. The hurt is healed slightly, and peace is spoken where there is no peace. [Jer. vi. 14] The healing of the hurt can only be brought about by speaking peace where there is peace.

Here the work of Christ comes in; and the cross of the Sin-bearer answers the question which conscience has raised, - "Is it righteous grace?" It is this great work of propitiation that exhibits God as "the just God, yet the Saviour;" [Is. xiv. 21] not only righteous in spite of his justifying the ungodly, but righteous in doing so. It shows salvation as an act of righteousness; nay, one of the highest acts of righteousness that a righteous God can do. It shows pardon not only as the deed of a righteous God, but as the thing which shows how righteous he is, and how he hates and condemns the very sin that he is pardoning.

Hear the word of the Lord concerning this "finished" work. "Christ died for our sins." "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities." "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." "He gave himself for us." "He was delivered for our offences." "He gave himself for our sins." "Christ died for the ungodly." "He hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." "Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh." "Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust." "His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree."

These expressions speak of something more than love. Love is in each of them; the deep, true, real love of God; but also justice and holiness; inflexible and inexorable adherence to law. They have no meaning apart from law; law as the foundation, pillar, keystone of the universe.

But their connection with law is also their connection with love. For as it was law, in its unchangeable perfection, that constituted the

necessity for the Surety's death, so it was this necessity that drew out the Surety's love, and gave also glorious proof of the love of him who made him to be sin for us. For if a man were to die for another, when there was no necessity for his doing so, we should hardly call his death a proof of love. At best, such would be foolish love, or, at least, a fond and idle way of showing it. But to die for one, when there is really need of dying, is the true test of genuine love. To die for a friend when nothing less will save him; this is the proof of love! When either he or we must die; and when he, to save us from dying, dies himself, this is love. There was need of a death, if we were to be saved from dying. Righteousness made the necessity. And, to meet this terrible necessity, the Son of God took flesh and died! He died, because it was written, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." [Ezek. xviii.4] Love led him down to the cradle; love led him up to the cross! He died as the sinner's substitute. He died to make it a righteous thing in God to cancel the sinner's guilt and annul the penalty of his everlasting death.

Had it not been for this dying, grace and guilt could not have looked each other in the face; God and the sinner could not have come nigh; righteousness would have forbidden reconciliation; and righteousness, we know, is as divine and real a thing as love. Without this exception, it would not have been right for God to receive the sinner nor safe for the sinner to come.

But now, mercy and truth have met together; now grace is righteousness, and righteousness is grace. This satisfies the sinner's conscience, by showing him righteous love for the unrighteous and unlovable. It tells him, too, that the reconciliation brought about in this way shall never be disturbed, either in this life or that which is to come. It is righteous reconciliation, and will stand every test, as well as last throughout eternity. The peace of conscience thus secured will

be trial-proof, sickness-proof, deathbed-proof, judgment-proof. Realizing this, the chief of sinners can say, "Who is he that condemneth?"

What peace for the stricken conscience is there in the truth that Christ died for the ungodly; and that it is of the ungodly that the righteous God is the Justifier! The righteous grace thus coming to us through the sin-bearing work of the "Word made flesh," tells the soul, at once and forever, that there can be no condemnation for any sinner upon earth, who will only consent to be indebted to this free love of God, which, like a fountain of living water, is bursting freely forth from the foot of the Cross.

Just, yet the Justifier of the ungodly! What glad tidings are here! Here is grace; God's free love to the sinner; divine bounty and goodwill, altogether irrespective of human worth or merit. For this is the scriptural meaning of that often misunderstood word "grace."

This righteous free love has its origin in the bosom of the Father, where the only begotten has his dwelling. It is not produced by anything out of God himself. It was man's evil, not his good, that called it forth. It was not the drawing to the like, but to the unlike; it was light attracted by darkness, and life by death. It does not wait for our seeking, it comes unasked as well as undeserved. It is not our faith that creates it or calls it up; our faith realizes it as already existing in its divine and manifold fullness. Whether we believe it or not, this righteous grace exists, and exists for us. Unbelief refuses it; but faith takes it, rejoices in it, and lives upon it. Yes, faith takes this righteous grace of God, and, with it, a righteous pardon, a righteous salvation, and a righteous heirship of the everlasting glory.

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## **Chapter V - The Blood of Sprinkling**

But an inquirer asks, What is the special meaning of the blood, of which we read so much? How does it speak peace? How does it "purge the conscience from dead works?" What can blood have to do with the peace, the grace, and the righteousness of which we have been speaking?

God has given the reason for the stress which he lays upon the blood; and, in understanding this, we get to the very bottom of the grounds of a sinner's peace.

The sacrifices of old, from the days of Abel downward, furnishes us with the key to the meaning of the blood, and explain the necessity for its being "shed for the remission of sins." "Not without blood" [Heb. ix.7] was the great truth taught by God from the beginning; the inscription which may be said to have been written on the gates of tabernacle and temple. For more than two thousand years, during the ages of the patriarchs, there was but one great sacrifice, - the burnt offering. This, under the Mosaic service, was split into parts, - the peace offering, trespass offering, sin offering, etc. In all of these, however, the essence of the original burnt offering was preserved, - by the blood and the fire, which were common to them all. The blood, as the emblem of substitution, and the fire, as the symbol of God's wrath upon the substitute, were seen in all the parts of Israel's service; but specially in the daily burnt offering, the morning and evening lamb, which was the true continuation and representative of the old patriarchal burnt offering. It was to this that John referred when he said "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." Israel's daily lamb was the kernel and core of all the Old Testament sacrifices; and it was its blood that carried them back to the primitive sacrifices, and forward to the blood of sprinkling that was to speak better things than that of Abel.



In all these sacrifices the shedding of the blood was the infliction of death. The "blood was the life;" and the pouring out of the blood was the "pouring out of the soul." This blood shedding or life-taking was the payment of the penalty for sin; for it was threatened from the beginning, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;" and it is written, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," and again, "The wages of sin is death."

But the blood shedding of Israel's sacrifices could not take sin away. It showed the way in which this was to be done, but it was in fact more a "remembrance of sins," than an expiation. It said life must be given for life, ere sin can be pardoned; but then the continual repetition of the sacrifices showed that there was needed richer blood than Moriah's altar was ever sprinkled with, and a more precious life than man could give.

The great blood-shedding has been accomplished; the better life has been presented; and the one death of the Son of God has done what all the deaths of old could never do. His one life was enough; his one dying paid the penalty; and God does not ask two lives, or two deaths, or two payments. "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many. In that he died, he died unto sin once." "He offered one sacrifice for sins forever."

The "sprinkling of the blood," was the making use of the death, by putting it upon certain persons or things, so that these persons or things were counted to be dead, and, therefore, to have paid the law's penalty. So long as they had not paid that penalty, they were counted unclean and unfit for God to look upon; but as soon as they had paid it, they were counted clean and fit for the service of God. Usually when we read of cleansing, we think merely of our common process of removing stains by water and soap. But this is not the figure

meant in the application of the sacrifice. The blood cleanses, not like the prophet's "nitre and much soap," but by making us partakers of the death of the Substitute. For what is it that makes us filthy before God? It is our guilt, our breach of law, and our being under sentence of death in consequence of our disobedience. We have not only done what God dislikes, but what his righteous law declares to be worthy of death. It is this sentence of death that separates us so completely from God, making it wrong for him to bless us, and perilous for us to go to him.

When thus covered all over with that guilt whose penalty is death, the blood is brought in by the great High Priest. That blood represents death; it is God's expression for death. It is then sprinkled on us, and thus death, which is the law's penalty, passes on us. We die. We undergo the sentence; and thus the guilt passes away. We are cleansed! The sin which was like scarlet becomes as snow; and that which was like crimson becomes as wool. It is thus that we make use of the blood of Christ in believing; for faith is just the sinner's employing the blood. Believing what God has testified concerning this blood, we become one with Jesus in his death; and thus we are counted in law, and treated by God, as men who have paid the whole penalty, and so been "washed from their sins in his blood." [Rev. i.5]

Such are the glad tidings of life, through him who died. They are tidings which tell us, not what we are to do, in order to be saved, but what He has done. This only can lay to rest the sinner's fears; can "purge his conscience;" can make him feel as a thoroughly pardoned man. The right knowledge of God's meaning in this sprinkling of the blood, is the only effectual way of removing the anxieties of the troubled soul, and introducing him into perfect peace.

The gospel is not the mere revelation of the heart of God in Christ Jesus. In it the righteousness of God is specially manifested; and it is this revelation of the righteousness that makes it so truly "the power of God unto salvation." The blood shedding is God's declaration of the righteousness of the love which he is pouring down upon the sons of men; it is the reconciliation of law and love; the condemnation of the sin and the acquittal of the sinner. As "without shedding of blood there is no remission; so the gospel announces that the blood has been shed by which remission flows; and now we know that "the Son of God is come," and that "the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin." The conscience is satisfied. It feels that God's grace is righteous grace, that his love is holy love. There it rests.

It is not by incarnation but by blood shedding that we are saved. The Christ of God is no mere expounder of wisdom; no mere deliverer or gracious benefactor; and they who think they have told the whole gospel, when they have spoken of Jesus revealing the love of God, do greatly err. If Christ be not the Substitute, he is nothing to the sinner. If he did not die as the Sinbearer, he has died in vain. Let us not be deceived on this point, nor misled by those who, when they announce Christ as the Deliverer, think they have preached the gospel. If I throw a rope to a drowning man, I am a deliverer. But is Christ no more than that? If I cast myself into the sea, and risk my life to save another, I am a deliverer. But is Christ no more? Did he but risk his life? The very essence of Christ's deliverance is the substitution of Himself for us, his life for ours. He did not come to risk his life; he came to die! He did not redeem us by a little loss, a little sacrifice, a little labor, a little suffering, "He redeemed us to God by his blood;" "the precious blood of Christ." He gave all he had, even his life, for us. This is the kind of deliverance that awakens the happy

song, "To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."

The tendency of the world's religion just now is, to reject the blood; and to glory in a gospel which needs no sacrifice, no "Lamb slain." Thus, they go "in the way of Cain." Cain refused the blood, and came to God without it. He would not own himself a sinner, condemned to die, and needing the death of another to save him. This was man's open rejection of God's own way of life. Foremost in this rejection of, what is profanely called by some scoffers, "the religion of the shambles," we see the first murderer; and he who would not defile his altar with the blood of a lamb, pollutes the earth with his brother's blood.

The heathen altars have been red with blood; and to this day they are the same. But these worshippers know not what they mean, in bringing that blood. It is associated only with vengeance in their minds; and they shed it, to appease the vengeance of their gods. But this is no recognition either of the love or the righteousness of God. "Fury is not in him;" whereas their altars speak only of fury. The blood which they bring is a denial both of righteousness and grace.

But look at Israel's altars. There is blood; and they who bring it know the God to whom they come. They bring it in acknowledgment of their own guilt, but also of his pardoning love. They say, "I deserve death;" but let this death stand for mine; and let the love which otherwise could not reach me, by reason of guilt, now pour itself out on me."

Inquiring soul! Beware of Cain's error on the one hand, in coming to God without blood; and beware of the heathen error on the other, in mistaking the meaning of the blood. Understand God's mind and meaning, in "the precious blood" of his Son. Believe his testimony

concerning it; so shall thy conscience be pacified, and thy soul find rest.

It is into Christ's death, that we are baptized, and hence the cross, which was the instrument of that death, is that in which we glory. The cross is to us the payment of the sinner's penalty, the extinction of the debt, and the tearing up of the bond or handwriting which was against us. And as the cross is the payment, so the resurrection is God's receipt in full, for the whole sum, signed with his own hand. *Our faith is not the completion of the payment, but the simple recognition on our part of the payment made by the Son of God.* By this recognition, we become so one with Him who died and rose, that we are henceforth reckoned to be the parties who have paid the penalty, and treated as if it were we ourselves who had died. Thus are we justified from the sin, and then made partakers of the righteousness of him, who was not only delivered for our offences, but who rose again for our justification.

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## **Chapter VI - The Person and Work of the Substitute**

Life comes to us through death; and thus grace bounds towards us in righteousness. This we have seen in a general way. But we have something more to learn concerning him who lived and died as the sinner's substitute. The more that we know of his person and his works, the more shall we be satisfied, in heart and conscience, with the provision which God has made for our great need.

Our sin-bearer is the Son of God, the eternal Son of the Father. Of him it is written, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." He is "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." He is "in the Father, and the Father in him;" "the Father dwelleth in him;" "he that hath seen him

hath seen the Father;" and "he that heareth him, heareth him that sent him." He is the "Word made flesh;" "God manifest in flesh;" "Jesus the Christ, who has come in the flesh." His name is "Immanuel," God with us; Jesus, the "Saviour;" "Christ," the anointed One, filled with the Spirit without measure; "the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

He came preaching the gospel of the kingdom, that is, the good news about the kingdom; teaching the multitudes that gathered round him; healing the sick, and opening the eyes of the blind, and raising the dead; "receiving sinners and eating with them." "He came to seek and to save that which was lost;" he went about speaking words of grace such as man never spake, saying, "I am the Way, and the truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." He went out and in as The Saviour, and in his whole life we see him as the Shepherd seeking his lost sheep, as the woman her lost piece of silver, and as the father looking out for his lost son. He is "mighty to save;" he is "able to save to the uttermost;" he came to be "the Saviour of the world."

In all these things thus written concerning Jesus, there is good news for the sinner; such as should draw him, in simple confidence to God; making him feel that his case has really been taken up in earnest by God; and that God's thoughts towards him are thoughts, not of anger, but of peace and grace. Heaven has come down to earth! There is goodwill toward man. He is not to be handed over to his great enemy. God has taken his side, and stepped in between him and Satan. This world is not to be burned up, nor its dwellers made eternal exiles from God! The darkness is passing away, and the true light is shining!

Yet it is not the person of Christ, nor his birth, nor his life, that can suffice. That the Son of God took a true but a sinless humanity of the very substance of the virgin; becoming bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; being in very deed the woman's seed; that he dwelt among us for a lifetime, is but the beginning of the good news; the Alpha, but not the Omega. This was shown to Israel, and to us also, in the temple veil. That veil was the type of the flesh; and, so long as that curtain remained whole, there was no entrance into the near presence of God. The worshipper was not indeed frowned upon; but he had to stand afar off. The veil said to the sinner, "Godhead is within;" but is also said, "You cannot enter till something more has been done." The Holy Ghost, by it, signified that the way into the Holiest was not yet open. The rending of the veil; that is, the crucifixion of "the Word made flesh," opened the way completely.

Hence it is that the Holy Spirit sums up the good news in one or two special points. They are these: Christ was crucified. Christ died. Christ was buried. Christ rose again from the dead. Christ went up on high. Christ sits at God's right hand, our "Advocate with the Father," "ever living to make intercession for us."

These are the great facts which contain the good news. They are few and they are plain; so that a child may remember and understand them. They are the caskets which contain the heavenly gems. They are the cups which hold the living water for the thirsty soul; the golden baskets in which God has placed the bread of life, the true bread which came down from heaven, of which if man eat he shall never die. They are the volumes in whose brief but blessed pages are written the records of God's mighty mercy; records so simple that even the "fool" may read and comprehend them; so true that all the wisdom of the world, and all the wiles of hell, cannot shake their certainty.

The knowledge of these is salvation. On them we rest our confidence; for they are the revelation of the name of God; and it is written, "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee."

Let us listen to apostolic preaching, and see how these facts form the heads of primitive sermons; sermons such as Peter's at Jerusalem, or Paul's at Corinth and Antioch. Peter's sermon at Jerusalem was that Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified, had been raised from the dead and exalted to the throne of God, being made Lord and Christ. This the apostle declared to be "good news." Paul's sermon at Antioch was, in substance the same, - a statement of the facts regarding the death and resurrection of Jesus; and the application of that sermon was in these words, "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified." His sermon at Corinth was very similar. He gives us the following sketch of it: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." Then he adds: "So we preach, and so ye believed."

Such was apostolic preaching. Such was Paul's gospel. It narrated a few facts respecting Christ; adding the evidence of their truth and certainty, that all who heard might believe and be saved. In these facts the free love of God to sinners is announced; and the great salvation is revealed. It is this gospel which is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith." Its burden was not, "Do this or do that; labor and pray, and use the means;" - that is, law, not gospel:



- but Christ has done all! He did it when he was "delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." He did it all when he "made peace by the blood of his cross." "It is finished." His doing is so complete that it has left nothing for us to do. We have but to enter into the joy of knowing that all is done! "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son."

But let us gather together some of the "true sayings of God" concerning Christ and his work. In these we shall find the divine interpretation of the facts above referred to. We shall see the meaning which the Holy Spirit attaches to these, and so our faith shall not "stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." It is in this way that the Lord himself, ere he left the earth, removed the unbelief of the doubters around him. He reminded them of the written word, "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, among all nations beginning at Jerusalem."

Hear, then, the word of the Lord! For heaven and earth shall pass away, but these words shall not pass away. "Who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him." "By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." "In due time Christ died for the ungodly." "It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." "Who gave himself for our sins." "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace." "He humbled himself and

became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." "Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead, according to my gospel." "Who gave himself for us." "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." "Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." "Christ also suffered for us." "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust." "Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh." "He is the propitiation for our sins." "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." "I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore." "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

These are all divine truths written in divine words. These sayings are faithful and true; they come from Him that cannot lie; and they are as true, in these last days, as they were eighteen hundred years ago; for "the word of our God shall stand forever." In them we find the authentic exposition of the facts which the apostles preached; and in that we learn the glad tidings concerning the way in which salvation from a righteous God has come to unrighteous man. Jesus died! That is the paying of the debt, the endurance of the penalty; the death for death! He was buried. That is the proof that his death was a true death, needing a tomb as we do. He rose again. This is God's declaration that he, the righteous Judge, is satisfied with the payment, no less than with him who made it.

Could there be a better, gladder news to the sinner than this? What more can he ask to satisfy him, than that which has so fully satisfied the holy Lord God of earth and heaven? If this will not avail, then he can expect no more. If this is not enough, then Christ has died in vain.

God has thus "brought near his righteousness." We do not need to go up to heaven for it; that would imply that Christ had never come down. Nor do we need to go down to the depths of the earth for it; that would say that Christ had never been buried and never risen. It is near. It is as near as is the word concerning it, which enters into our ears. We do not need to exert ourselves to bring it near; nor to do anything to attract it towards us. It is already so near, so very near, that we cannot bring it closer. If we try to get up warm feelings and good dispositions in order to remove some fancied remainder of distance, we shall fail; not simply because these actings of ours cannot do what we are trying to do, but because there is no need of any such effort. The thing is done already. God has brought his righteousness nigh to the sinner. The office of faith is not to work, but to cease working; not to do anything, but to own that all is done; not to bring near the righteousness, but to rejoice in it as already near. This is "the word of the truth of the gospel."

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## **Chapter VII - The Word of the Truth of the Gospel**

How shall I come before God, and stand in his presence, with happy confidence on my part, and gracious acceptance on his?

This is the sinner's question; and he asks it because he knows that there is guilt between him and God. No doubt this was Adam's question when he stitched his fig leaves together for a covering. But he was soon made to feel that the fig leaves would not do. He must be wholly covered, not in part only; and that by something which even God's eye cannot see through. As God comes near, the uselessness of his fig leaves is felt, and he rushes into the thick foliage of Paradise to hide from the Divine eye. The Lord approaches the trembling man, and makes him feel that his hiding place will not do. Then he began

to tell him what will do. He announces a better covering and a better hiding place. He reveals himself as the God of grace, the God who hates sin, yet who takes the sinner's side against the sinner's enemy, - the old serpent. All this through the seed of the woman - "the man" who is the true "hiding place." Adam can now leave his thicket safely; and feel that in this revealed grace, he can stand before God without fear or shame. He has heard the good tidings, and brief as they are, they have restored his confidence and removed his alarm.

Let us hear the good news, and let us hear it as Adam did, - from the lips of God himself. For that which is revealed for our belief is set before us on God's authority, not on man's. We are not only to believe the truth, but we are to believe it because God has spoken it. Faith must have a divine foundation.

We gather together a few of these divine announcements; asking the anxious soul to study them as divine. Nor let him say that he knows them already; but let him accept our invitation, to traverse, along with us, the field of gospel statement. It is of God himself that we must learn; and it is only by listening to the very words of God that we shall arrive at the true knowledge of what the gospel is. His own words are the truest, the simplest, and the best. They are not only the likeliest to meet our case; but they are the words which he has promised to honor and to bless.

Let us hear, then, the words of God as to his own "grace," or "free love," or "mercy." "The Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin." "The Lord is long suffering and of great mercy." "His mercies are great." "The Lord your God is gracious and merciful." "Thou art a God ready to pardon,

gracious and merciful." "His mercy endureth forever." "Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee;" "thou art a God full of compassion and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth;" "thy mercy is great unto the heavens;" "thy mercy is great above the heavens;" "his tender mercies are over all his works;" "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity and passeth by the transgressions of the remnant of his heritage; he retaineth not his anger forever, because he delighteth in mercy;" "I will love them freely;" "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son;" "God commendeth his love towards us;" "God, who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he hath loved us, even when we were dead in sins;" "the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man;" "according to his mercy he saved us;" "in this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him; herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins;" "the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth;" "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ;" "the word of his grace;" "the gospel of the grace of God."

Such are a few of the words of Him who cannot lie, concerning his own free love. These sayings are faithful and true; and though perhaps we may but little have owned them as such, or given heed to the blessed news which they embody, yet they are all fitted to speak peace to the soul even of the most troubled and heavy laden. Each of these words of grace is like a star sparkling in the round, blue sky above us; or like a well of water pouring out its freshness amid desert rocks and sands. Blessed are they who know these joyful sounds.

Let no one say, - "We know all these passages; of what use is it to read and re-read words so familiar?" Much every way. Chiefly

because it is in such declarations regarding the riches of God's free love that the gospel is wrapped up; and it is out of these that the Holy Spirit ministers light and peace to us. Such are the words which he delights to honor as his messengers of joy to the soul. Hear then, in these, the voice of the Spirit's love of the Father and the Son! If you find no peace coming out of them to you, as you read them the first time, read them again. If you find nothing the second time, read them once more. If you find nothing the hundredth or thousandth time, study them yet again. "The word of God is quick and powerful;" his sayings are the lively oracles; his word liveth and abideth forever; it is like a fire, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces. The gospel is the power of God; and it is by manifestation of the truth, that we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

There are no words like those of God, in heaven or in earth. Hence it is that we are to study that which is written, for He Himself wrote it for you. Do not think it needless to read these passages again and again. They will blaze up at last; and light up that dark soul of yours with the very joy of heaven.

You have sometimes looked up to the sky at twilight, searching for a star which you expected to find in its wonted place. You did not see it at first, but you knew it was there, and that its light was undiminished. So, instead of closing your eye or turning away to some other object, you continued to gaze more and more intently on the spot where you knew it was. Slowly and faintly the star seemed to come out in the sky, as you gazed; and your persevering search ended in the discovery of the long sought gem.

Just so it is with those passages which speak to you of the free love of God. You say, I have looked into them, but they contain nothing for

me. Do not turn away from them, as if you knew them too well already, yet could find nothing in them. You have not seen them yet. There are wonders beyond all price hidden in each. Take them up again. Search and study them. The Holy Spirit is most willing to reveal to you the glory which they contain. It is his office, it is his delight, to be the sinner's teacher. He will not be behind you in willingness. It is of the utmost moment that you should remember this; lest you should grieve and repel him by your distrust. Never lose sight of this great truth, that the evil thing in you, which is the root of bitterness to the soul, is distrust of God; distrust of the Father, who so loved the world as to give his Son; distrust of the Son, who came to seek and save that which was lost; distrust of the Holy Ghost, whose tender mercies are over you, and whose work is to reveal the Christ of God to your souls. Besides, keep this in mind, that in teaching you he is honoring his own word and glorifying Christ. You need not then suspect him of indifference toward you, or doubt his willingness to enlighten the eyes of your understanding. While you are firmly persuaded that it is only his teaching that can be of any real use to you, do not grieve him by separating his love, in writing the Bible for you, from his willingness to make you understand it. He who gave you the word will interpret it for you. He does not stand aloof from you or from his own word, as if he needed to be persuaded, or bribed by your deeds and prayers, to unfold the heavenly truth to you. Trust him for teaching. Taste and see that he is good. Avail yourself at once of his love and power.

Do not say I am not entitled to trust him till I am converted. You are to trust him as a sinner, not as a converted man. You are to trust him as you are, not as you hope to be made ere long. Your conversion is not your warrant for trusting him. The great sin of an unconverted man is his not trusting the God that made him; Father, Son, and Spirit; and how can any one be so foolish, not to say wicked, as to ask

for a warrant for forsaking sin? What would you say to a thief who should say, I have no warrant to forsake stealing; I must wait till I am made an honest man, then I shall give it up? And what shall I say to a distruster of God, who tells me that he has no warrant for giving up his distrust, for he is not entitled to trust God till he is converted? One of the greatest things in conversion is turning from distrust to trust. If you are not entitled to turn at once from distrust to trust, then your distrust is no sin. If, however, your distrust of the Holy Spirit be one of your worst sins, how absurd it is to say, I am not entitled to trust him till I am converted! For is not that just saying, I am not entitled to trust him till I trust him?

You say that you know God to be gracious, yet, by your acting, you show that you do not believe him to be so; or, at least, to be so gracious as to be willing to show you the meaning of his own word. You believe him to be so gracious as to give his only begotten Son; yet the way in which you treat him, as to his word, shows that you do not believe him to be willing to give his Spirit to make known his truth. Nay, you think yourself much more willing to be taught than he is to teach; more willing to be blest than he is to bless.

You say, I must wait till God enlightens my mind. If God had told you that waiting is the way of light, you would be right. But he has nowhere told you to wait; and your idea of waiting is a mere excuse for not trusting him immediately. If your way of proceeding be correct, God must have said both "Come" and "wait," "Come now, but do not come now," which is a contradiction. When a kind rich man sends a message to a poor cripple to come at once to him and be provided for, he sends his carriage to convey him. He does not say, "Come; but then, as you are lame, and have besides no means of conveyance, you must make all the interest you can, and use all the means in your power, to induce me to send my carriage for you." The



invitation and the carriage go together. Much more is this true of God and his messages. His word and his Spirit go together. Not that the Spirit is in the word, or the power in the message, as some foolishly tell you. They are distinct things; but they go together. And your mistake lies in your supposing, that He who sent the one may not be willing to send the other. You think that it is He, not yourself, who creates the interval which you call "waiting;" although this waiting is, in reality, a deliberate refusal to comply with a command of God, and a determination to do something else, which he has not commanded, instead; a determination to make the doing of that something else an excuse for not doing the very thing commanded! Thus it is that you rid yourself of blame by pleading inability; nay more, you throw the blame on God, for not being willing to do immediately that which he is most willing to do.

God demands immediate acceptance of his Son, and immediate belief of his gospel. You evade this duty on the plea, that as you cannot accept Christ of yourself, you must go and ask him to enable you to do so. By this pretext you try to relieve yourself from the overwhelming sense of the necessity for immediate obedience. You soothe your conscience with the idea that you are doing what you can, in the mean time, and that so you are not guilty of unbelief, as before, seeing you desire to believe, and are doing your part in this great business!

It will not do. The command is "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." Nothing less than this is pleasing to God. And though it is every man's duty to pray, just as it is every man's duty to love God and to keep his statutes, yet you must not delude yourself with the idea that you are doing the right thing, when you only pray to believe, instead of believing. The thief is still a thief, though he may desire to give up

stealing, and pray to be enabled to give it up, until he actually give it up.

The question is not as to whether prayer is a duty; but whether it is a right and acceptable thing to pray in unbelief. Unbelieving prayer is prayer to an unknown God, and it cannot be your duty to pray to an unknown God.

You must go to your knees, believing that God is willing, or that he is not willing, to bless you. In the latter case, you cannot expect any answer or blessing. In the former case, you are really believing; as it is written, "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of all those that diligently seek him." In maintaining the duty of praying before believing, you cannot surely be asserting that it is your duty to go to God in unbelief? You cannot mean to say that you ought to go to God, believing that he is not willing to bless you, in order that by so praying you may persuade him to make you believe that he is willing. Are you to perish in unbelief till in some miraculous way faith drops into you, and God compels you to believe? Must you go to God with unacceptable prayer, in order to induce him to give you the power of acceptable prayer? Is this what you mean by the duty of praying in order to believe? If so, it is a delusion and a sin.

Understanding prayer in the scriptural sense, I would tell every man to pray, just as I would tell every man to believe. For prayer includes and presupposes faith. It assumes that the man knows something of the God he is going to; and that is faith. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." But then the Apostle adds, "How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" Does not this last verse go to the very root of the matter before us? It is every man's duty to call upon the name of the Lord; nay, it is the great sin of the

ungodly that they do not do so. Yet says the Apostle, "How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?"

But I do not enter further on this point here. It may come up again. Meanwhile, I would just remind you of the tidings concerning God's free love, in the free gift of his Son. Listen to what He himself has told you regarding this, and know that God who is asking you to call upon his name; for if thou but knewest this God and his great gift of love, thou wouldest ask him and he would give thee living water. Remember that the gospel is not a list of duties to be performed, or feelings to be produced, or frames which we are to pray ourselves into, in order to make God think well of us, and in order to fit us for receiving pardon. The gospel is the good news of the great work done upon the cross. The knowledge of that finished work is immediate peace.

Read again and again the wondrous words which I have quoted at length from His own book. The Bible is a living book, not a dead one; a divine one, not a human one; a perfect one, not an imperfect one. Search it, study it, dig into it. "My son," says God, our Father, "receive my words; hide my commandments with thee; incline thine ear unto wisdom; take fast hold of instruction; attend unto my wisdom and bow thine ear to my understanding; keep my words and lay up my commandments with thee." Do not say these messages are only for the children of God; for, as if to prevent this, God thus speaks to the simple, the scorers, the fools. "Turn ye at my reproof;" showing us that it is in listening to His words that the simple, the scorer, and the fool cease to be such and become sons. Do not revert to the old difficulty about your need of the Holy Spirit; for, as if to meet this, God, in the above pages, adds, "Behold I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you." Not for

one moment would God allow you to suspect his willingness to accompany his word with his Spirit.

Honor the words of God; and honor him who wrote them, by trusting him for interpretation and light. Do not disparage them by calling them a dead letter. They are not dead. If you will use the figure of death in this case, use it rightly. They are the savor of death unto death in them that perish; but this only shows their awful vitality. As the blood of Christ either cleanses or condemns, so the words of the Spirit either kill or make alive. The words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are Life.

Again I say to you, honor the words of God. Make much of them. Them that honor me I will honor, is as true of Scripture as it is of the God of Scripture. Peace, light, comfort, life, salvation, holiness, are wrapt up in them. "Thy word hath quickened me." "I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me."

It is through belief of the truth that God hath from the beginning chosen us to salvation. It is with the word of Truth that he begat us: and all this is in perfect harmony with the great truth of man's total helplessness and his need of the Almighty Spirit.

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."  
"Hear, and your soul shall live."

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## **Chapter VIII - Believe and be Saved**

It is the Holy Spirit alone that can draw us to the cross and fasten us to the Saviour. He who thinks he can do without the Spirit, has yet to learn his own sinfulness and helplessness. The gospel would be no good news to the dead in sin, if it did not tell of the love and power of

the divine Spirit, as explicitly as it announces the love and power of the divine Substitute.

But, while keeping this in mind, we may try to learn from Scripture what is written concerning the bond which connects us individually with the cross of Christ; making us thereby partakers of the pardon and the life which that cross reveals.

Thus then it is written, "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."

Faith then is the link, the one link, between the sinner and the Sin-bearer. It is not faith, as a work or exercise of our minds, which must be properly performed in order to qualify or fit us for pardon. It is not faith, as a religious duty, which must be gone through according to certain rules, in order to induce Christ to give us the benefits of his work. It is faith, simply as a receiver of the divine record concerning the Son of God. It is not faith considered as the source of holiness, as containing in itself the seed of all spiritual excellence and good works; it is faith alone, recognizing simply the completeness of the great sacrifice for sin, and the trueness of the Father's testimony to that completeness; as Paul writes to the Thessalonians, "our testimony among you was believed." It is not faith as a piece of money or a thing of merit; but faith taking God at his word, and giving him credit for speaking the honest truth, when he declares that "Christ died for the ungodly," and that the life which that death contains for sinners, is to be had without money, and without price."

But let us learn the things concerning this faith, from the lips of God himself. I lay great stress on this in dealing with inquirers. For the more that we can fix the sinner's eye and conscience upon God's own words, the more likely shall we be to lead him aright, and to secure the quickening presence of that Almighty Spirit who alone can give

sight to the blind. One great difficulty which the inquirer finds in such cases, is that of unlearning much of his past experience and teaching. Hence the importance of studying the divine words themselves, by which the sinner is made wise unto salvation. For they both unteach the false and imperfect, and teach the true and the perfect.

Let us mark how frequently and strongly God has spoken respecting faith and believing. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." "Therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." "The righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe." "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood...to declare his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." "He that believeth shall be saved." "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life; 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. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life." "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life." "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." "He that believeth on me shall never thirst." "This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life." "He that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall

never die." "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness." "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life through his name." "By him all that believeth are justified from all things." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "To him gave all the prophets witness, that through his name whoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." "It pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe." "This is his commandment, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us." "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." "He that believeth not shall be damned."

These are some of the many texts which teach us what the link is between the sinner and the great salvation. They show that it is our belief of God's testimony, concerning his own free love, and the work of his Son, that makes us partakers of the blessings which that testimony reveals. They do not indeed ascribe any meritorious or saving virtue to our act of faith. They show us that it is the object of faith, - the person, or thing, or truth of which faith lays hold, - that is the soul's peace and consolation. But still they announce most solemnly the necessity of believing, and the greatness of the sin of unbelief. In them God demands the immediate faith of all who hear his testimony. Yet he gives no countenance to the self-righteousness

of those who are trying to perform the act of faith, in order to qualify themselves for the favor of God; whose religion consists in performing acts of a certain kind; whose comfort arises from thinking of these well-performed acts; and whose assurance comes from the summing up of these at certain seasons, and dwelling upon the superior quality of many of them.

In some places the word trust occurs where perhaps we might have expected faith. But the reason of this is plain; the testimony which faith receives, is testimony to a person and his good will, in which case, belief of the testimony and confidence in the person are things inseparable. Our reception of God's testimony is confidence in God himself, and in Jesus Christ his Son. Hence it is that the Scripture speaks of trust or confidence as that which saves us, as if it would say to the sinner, "Such is the gracious character of God, that you have only to put your case into his hands, however bad it be, and entrust your soul to his keeping, and you shall be saved."

In some places we are said to be saved by the knowledge of God or of Christ; that is simply knowing God as he has made himself known to us in Jesus Christ. (Isa. liii.11; 1 Tim. ii.4; 2 Pet. ii.20). Thus Jesus spoke, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." And as if to make simplicity more simple, the Apostle, in speaking of the facts of Christ's death, and burial, and resurrection, says, "By which ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you." The God connects salvation with believing, trusting, knowing, remembering. Yet the salvation is not in our act of believing, trusting, knowing, or remembering; it is in the thing or person believed on, trusted, known, remembered. Nor is salvation given as a reward for believing and knowing. The things believed and known are our salvation. Nor are we saved or comforted by thinking about our act of believing and



ascertaining that it possesses all the proper ingredients and qualities which would induce God to approve of it, and of us because of it. This would be making faith a meritorious, or, at least, a qualifying work; and then grace would be no more grace. It would really be making our faith a part of Christ's work, - the finishing stroke put to the great understanding of the Son of God, which, otherwise, would have been incomplete, or, at least, unsuitable for the sinner, as a sinner. To the man that makes his faith and his trust his rest, and tries to pacify his conscience by getting up evidence of their solidity and excellence, we say, miserable comforters are they all! I get light by using my eyes; not by thinking about my use of them, nor by a scientific analysis of their component parts. So I get peace by, and in believing; not by thinking about my faith, or trying to prove to myself how well I have performed the believing act. We might as well extract water from the desert sands as peace from our own act of faith. Believing in the Lord Jesus Christ will do everything for us; believing in our own faith, or trusting in our own trust, will do nothing.

Thus faith is the bond between us and the Son of God; and it is so, not because of anything in itself, but because it is only through the medium of truth, as known and believed, that the soul can get hold of things or persons. Faith is nothing, save as it lays hold of Christ; and it does so by laying hold of the truth or testimony concerning him. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," says the apostle. "Ye shall know the truth," says the Lord, "and the truth shall make you free," and again, "because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not...And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?" We have also such expressions as these: "Those that know the truth;" "those that obey not the truth;" "The truth as it is in Jesus;" "belief of the truth;" "acknowledging of the truth;" "the way of truth;" "we are of the truth;" "destitute of the truth;" "sanctify them through thy truth;" "I speak forth the words of truth;" "the Spirit of truth will guide you

into all truth." Most memorable in connection with this subject, are the Lord's warnings in the parable of the sower, specially the following: - "The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are they that hear: then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved." The words, too, of the beloved disciple are no less so: - "He that saw it bare record, and his record is true; and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe;" and, again, "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

This truth regarding Christ and his sacrificial work, the natural man hates, because he hates Christ himself. "They hated me," says the Lord; nay, more, they hated me without a cause." It is not error that man hates, but truth; and hence the necessity for the Holy Spirit's work to remove that hatred, - to make the sinner even so much as willing to know the truth or the True One. Yet there is no backwardness on the part of God to give that Spirit; - and the first dawnings of inquiry and anxiety show that something beyond flesh and blood is at work in the soul.

But though it needs the power of the divine Spirit to make us believing men, this is not because faith is a mysterious thing, a great exercise or effort of soul, which must be very accurately gone through in order to make it acceptable, but because of our dislike to the truth believed, and our enmity to the Being in whom we are asked to confide. Believing is the simplest of all mental processes; yet not the less is the power of God needed. Let not the inquirer mystify or magnify faith in order to give it merit or importance in itself, so that by its superior texture or quality it may justify him; yet never, on the other hand, let him try to simplify it for the purpose of making the Spirit's work unnecessary. The more simple that he sees it to be, the

more will he see his own guilt, in so deliberately refusing to believe, and his need of the divine Helper to overcome the fearful opposition of the natural heart to the simple reception of the truth.

The difficulty of believing has its real root in pure self-righteousness; and the struggles to believe, the endeavors to trust, of which men speak, are the indications of this self-righteousness. So far are these spiritual exercises from being tokens for good, they are often mere expressions of spiritual pride, - evidences of the desperate strength of self-righteousness. It is worse than vain, then, to try to comfort an anxious soul by pointing to these exercises or efforts as proofs of existing faith. They are proofs either of ignorance or of unbelief, - proofs of the sinner's determination to do anything rather than believe that all is done. Doubts are not the best evidences of faith; and attempts at performing this great thing called faith are mere proofs of blindness to the finished propitiation of the Son of God.

To do some great thing called faith, in order to win God's favour, the sinner has no objection; nay, it is just what he wants, for it gives him the opportunity of working for his salvation. But he rejects the idea of taking his stand upon a work already done, and so ceasing to exercise his soul in order to effect a reconciliation, for which all that is needed was accomplished eighteen hundred years ago, upon the cross of Him who "was made sin for us, though he knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

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## **Chapter IX - Believe Just Now**

You are in earnest now; but I fear you are making your earnestness your Christ, and actually using it as a reason for not trusting Christ immediately. You think your earnestness will lead on to faith, if it be but intense enough, and long enough persisted in.

But there is such a thing as earnestness in the wrong direction; earnestness in unbelief, and a substitution of earnestness for simple faith in Jesus. You must not soothe the alarms of conscience by this earnestness of yours. It is unbelieving earnestness; and that will not do. What God demands is simple faith in the record which he has given you of his Son. You say, "I can't give him faith, but I can give him earnestness; and by giving him earnestness, I hope to persuade him to give me faith." This is self-righteousness. It shows that you regard both faith and earnestness as something to be done in order to please God, and secure his good will. You say, faith is the gift of God, but earnestness is not; it is in my own power; therefore I will earnestly labor, and struggle, and pray, hoping that ere long God will take pity on my earnest struggles, nay, feeling secretly that it would be hardly fair to him to disregard such earnestness. Now, if God has anywhere said that unbelieving earnestness and the unbelieving use of means is the way of procuring faith, I cannot object to such proceeding on your part. But I do not find that he has said so, or that the apostle in dealing with inquirers set them upon this preliminary process for acquiring faith. I find that the apostles shut up their hearers to immediate faith and repentance, bringing them face to face with the great object of faith, and commanding them in the name of the living God to believe, just as Jesus commanded the man with the withered arm to stretch out his hand. The man was thoroughly helpless, yet he is, on the spot, commanded to do the very thing which he could least of all do, the thing which Jesus only could enable him to do. The Lord did not give him any directions as to a preliminary work, or preparatory efforts, and struggles, and using of means. These are man's attempts to bridge over the great gulf by human appliances; man's ways of evading the awful question of his own utter impotence; man's unscriptural devices for sliding out of inability into ability, out of unbelief into faith; man's plan for helping God to save him; man's self-made ladder for climbing up a little way

out of the horrible pit, in the hope that God will so commiserate his earnest struggles as to do all the rest that is needed.

Now God has commanded all men everywhere to repent; but he has nowhere given us any directions for obtaining repentance. God has commanded sinners to believe, but has not prescribed for them any preparatory steps or process by means of which he may be induced to give them something which he is not from the first most willing to do. It is thus that he shuts them up to faith, by concluding them in unbelief. It is thus that he brings them to feel both the greatness and the guilt of their inability; and so constrains them to give up every hope of doing anything to save themselves; - driving them out of every refuge of lies, and showing them that these prolonged efforts of theirs are hindrances, not helps, and are just so many rejections of his own immediate help, - so many distrustful attempts to persuade him to do what he is already most willing to do in their behalf.

The great manifestation of self-righteousness, is this struggle to believe. Believing is not a work, but a ceasing from work; and this struggle to believe, is just the sinner's attempt to make a work out of that which is no work at all, to make a labor out of that which is a resting from labor. Sinners will not let go their hold of their former confidence, and drop into Christ's arms. Why? Because they still trust these confidences, and do not trust him who speaks to them in the gospel. Instead, therefore, of encouraging you to embrace more and more earnestly these preliminary efforts, I tell you they are all the sad indications of self-righteousness. They take for granted that Christ has not done his work sufficiently, and that God is not willing to give you faith till you have plied him with the arguments and importunities of months or years. God is at this moment willing to bless you; and these struggles of yours are not, as you fancy, humble attempts on your part to take the blessing, but proud attempts either

to put it from you or to get hold of it in some way of your own. You cannot, with all your struggles, make the Holy Spirit more willing to give you faith than he is at this moment. But our self-righteousness rejects this blessed truth; and if I were to encourage you in these efforts, I should be fostering your self-righteousness and your rejection of this grace of the Spirit.

You say you cannot change your heart or do any good thing. So say I. But I say more. I say that you are not at all aware of the extent of your helplessness and of your guilt. These are far greater and far worse than you suppose. And it is your imperfect view of these that leads you to resort to these appliances. You are not yet sensible of your weakness, in spite of all you say. It is this that is keeping you from God and God from you.

God commands you to believe and to repent. It is at our peril that you attempt to alter this imperative and immediate obligation by the substitution of something preliminary, the performance of which may perhaps soothe your terrors and lull your conscience to asleep, but will not avail either to propitiate God or to life you into a safer, or more salvable condition, as you imagine. For we are saved by faith, not by efforts to induce an unwilling God to give us faith.

God commands you to believe; and, so long as you do not believe, you are making him a liar, you are rejecting the truth, you are believing a lie; for unbelief is, in reality, the belief in a lie. Yes, God commands you to believe; and your not believing is your worst sin; and it is by exhibiting it as your worst sin, that God shuts you up to faith. Now, if you try to extenuate this sin; if you lay this flattering unction to your soul, that, by making all these earnest and laborious efforts to believe, you are lessening this awful sin, and rendering your unbelieving state a less guilty one; you are deluding your

conscience, and thrusting away from you that divine hand which, by this conviction of unbelief, is shutting you up to faith.

I do not remember to have seen this better stated anywhere than in Fuller's "Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation." I give just a few sentences: - "It is the duty of ministers not only to exhort their carnal hearers to believe in Jesus Christ for the salvation of their souls, but it is at our peril to exhort them to anything short of it, or which does not involve or imply it. We have sunk into such a compromising way of dealing with the unconverted, as to have well nigh lost the spirit of the primitive preachers; and hence it is that sinners of every description can sit so quietly as they do in our places of worship. Christ and his apostles, without any hesitation, called on sinners to repent and believe the gospel; but we, considering them as poor, impotent, and depraved creatures, have been disposed to drop this part of the Christian ministry. Considering such things as beyond the powers of their hearers, they seem to have contented themselves with pressing on them the things they could perform, still continuing enemies of Christ; such as behaving decently in society, reading the Scriptures, and attending the means of grace. Thus it is that hearers of this description sit at ease in our congregations. But as this implies no guilt on their part, they sit unconcerned, conceiving that all that is required of them is to lie in the way and wait the Lord's time. But is this the religion of the Scriptures? Where does it appear that the prophets or apostles treated that kind of inability, which is merely the effect of reigning aversion, as affording any excuse? And where have they descended in their exhortations to things which might be done, and the parties still continue the enemies of God? Instead of leaving out everything of a spiritual nature, because their hearers could not find in their hearts to comply with it, it may be safely affirmed that they exhorted to nothing else, treating such inability not only as of no account with regard to the lessening of obligation,

but as rendering the subjects of it worthy of the severest rebuke."...Repentance toward God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, are allowed to be duties, but not immediate duties. The sinner is considered as unable to comply with them, and therefore they are not urged upon him; but instead of them, he is directed to pray for the Holy Spirit to enable him to repent and believe! This, it seems, he can do, notwithstanding the aversion of his heart from everything of the kind. But if any man be required to pray for the Holy Spirit, it must be either sincerely and in the name of Jesus, or insincerely and in some other way. The latter, I suppose, will be allowed to be an abomination in the sight of God; he cannot, therefore, be required to do this; and as to the former, it is just as difficult and as opposite to the carnal heart as repentance and faith themselves. Indeed, it amounts to the same thing; for a sincere desire after a spiritual blessing, presented in the name of Jesus, is no other than the prayer of faith."

The great thing which I would press upon our conscience is the awful guilt that there is in unbelief. Continuance in unbelief is continuance in the very worst of sins; and continuance in it because (as you say) you cannot help it, is the worst aggravation of your sin. The habitual drunkard says, he cannot help it; the habitual swearer says, he cannot help it; the habitual unbeliever says, he cannot help it. Do you admit the drunkard's excuse? Or do you not tell him that it is the worst feature of his case, and that he ought to be utterly ashamed of himself for using such a plea? Do you say, I know you can't give up your drunken habits, but you can go and pray to God to enable you to give up these habits, and perhaps God will hear you and enable you to do so. What would this be but to tell him to go on drinking and praying alternately; and that, possibly, God may hear his drunken prayers, and give him sobriety? You would not deal with drunkenness in this way; ought you to deal thus with unbelief?



Ought you not to press home the unutterable guilt of unbelief; and to show a sinner that, when he says I can't help my unbelief, he is uttering his most dreadful condemnation, and saying, I can't help distrusting God, I can't help hating God, I can't help making God a liar; and that he might just as well say, I can't help stealing and lying, and swearing.

Never let unbelief be spoken of as a misfortune. It is awfully sinful; and its root is the desperate wickedness of the heart. How resolutely evil must that heart be, when it will not even believe! For this depravity of soul and need of a heavenly Quickener, cannot palliate our unbelief, or make it less truly the sin of sins. If our helplessness and hardness of heart lessened our guilt, then the more wicked we became, the less guilty we should be. The sinner who loves sin so much that he cannot part with it, is the most guilty of all. The man who says, I cannot love God, is proclaiming himself one of the worst of sinners; but he who says, I cannot even believe, is taking to himself a guilt which we may truly call the darkest and most damnable of all.

Oh, the unutterable guilt involved even in one moment's unbelief - one single act of an unbelieving soul! How much more in the continuous unbelief of twenty or sixty years! To steal once is bad enough, how much more to be a thief by habit and repute! We think it bad enough when a man is overtaken with drunkenness; how much more when we have to say of him, he is never sober. Such is our charge against the man who has not yet known Christ. He is a continuous unbeliever. His life is one unbroken course of unbelief, and hence of false worship, if he worships at all. Every new moment is a new act of unbelief; a new commission of the worst of sins; the sin of sins; a sin in comparison with which stealing and drunkenness, and murder, awful as they are, becomes as trifles.

Let the thought of this guilt, Oh, anxious soul, cut your conscience to the quick! Oh! tremble as you think of what it is to be, not for a day or an hour, but for a whole lifetime, an unbelieving man!

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## **Chapter X - The Want of Power to Believe**

You say, I know all these things, yet they bring me no peace.

I doubt much in that case whether you do know them; and I should like you to doubt upon this point. You take for granted much too easily that you know them. Seeing they do not bring to your soul the peace which God says they are sure to do, your wisest way would be to suspect the correctness of your knowledge. If a trusty physician prescribes a sure medicine for some complaint, and if on trial I find that what I have taken does me no good, I begin to suspect that I have some wrong medicine instead of that which he prescribed.

Now are you sure that the truth which, you say you know, is the very gospel of the grace of God? Or is it only something like it? And may not the reason of your getting no peace from that which you believe, just be, because it contains none? You have got hold of many of the good things, but you have missed, perhaps, the one thing which made it a joyful sound? You believe perhaps the whole gospel, save the one thing which makes it good news to a sinner? You see the cross as bringing salvation very near; but no so absolutely close as to be in actual contact with you as you are; not so entirely close but that there is a little space, just a hand breadth or a hairbreadth, to be made up by your own prayers, or efforts, or feelings? Everything, you say, is complete; but then, that want of feeling in myself! Ah, there it is! There is the little unfinished bit of Christ's work which you are trying to finish, or to persuade him by your prayers, to finish for you! That want of feeling is the little inch of distance which you have to

get removed before the completeness of Christ's work is available for you!

The consciousness of insensibility, like the sense of guilt, ought to be one of your reasons for trusting him the more, whereas you make it a reason for not trusting him at all. Would a child treat a father or a mother thus? Would it make its bodily weakness a reason for distrusting parental love? Would it not feel that that weakness was thoroughly known to the parent, and was just the very thing that was drawing out more love and skill? A stronger child would need less care and tenderness. But the poor helpless palsied one would be of all others the likeliest to be pitied and watched over. Deal thus with Christ; and make that hardness of heart an additional reason for trusting him, and for prizing his finished work.

This state of mind shows that you are not believing the right thing; but something else which will not heal your hurt; or, at least, that you are mixing up something with the right thing, which will neutralize all its healing properties.

You must begin at the beginning once more; and go back to the simplest elements of heavenly truth, which are wrapped up in the great facts that Jesus died and rose again; facts too little understood, nay, undervalued by many; facts to which the apostles attached such vast importance, and on which they laid so much stress; facts out of which the primitive believers, without the delay of weeks or months, extracted their peace and joy.

You say, I cannot believe. Let us look into this complaint of yours.

I know that the Holy Spirit is as indispensable to your believing, as is Christ in order to your being pardoned. The Holy Spirit's work is direct and powerful; and you will not rid yourself of your difficulties

by trying to persuade yourself that his operations are all indirect, and merely those of a teacher presenting truth to you. Salvation for the sinner is Christ's work; salvation in the sinner is the Spirit's work. Of this internal salvation he is the beginner and the ender. He works in you, in order to your believing, as truly as he works in you after you have believed, and in consequence of your believing.

This doctrine, instead of being a discouragement, is one of unspeakable encouragement to the sinner; and he will acknowledge this, if he knows himself to be the thoroughly helpless being which the Bible says he is. If he is not totally depraved, he will feel the doctrine of the Spirit's work a hindrance, no doubt; but as, in that case, he will be able to save himself without much assistance, he might just set aside the Spirit altogether, and work his way to heaven without his help!

The truth is, that without the Spirit's direct and almighty help, there could be no hope for a totally depraved being at all.

You speak of this inability to believe as if it were some unprovided difficulty; and as if the discovery of it had sorely cast you down. You would not have so desponded had you found that you could believe of yourself, without the Spirit; and it would greatly relieve you to be told that you could dispense with the Spirit's help in this matter. If this would relieve you, it is plain that you have no confidence in the Spirit; and you wish to have the power in your own hands, because you believe your own willingness to be much greater than his. Did you but know the blessed truth, that his willingness far exceeds yours, you would rejoice that the power was in his hands rather than in your own. You would feel far more certain of attaining the end desired when the strength needed is in hands so infinitely gracious; and you would feel that the man who told you that you had all the

needed strength in yourself, was casting down your best hope, and robbing you of a heavenly treasure.

How eagerly some grasp at the idea, that they can believe, and repent, and turn of themselves, as if this were consolation to the troubled spirit! as if this were the unraveling of its dark perplexities! Is it comfort to persuade yourself that you are not wholly without strength? Can you, by lessening the sum total of your depravity and inability, find the way to peace? Is it a relief to your burdened spirit to be delivered from the necessity of being wholly indebted to the Spirit of God for faith and repentance? Will it rescue you from the bitterness of despair to be told that you had not enough strength left to enable you to love God, yet that in virtue of some little remaining power, you can perform this least of all religious acts, believing on the Son of God?

If such be your feeling, it is evident that you do not know the extent of your own disease, nor the depths of your evil heart, you don't understand the good news brought to you by the Son of God, - of complete deliverance from all that oppresses you, whether it be guilt or helplessness. You have forgotten the blessed announcement, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." Your strength, as well as your righteousness, is in another; yet, while you admit the former, you deny the latter. You have forgotten, too, the apostle's rejoicing in the strength of his Lord; his feeling that when he was weak that he was strong; and his determination to glory in his infirmities, that the power of Christ might rest upon him.

If you understand the genuine gospel in all its freeness, you will feel that the man who tries to persuade you that you have strength enough left to do without the Spirit, is as great an enemy of the cross, and of your soul, as the man who wants to make you believe that you

are not altogether guilty, but have some remaining goodness, and therefore do not need to be wholly indebted for pardon to the blood and righteousness of Immanuel. Without strength, is as literal a description of your state, as without goodness." If you understand the gospel, the consciousness of your total helplessness would just be the discovery that you are the very sinner to whom the great salvation is sent; that your inability was all foreseen and provided for, and that you are in the very position which needs, which calls for, and shall receive, the aid of the Almighty Spirit.

Till you free yourself in this extremity of weakness, you are not in a condition (if I may say so) to receive the heavenly help. Your idea of remaining ability is the very thing that repels the help of the Spirit, just as any idea of remaining goodness thrusts away the propitiation of the Saviour. It is your not seeing that you have no strength that is keeping you from believing. So long as you think you have some strength in doing something, - and specially in performing to your own and Satan's satisfaction, that great act or exercise of soul called "faith." But when you find out that you have no strength left, you will, in blessed despair, cease to work, - and (ere you are aware) - believe! For, if believing be not a ceasing to work, it is at least the necessary and immediate result of it. You expended your little stock of imagined strength in holding fast the ropes of self-righteousness, but now, when the conviction of having no strength at all is forced upon you, you drop into the arms of Jesus. But this you will never do, so long as you fancy that you have strength to believe.

Paul, after many years believing, still drew his strength from Christ alone; how much more must you and others who have never yet believed at all? He said, "I take pleasure in my infirmities," that is, my want of strength. You say, I am cast down because of it!

They who tell you that you have some power left, and that you are to use that power in believing and repenting, are enemies of your peace, and subverters of the gospel. They, in fact, say to you that faith is a work, and that you are to do that work in order to be saved. They mock you. In yielding to them you are maintaining that posture which vexes and resists the Spirit which is striving within you; you are proudly asserting for fallen man a strength which belongs only to the unfallen; you are denying the completeness of the divine provision made for the sinner in the fullness of Him in whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell.

The following sentence from an old writer is worth pondering:

"Ask him what it is he finds makes believing difficult to him? Is it unwillingness to be justified and saved? Is it unwillingness to be so saved by Jesus Christ, to the praise of God's grace in him, and to the voiding of all boasting in himself? This he will surely deny. Is it a distrust of the truth of the gospel record? This he dare not own. Is it a doubt of Christ's ability or goodwill to save? This is to contradict the testimony of God in the gospel. Is it because he doubts of an interest in Christ and his redemption? You tell him that believing on Christ makes up the interest in him. If he says he cannot believe on Christ, because of the difficulty of the acting this faith, and that a divine power is needful to draw it forth, which he finds not, you tell him that believing in Jesus Christ is no work, but a resting on Jesus Christ; and that this pretence is as unreasonable as that if a man wearied with a journey, and who is not able to go one step farther, should argue, I am so tired that I am not able to lie down, when, indeed, he can neither stand nor go. The poor wearied sinner can never believe on Jesus Christ till he finds he can do nothing for himself, and in his first believing doth always apply himself to Christ for salvation, as a man hopeless and helpless in himself. And by such

reasonings with him from the gospel, the Lord will (as he hath often done) convey faith, and joy, and peace, by believing."

Your puzzling yourself with this "cannot," shows that you are proceeding in a wrong direction. You are still laboring under the idea that this believing is a work to be done by you, and not the simple acknowledgment of a work done by another. You would fain do something in order to get peace, and you think that if you could only do this great thing called faith, God would reward you with peace. In this view, faith is a price as well as a work; whereas it is neither; but a ceasing from work and from attempting to pay for salvation. Faith is not a climbing of the mountain; but a ceasing to attempt it, and allowing Christ to carry you up in his arms.

You seem to think that it is your own act of faith that is to save you; whereas it is the object of your faith, without which your own act of faith, however well performed, is nothing. Supposing that this believing is a mighty work, you ask, "How am I to get it properly performed?" But your peace is not to come from any such performance, but entirely from Him to whom the Father is pointing, "Behold my servant whom I have chosen." As if he would say, "Look at him as Israel looked at the serpent of brass: forget everything about yourself, - your faith, your frames, your repentance, your prayers, - and look at Him." It is in Him, and not in your poor act of faith, that salvation lies. It is in Him and in his boundless love that you are to find your resting place. Out of Him, not out of your exercise of soul concerning him, that peace is to come. Looking at your own faith will only minister to your self-righteousness; it is like letting your left hand know what your right hand doeth. To seek for satisfaction as to the quality or quantity of your faith, before you will take comfort from Christ's work, is to proceed upon the supposition that the work is not sufficient of itself to give you comfort, as soon as



received; and that until made sufficient by a certain amount of religious feeling, it contains no comfort to the sinner; in short, that the comforting or comfortable ingredient is an indescribable something, depending for its efficiency chiefly upon the superior excellence of your own act of faith, and the success of your own exertions in putting it forth.

Your inability, then, does not lie in the impossibility of your performing aright this great act of believing, but of ceasing from all such self-righteous attempts to perform any act, or do anything whatever, in order to your being saved. So that the real truth is, that you have not yet seen such a sufficiency in the one great work of the Son of God upon the cross, as to lead you utterly to discontinue your wretched efforts to work out something of your own. As soon as the Holy Spirit shows you the entire sufficiency of the great propitiation, for the sinner, just as he is, you cease your attempts to act or work, and take, instead of all such exercises of yours, that which Christ has done. The Spirit's work is not to enable a man to do something which will save him or help to save him, but so to detach him from all his own exertions and performances, whether good, bad, or indifferent, that he should be content with the salvation which the Saviour of the lost has finished.

Remember that what you call your inability God calls your guilt; and that this inability is a willful thing. It was not put into you by God; for he made you with the full power of doing everything he tells you to do. You disobey and disbelieve willingly. No one forces you to do either. Your rejection of Christ is the free and deliberate choice of your own will.

That inability of yours is a fearfully wicked thing. It is the summing up of your depravity. It makes you more like the devil than almost

anything else. Incapable of loving God, or even of believing on his Son! Capable of only hating him, and of rejecting Christ! Oh, dreadful guilt! Unutterable wickedness of the human heart!

Is it really the cannot that is keeping you back from Christ? No, it is the will not. You have not got the length of the cannot. It is the will not that is the real and present barrier. "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

If your heart would speak out it would say, "Well, after all, I cannot, and God will not." And what is this but saying, "I have a hard-hearted God to deal with, who won't help or pity me?" Whatever your rebellious heart may say, Christ's words are true, "Ye will not." What he spoke when weeping over impenitent Jerusalem he speaks to you, "I would but ye would not."

"They are fearful words," writes Dr. Owen, "ye would not." Whatever is pretended, it is will and stubbornness that lie at the bottom of this refusal." And oh! what must be the strength as well as the guilt of this unbelief, when nothing but the almightiness of the Holy Ghost can root it out of you?

You are perplexed by the doctrine of God's sovereignty and election. I wonder that any man believing in a God should be perplexed by these. For if there be a God, a King, eternal, immortal, and invisible, he cannot but be sovereign, - and he cannot but do according to his own will, and choose according to his own purpose. You may dislike these doctrines, but you can only get quit of them by denying altogether the existence of an infinitely wise, glorious, and powerful Being. God would not be God were he not thus absolutely sovereign in his present doings and his eternal pre-arrangements.

But how would it rid you of your perplexities to get quit of sovereignty and election? Suppose these were not aside, you still remain the same depraved and helpless being as before. The truth is, that the sinner's real difficulty lies neither in sovereignty nor election, but in his own depravity. If the removal of these hard doctrines (as some call them) would lessen his own sinfulness, or make him more able to believe and repent, the hardship would lie at their door; but if not, then these doctrines are no hindrance at all. If it be God's sovereignty that is keeping him from coming to Christ, the sinner has serious matter of complaint against the doctrine. But if it be his own depravity, is it not foolish to be objecting to a truth that has never thrown one single straw of a hindrance in the way of his return to God? Election has helped many a soul to heaven; but never yet hindered one. Depravity is the hindrance; election is God's way of overcoming that hindrance. And if that hindrance is not overcome in all, but only in some, who shall find fault? Was God bound to overcome it in all? Was he bound to bring every man to Christ, and to pluck every brand from the burning? Do not blame God for that which belongs solely to yourself; nor be troubled about His sovereignty when the real cause of trouble is your own desperately wicked heart.

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## **Chapter XI - Insensibility**

You say that you do not feel yourself to be a sinner; that you are not anxious enough; that you are not penitent enough.

Be it so. Let me, however, ask you such questions as the following: -

1. Does your want of feeling alter the gospel? Does it make the good news less free, less blessed, less suitable? Is it not glad tidings of God's love to the unworthy, the unlovable, the insensible? Your not

feeling your burdens does not affect the nature of the gospel, nor change the gracious character of Him from whom it comes. It suits you as you are, and you suit it exactly. It comes up to you on the spot, and says, Here is a whole Christ for you, - a Christ containing everything you need. Your acquisition of feeling would not qualify you for it, nor bring it nearer, nor buy its blessings, nor make you more welcome, nor persuade God to do anything for you that he is not at this moment most willing to do.

2. Is your want of feeling and excuse for your unbelief? Faith does not spring out of feeling, but feeling out of faith. The less you feel the more you should trust. You cannot feel aright till you have believed. As all true repentance has its root in faith, so all true feeling has the same. It is vain for you to attempt to reverse God's order of things.

3. Is your want of feeling a reason for your staying away from Christ? A sense of want should lead you to Christ, and not keep you away. "More are drawn to Christ," says old Thomas Shepherd, "under a sense of a dead, blind heart, than by all sorrows, humiliations, and terrors." The less of feeling or conviction that you have, you are the more needy; and is that a reason for keeping aloof from him? Instead of being less fit for coming, you are more fit. The blindness of Bartimeus was his reason for coming to Christ, not for staying away. If you have more blindness and deadness than others, you have so many more reasons for coming, so many fewer for standing afar off. If the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint, you should feel yourself the more shut up to the necessity of coming, - and that immediately. Whatever others may do who have convictions, you who have none dare not stay away, nor even wait an hour. You must come!

4. Will your want of feeling make you less welcome to Christ? How is this? What makes you think so? Has he said so, or did he act, when on earth, as if this were his rule of procedure/ Had the woman of Sychar any feeling when he spoke to her so lovingly? Was it the amount of conviction in Zaccheus that made the Lord address him so graciously, "Make haste, for today I must abide at thy house?" The balm of Gilead will not be the less suitable for you, nor the physician there the less affectionate and cordial, because, in addition to other diseases, you are afflicted with the benumbing palsy. Your greater need only gives him an opportunity of showing the extent of his fullness, as well as the riches of his grace. Come to him, then, just because you do not feel. "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Whatever you may feel, or may not feel, it is still a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Do not limit the grace of God, nor suspect the love of Christ. Confidence in that grace and love will do everything for you; want of confidence, nothing. Christ wants you to come; not to wait, nor to stay away.

5. Will your remaining away from Christ remove your want of feeling? No. It will only make it worse; for it is a disease which he only can remove. So that a double necessity is laid upon you for going to Him. Others who feel more than you may linger. You cannot afford to do so. You must go immediately to Him who is exalted "a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and the forgiveness of sins." Seeing that distance and distrust will do nothing for you, try what drawing near and confidence will do. To you, though the chief of sinners, the message is, "Let us draw near." God commands you to come, without any further delay or preparation; to bring with you your sins, your unbelief, your insensibility, your heart, your will, your whole man, and to put them into Christ's hands. God demands your immediate confidence and instant surrender to Christ.

"Kiss the Son," is his message. His word insists on your return, - "Return unto the Lord thy God." It shows you that the real cause of the continuance of this distance is your unwillingness to let Christ save you in his own way, - and a desire to have the credit of removing your insensibility by your own prayers and tears.

6. Is not your insensibility one of your worst sins? A hard-hearted child is one of the most hateful of beings. You may pity and excuse many things, but not hard-heartedness. "Thou art the man." Thou art the hard-hearted child! Cease then to pity yourself, and learn only to condemn. Give this sin no quarter. Treat it not as a misfortune, but as unmingled guiltiness. You may call it a disease; but remember that it is an inexcusable sin. It is one great all pervading sin added to your innumerable others. This should shut you up to Christ. As an incurable leper you must go to him for cure. As a desperate criminal, you must go to him for pardon. Do not, I beseech you, add to this awful sin, the yet more damning sin of refusing to acknowledge Christ as the healer of all diseases, and the forgiver of all iniquities.

Repentance is only to be got from Christ. Why then should you make the want of it a reason for staying away from him? Go to Him for it. He is exalted to give it. If you speak of waiting, you only show that you are not sincere in your desire to have it. No man in such circumstances would think of waiting. Your conviction of sin is to come, not by waiting, but by looking; looking to Him whom your sins have crucified, and whom, by your distrust and unbelief, you are crucifying afresh. It is written, "They shall look on me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn?"

Beware of fancying that convictions are to save you, or that they are to be desired for their own sakes. Thus writes an old minister, "I was put out of conceit with legal terrors; for I thought they were good,

and only esteemed them happy that were under them; they came, but I found they did me ill; and unless the Lord had guided me thus, I think I should have died doting after them." And another says, "Sense of a dead, hard heart is an effectual means to draw to Christ; yea, more effectual than any other can be, because it is the poor, the blind, the naked, the miserable, that are invited."

As to what is called a "law-work," preparatory to faith in Christ, let us consult the Acts of the Apostles. There we have the preaching of the apostolic gospel and the fruits of it, in the conversion of thousands. We have several inspired sermons, addressed both to Jew and Gentile; but into none of these is the law introduced. That which pricked the hearts of the thousands at Pentecost was a simple narrative of the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, concluding with these awful words, which must have sounded like the trumpet of doom to those who heard them, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." These were words more terrible than law; more overwhelming than Sinai heard. Awful as it would have been to be told, "Ye have broken the whole law of God;" what was this to being told, "Ye have crucified his Son?" The sin of crucifying the Lord of glory was greater than that of breaking a thousand laws. And yet in that very deed of consummate wickedness was contained the gospel of the grace of God. That which pronounced the sinner's condemnation, declared also his deliverance. There was life in that death; and the nails which fastened the Son of God to the cross, let out the pent up stream of divine love upon the murderers themselves!

The gospel was the apostolic hammer for breaking hard hearts in pieces; for producing repentance unto life. It was a believed gospel that melted the obduracy of the self-righteous Jew; and nothing but

the good news of God's free love, condemning the sin yet pardoning the sinner, will, in our own day, melt the heart and soften human rock-work into men." "Law and terrors do but harden;" and their power, though wielded by an Elijah, is feeble in comparison with that of a preached cross. "O blessed cross of Christ," as Luther, using an old hymn, used to say, "there is no wood like thine!"

The word repentance signifies in the Greek, "change of mind;" and this change the Holy Spirit produces in connection with the gospel, not the law. "Repent and believe the gospel: does not mean get repentance by the law, and then believe the gospel; but let this good news about the kingdom which I am preaching, lead you to change your views and receive the gospel. Repentance being put before faith here, simply implies, that there must be a turning from what is false in order to the reception of what is true. If I would turn my face to the north, I must turn it from the south; yet I should not think of calling the one of these preparatory to the other. They must, in the nature of things, go together. Repentance, then, is not, in any sense, a preliminary qualification for faith, - least of all in the sense of sorrow for sin. "It must be reckoned a settled point," says Calvin, "that repentance not only immediately follows upon faith, but springs out of it...They who think that repentance goes before faith, instead of flowing from or being produced by it, as fruit from a tree, have never understood its nature. And Dr. Colquhoun remarks, "Justifying and saving faith is the mean of true repentance; and this repentance is not the mean but the end of that faith."

That terror of conscience may go before faith, I do not doubt. But such terror is very unlike Bible repentance; and its tendency is to draw men away from, not to, the cross. Alarms, such as these, are not uncommon among unbelieving men, such as Ahab and Judas. They will be heard with awful distinctness in hell; but they are not



repentance. Sorrow for sin comes from apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, from the sight of the cross and of the love which the cross reveals. The broken and the contrite heart is the result of our believing the glad tidings of God's free love, in the death and resurrection of his Son. Few things are more dangerous to the anxious soul than the endeavors to get convictions, and terrors, and humiliations, as preliminaries to believing the gospel. They who would tell a sinner that the reason of his not finding peace is that he is not anxious enough, nor convicted enough, nor humble enough, are enemies to the cross of Christ. They who would inculcate a course of prayer, and humiliation, and self-examination, and dealing with the law, in order to believing in Christ, are teaching what is the very essence of Popery; not the less poisonous and perilous, because refined from Romish grossness, and administered under the name of gospel.

Christ asks no preparation of any kind whatsoever, - legal or evangelical, outward, or inward, - in the coming sinner. And he that will not come as he is shall never be received at all. It is not exercised souls, nor penitent believers, nor well humbled seekers, nor earnest users of the means, nor any of the better class of Adam's sons and daughters, but "sinner", that Christ welcomes. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. This man receiveth sinners.

Spurious repentance, the produce and expression of unbelief and self-righteousness, may be found previous to faith - just as all manner of evils abound in the soul before it believes. But when faith comes, it comes not as the result of this self-wrought repentance, - but in spite of it; and this so called repentance will be afterwards regarded by the believing soul as one of those self-righteous efforts, whose only tendency was to keep the sinner from the Saviour. They who call on penitent sinners to believe, mistake both repentance and

faith; and that which they teach is no glad tidings to the sinner. To the better class of sinners (if such there be), who have by laborious efforts got themselves sufficiently humbled, it may be glad tidings; but not to those who are without strength, the lost, the ungodly, the hard-hearted, the insensible, the lame, the blind, the halt, the maimed. "It is not sound doctrine," says Dr. Colquhoun, "to teach that Christ will receive none but the true penitent, or that none else is warranted to come by faith to him for salvation. The evil of that doctrine is that it sets needy sinners on spinning repentance, as it were, out of their own bowels, and on bringing it with them to Christ, instead of coming to him by faith to receive it from him. If none be invited but the true penitent, then impenitent sinners are not bound to come to Christ; and cannot be blamed for not coming."

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## **Chapter XII - Jesus Only**

You say, "I am not satisfied with the motives that have led me to seek Christ; they are selfish." That is very likely. The feelings of a newly awakened sinner are not disinterested, neither can they be so.

You have gone in quest of salvation from a sense of danger, or fear of the wrath to come, or a desire to obtain the inheritance of glory. These are some of the motives by which you are actuated.

How could it be otherwise? God made you with these fears and hopes; and he appeals to them in his word. When he says, "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" he is appealing to your fears. When he sets eternal life before you, and the joys of an endless kingdom, he is appealing to your hopes. And when he presents these motives, he expects you to be moved by them. To act upon such motives, then, cannot be wrong. Nay, not to act upon them, would be to harden yourself against God's most solemn appeals. "Knowing the terror of

the Lord, we persuade men," says Paul. It cannot be wrong to be influenced by this terror. "The remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven." This surely was not wrong. The whole Bible is full of such motives, addressed to our hopes and fears.

When was it otherwise? Among all the millions who have found life in Christ, who began in any other way, or from any higher motive? Was it not thus that the jailor began when the earthquake shook his soul, and called up before his conscience the everlasting woe? Was it not a sense of danger and a dread of wrath that made him ask, "What shall I do to be saved?" And did the apostle rebuke him for this? Did he refuse to answer his anxious question, because his motive was so selfish? No. He answered at once, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

There is nothing wrong in these motives. When my body is painted, it is not wrong to wish for relief. When overtaken by sickness, it is not wrong to send for the physician. You may call this selfishness, which He who made us what we are, and who gave us these instincts, expects us to act upon; and in acting on which, we may count upon his blessing, not his rebuke. It is not wrong to dread hell, to desire heaven, to flee from torments, to long for blessedness, to shun condemnation, and to desire pardon. Let not Satan then ensnare you with such foolish thoughts, the tendency of which is to quench every serious desire, under the pretext of its not being disinterested and perfect.

You think that, were you seeking salvation from a regard to the glory of God, you would be satisfied. But what does that mean, but that, at the very first, even before you have come to Christ, you are to be actuated by the highest of all motives? He who has learned to seek God's glory is one who has already come to Christ; and he who has

learned to do this entirely, is no sinner at all, and, therefore, does not need Christ. To seek God's glory is a high attainment of faith; yet you want to be conscious of possessing it before you have got faith, - nay, in order to your getting it! Is it possible that you can be deluding yourself with the idea that if you could only secure this qualification, you might confidently expect God to give you faith. This would be substituting your own zeal for his glory, in the room of the cross of Christ.

Do not keep back from Christ under the idea that you must come to him in a disinterested frame, and from an unselfish motive. If you were right in this thing, who could be saved? You are to come as you are; with all your bad motives, whatever these may be. Take all your bad motives, add them to the number of your sins, and bring them all to the altar where the great sacrifice is lying. Go to the mercy seat. Tell the High Priest there, not what you desire to be, nor what you ought to be, but what you are. Tell him the honest truth as to your condition at this moment. Confess the impurity of your motives; all the evil that you feel or that you don't feel; your hard-heartedness, your blindness, your unteachableness. Confess everything without reserve. He wants you to come to Him exactly as you are, and not to cherish the vain thought that, by a little waiting, or working, or praying, you can make yourself fit, or persuade Him to make you fit.

"But I am not satisfied with my faith," you say. No truly. Nor are you ever likely to be so. At least I should hope not. If you wait for this before you take peace, you will wait till life is done. It would appear that you want to believe in your own faith, in order to obtain rest to your soul. The Bible does not say, "Being satisfied about our faith, we have peace with God," but "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God;" and between these two things there is a wonderful difference. Satisfaction with Jesus and his work, not satisfaction with

your own faith, is what God expects of you. "I am satisfied with Christ," you say. Are you? Then you are a believing man; and what more do you wish? Is not satisfaction with Christ enough for you or for any sinner? Nay, and is not this the truest kind of faith? To be satisfied with Christ, is faith in Christ. To be satisfied with his blood, is faith in his blood. Do not bewilder yourself, or allow others to bewilder you. Be assured that the very essence of faith is being satisfied with Christ and his sinbearing work; ask no more questions about faith, but go upon your way rejoicing, as one to whom Christ is all.

Remember, the Baptist's words, "He must increase, but I must decrease." Self, in every form, must decrease, and Christ must increase. To become satisfied with your faith would look as if you were dissatisfied with Christ. The beginning, the middle, and end of your course must be dissatisfaction with self, and satisfaction with Christ. Be content to be satisfied with faith's glorious object, and let faith itself be forgotten. Faith, however perfect, has nothing to give you. It points you to Jesus. It bids you look away from itself to Him. It bids you look away from itself to Him. It says, "Christ is all." It bids you look to him who says, "Look upon me;" who says, "Fear not, I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore."

If you were required to believe in your own faith, to ascertain its quality, and to know that you are born again before you were warranted to trust in Jesus, or to have peace, you would certainly need to be satisfied with your own faith. But you are not required to make good any personal claim, save that you are a sinner; not that you feel yourself to be one, (that would open up an endless metaphysical inquiry into your own feelings,) but simply that you are one. This you know upon God's authority, and learn from his word;

and on this you act whether you feel your sinfulness or not. The gospel needs no ascertaining of anything about ourselves, save what is written in the Bible, and what is common to all Adam's children, - that we need a Saviour. It is upon this need that faith acts; it is this need that faith presents at the throne of grace. The question, then, is not, Am I satisfied with my faith? but, Am I a needy sinner, and am I satisfied that in Christ there is all I need?

You say, "I am not satisfied with my love." What! Did you expect to be so? Is it your love to Christ, or his love to you, that is to bring you peace? God's free love to sinners, as such, is our resting place. There are two kinds of love in God, - his love of compassion to the unbelieving sinner, and his love of delight and complacency to his believing children. A father's love to a prodigal child is quite as sincere as his love to his obedient, loving child at home, though it be a different kind. God cannot love you as a believer till you are such. But he loves you as a poor sinner. And it is this love of his to the unloving and unlovable that affords the sinner his first resting place. This free love of God satisfies and attracts him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us." "We love him because he first loved us." "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son."

"I am not satisfied with my repentance," you say. It is well. What should you have thought of yourself had you been so? What pride and self-righteousness would it indicate, were you saying, "I am satisfied with my repentance, - it is of the proper quality and amount." If satisfied with it, what would you do with it? Would you ground your peace upon it? Would you pacify your conscience with it? Would you go with it instead of the blood to a holy God? If not, what do you mean by the desire to be satisfied with your repentance before having peace with God?

In short, you are not satisfied with any of your religious feelings; and it is well that you are not; for, if you were, you must have a very high idea of yourself, and a very low idea of what both law and gospel expect of you. You are, I doubt not, right in not being satisfied with the state of your feelings; but what has this to do with the great duty of immediately believing on the Son of God? If the gospel is nothing to you till you have got your feelings all set right, it is no gospel for the sinner at all. But this is its special fitness and glory, that it takes you up at the very point where you are at this moment, and brings you glad tidings in spite of your feelings being altogether wrong.

All these difficulties of yours have their root in the self esteem of our natures, which makes us refuse to be counted altogether sinners, and which shrinks from going to God save with some personal recommendation to make acceptance likely. Utter want of goodness is what we are slow to acknowledge. Give up these attempts to be satisfied with yourself in anything, great or small, faith, feeling, or action. The Holy Spirit's work in convincing you of sin, is to make you dissatisfied with yourself; and will you pursue a course which can only grieve him away? God can never be satisfied with you on account of any goodness about you; and why should you attempt to be satisfied with anything which will not satisfy him? There is but one thing with which he is entirely satisfied, - the person and work of his only begotten Son. It is with Him that he wants you to be satisfied, not with yourself. How much better would it be to take God's way at once, and be satisfied with Christ? Then would pardon and peace be given without delay. Then would the favor of God rest upon you. For God has declared, that whoever is satisfied with Christ shall find favor with him. His desire is that you should come to be as one with him in this great thing. He asks nothing of you, save this. But with nothing else than this will he be content, nor will he receive

you on any other footing, save that of one who has come to be satisfied with Christ, and with what Christ has done.

Surely all this is simple enough. Does it exactly meet your case. Satisfaction with yourself, even could you get it, would do nothing for you. Satisfaction with Christ would do everything; for Christ is ALL. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Be pleased with him in whom the Father is pleased, and all is well.

I suspect that some of those difficulties of yours arise from the secret idea that the gospel is just a sort of modified law, by keeping which you are to be saved. You know that the old law is far above your reach, and that it condemns, but cannot save you. But you think, perhaps, that Christ came to make the law easier, to lower its demands, to make it (as some say) an evangelical law, with milder terms, suited to the sinner's weakness. That this is blasphemy, a moment's thought will show you. For it means that the former law was too strict; that is, it was not holy, and just, and good. It denies also Christ's words, that he came not to destroy but to fulfill the law. God has but one law, and it is perfect; its substance is love to God and man. A milder law must mean an imperfect one; a law that makes God's one law unnecessary; a law that gives countenance to sin. Will obedience to an imperfect law save the breaker of the perfect law? But faith does not make void the law; it establishes it.

It is by a perfect law that we are saved; else it would be an unholy salvation. It is by a perfect law, fulfilled in every "jot and tittle," that we are saved; else it would be an unrighteous salvation. The Son of God has kept the law for us; he has magnified it and made it honorable; and thus we have a holy and righteous salvation. Though above law in himself, he was made under the law for us; and by the vicarious law keeping of his spotless life, as well as by endurance



unto death of that law's awful penalties, we are redeemed from the curse of the law. "Christ is the end (the fulfilling and exhausting) of the law, for righteousness to every one that believeth." FOR CHRIST IS NOT A HELPER, BUT A SAVIOUR. He has not come to enable us to save ourselves, by keeping a mitigated law; but to keep the unmitigated law in our room, that the law might have no claim for penalty, upon any sinner who will only consent to be indebted to the law keeping and law enduring of the divine Surety.

Others of your difficulties spring from confounding the work of the Spirit in us with the work of Christ for us. These two must be kept distinct; for the intermingling of them is the subversion of both. Beware of overlooking either; beware of keeping them at a distance from each other. Though quite distinct, they go hand in hand, inseparably linked together, yet each having its own place and its own office. Your medicine and your physician are not the same, yet they go together. Christ is your medicine, the Spirit is your physician. Do not take the two works as if they were one compounded work; nor try to build your peace upon some mystic gospel which is made up of a strange mixture of the two. Realize both, the outward and the inward; the objective and the subjective; Christ for us, and the Holy Spirit in us.

As at the first, so to the last, must this distinctiveness be observed, lest, having found peace in believing, you lose it by not holding the beginning of your confidence steadfast unto the end. "When I begin to doubt," writes one, "I quiet my doubts by going back to the place where I got them first quieted; I go and get peace again where I got it at the beginning; I do not sit down gloomily to mope over my own faith or unbelief, but over the finished work of Immanuel; I don't try to reckon up my experiences, to prove that I once was a believer, but I believe again as I did before; I don't examine the evidence of the

Spirit's work in me, but I think of the sure evidences which I have of Christ's work for me, in his death, and burial, and resurrection. This is the restoration of my peace. I had begun to look at other objects; I am now recalled from my wanderings to look at Jesus only."

Some of your difficulties seem to arise from a mixing up of the natural and the supernatural. Now the marvelous thing in conversion is, that while all is supernatural (being the entire work of the Holy Ghost), all is also natural. You are, perhaps unconsciously, expecting some miraculous illapse of heavenly power and brightness into your soul; something apart from divine truth, and from the working of man's powers of mind. You have been expecting faith to descend, like an angel from heaven, into our soul, and hope to be lighted up like a new star in your firmament. It is not so. Whilst the Spirit's work is beyond nature, it is not against nature. He displaces no faculty; he disturbs no mental process; he does violence to no part of our moral framework; he creates no new organ of thought or feeling. His office is to set all to rights within you; so that you never feel so calm, so true, so real, so perfectly natural, so much yourself, - as when He has taken possession of you in every part; and filled your whole man with his heavenly joy. Never do you feel so perfectly free, - less constrained and less mechanical, - in every faculty, as when he has "brought every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." The heavenly life imparted is liberty, and truth, and peace; it is the removal of bondage, and pain. So far from being a mechanical constraint, as some would represent, it is the removal of the iron chain with which guilt had bound the sinner. It acts like an army of liberation to a down-trodden country; like the warm breath of spring to the frost-fettered tree. For the entrance of true life, or living truth, into man's soul, must be liberty, not bondage. "The truth shall make you FREE."

Other difficulties arise out of confused ideas as to the proper order of truth. Misplaced truth is sometimes more injurious than actual error. In our statements of doctrine, we are to have regard to God's order of things, as well as to the things themselves. If you would solve the simplest question in arithmetic, the figures must not only be the proper ones, but they must be placed in proper order. So is it with the doctrines of the word of God. Some seem to fling them about in ill-assorted couples, or confused bundles, as if it mattered little to the hearer or reader what order was preserved, provided only certain truths were distinctly announced. Much trouble to the anxious spirit has arisen from this reckless confusion. A gospel in which election is placed first is not the gospel of the apostles; though certainly a gospel in which election is denied is still less the apostolic gospel. The true gospel is neither that Christ died for the elect, nor that he died for the whole world; for the excellency of the gospel does not lie in its announcement of the numbers to be saved, but in its proclamation of the great propitiation itself. Some who are supposed to be holding fast the form of sound words present us with a mere dislocation of the gospel, the different truths being so jumbled, that while they may be all there, they produce no result. They rather so neutralize each other as to prevent the sinner extracting from them the good news which, when rightly put together, they most assuredly contain. If the verses or chapters of the Epistle to the Romans were transposed or jumbled together, would it be the Epistle to the Romans, though every word were there? So, if, in teaching the gospel, we do not begin at the beginning; if, for instance, we tell the sinner what he has to do, before we tell him what God has done; if we tell him to examine his own heart before we tell him to study the cross of Christ; we take out the whole gladness from the glad tidings, and preach another gospel.

Do we not often, too, read the Bible as if it were a book of law, and not the revelation of grace? In so doing, we draw a cloud over it, and

read it as a volume written by a hard master. So that a harsh tone is imparted in its words, and the legal element is made to obscure the evangelical. We are slow to read it as the expansion of the first gracious promise to man; as a revelation of the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; as the book of grace, specially written for us by the Spirit of grace. The law is in it, yet the Bible is not law, but gospel. As Mount Sinai rears its head, an isolated mass of hard, red granite, amid a thousand desert mountains of softer and less stern material, so does the law stand in the Bible; - a necessary part of it, - but not the characteristic of it; added because of transgressions till the seed should come. Yet have not our suspicious hearts darkened this book of light? Do we not often read it as the proclamation of a command to do, instead of a declaration of what the love of God has done?

Oh, strange! We believe in Satan's willingness to tempt and injure; but not in God's willingness to deliver and to save! Nay, more, we yield to our great enemy when he seduces into sin, and leads away from Christ and heaven; but we will not yield to our truest friend, when he draws us with the cords of a man, and with bands of love! We will not give God the credit for speaking truly when he speaks in tender mercy, and utters over the sinner the yearnings of his unfathomable pity. We listen, as if his words were hollow; as if he did not mean what he says; as if his messages of grace, instead of being the most thoroughly sincere that ever fell on human ears, were mere words of course.

There is nothing in the whole Bible to repel the sinner, and yet the sinner will not come! There is everything to draw and to win; yet the sinner stands aloof! Christ receiveth sinners; yet the sinner turns away! He yearns over them, weeps over them, as over Jerusalem; yet the sinner is unmoved! The heavenly compassion is unavailing; the

infinite long-suffering touches not the stony heart, and the divine tears are thrown away. The Son of God stretches out his hands all the day long, but the outstretched hands are disregarded. All, all seems in vain to arrest the heedless, and to win back the wanderer.

Oh, the amount of divine love that has been expended upon this sad world, - that has been brought to bear upon the needy sons of men! We sometimes almost doubt whether it be true or possible, that God should lavish such a love on such a world. But the cross is the blessed memorial of the love, and that saying stands unchangeable: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." Sometimes, too, we say, What is the use of throwing away such love? Is not the earnestness of God disproportioned to the littleness of its object, - man? It would be so were this life all; were there no eternity, no heaven, no hell, no endless gladness, and no everlasting woe. But with such a destiny as man's; with an eternity like that which is in store for him, - can any amount of earnestness be too great? Can love or pity exceed their bounds? Can the joy or grief over a sinner saved or lost be exaggerated?

He, whose infinite mind knows what heaven is, knows what its loss must be to an immortal being. Can He be too much in earnest about its gain? He whose all-reaching foresight knows what hell is, in all its never-ending anguish, sees afar off, and fathoms the horrors of the lost soul, its weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth for ever; its horrible sense of condemnation and immitigable woe; its cutting remorse, its too late repentance, its hopeless sighs, its bitter memories of earth's sunny hours; with all the thousand sadnesses that go to make up the sum total of a lost eternity! Can he, then, pity too much? Can he yearn too tenderly over souls that are madly bent on flinging themselves into a doom like this? Can he use words too strong, or too affectionate, in warning them against such a darkness,

and such a devil, and such a hell? Can he put forth words too affectionate in beseeching them to make sure of such a heaven as his?

In the minds of some, the idea prevails, that sin quenches pity for the sinner, in the heart of God.

It is not so. That it shall do so hereafter, and that God will cease to pity the lost, is an awful truth. The lost soul's eternity will be an unpitied eternity of woe.

But, meanwhile, God's hatred of the sin is not hatred of the sinner. Nay, the greatness of his sin seems rather to deepen than to lessen the divine compassion. At least we may say that the increasing misery which increasing sin entails calls into new intensity the paternal pity of the God of the spirits of all flesh. "It grieves him at his heart." The farther the prodigal goes into the far country, the more do the yearnings of the father's heart go out after him in unfeigned compassion for the wretched wanderer, in his famine, and nakedness, and degradation, and hopeless grief.

No; sin does not quench the pitying love of God. The kindest words ever spoken to Israel were in the very height of their apostasy and rebellion. The most gracious invitation ever uttered by the Lord was to Capernaum, and Bethsaida, and Chorazin, "Come unto me." The most loving message ever sent to a Church was that to Laodicea, the worst of all the seven, "Behold I stand at the door and knock." It was Jerusalem, in her utmost extremity of guilt, and rebellion, and unbelief, that drew forth the tears of the Son of God. No; sin does not extinguish the love of God to the sinner. Many waters cannot quench it, nor can the floods drown it. From first to last, God pursues the sinner as he flies from him; pursues him not in hatred, but in love; pursues him not to destroy, but to pardon and to save.

God is not a man that he should lie. He means what he says, when he speaks in pity, as truly as when he speaks in wrath. His words are not mere random expressions, such as man often uses when uttering vague sentiment, or trying to produce an impression by exaggerated representations of his feelings. God's words are all true and real. You cannot exaggerate the genuine feeling which they contain; and to understand them as figures, is not only to convert them into unrealities, but to treat them as falsehoods. Let sinners take God's words as they are; the genuine expressions of the mind of that infinitely truthful Being, who never uses but the words of truth and soberness. He is sovereign; but that sovereignty is not at war with grace; nor does it lead to insincerity of speech, as some seem to think it does. Whether we can reconcile the sovereignty with the pity, it matters not. Let us believe them both, because both are revealed in the Bible. Nor let us ever resort to an explanation of the words of pity, which would imply that they were not sincerely spoken; and that if a sinner took them too literally and too simply, he would be sorely disappointed; - finding them at last mere exaggerations, if not empty air.

Oh, let us learn to treat God as not merely the wisest, and the highest, and the holiest, but as the most truthful of all beings. Let the heedless sinner hear his truthful warnings, and tremble; for they shall all be fulfilled. Let the anxious sinner listen to his truthful words of grace, and be at peace. We need to be told this. For there is in the minds of many, a feeling of sad distrust as to the sincerity of the divine utterances, and a proneness to evade their plain and honest meaning. Let us do justice, not merely to the love, but to the truthfulness, of God. There are many who need to be reminded of this; - yes, many, who do not seem to be at all aware of their propensity to doubt even the simple truthfulness of the God of truth.

God is love. Yes, God is love. Can such a God be suspected of insincerity in the declarations of his long-suffering, yearning compassion toward the most rebellious and impenitent of the sons of men? That there is such a thing as righteousness; that there is such a place as hell; that there are such beings as lost angels and lost men, we know to be awful certainties. But, however terrible and however true these things may be, they cannot cast the slightest doubt upon the sincerity of the great oath which God has sworn before heaven and earth, that he has "no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live;" nor in the least blunt the solemn edge of his gracious entreaty, "TURN YE, TURN YE, FOR WHY WILL YE DIE?"

# **The Everlasting Righteousness**

**by Horatius Bonar**

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### **Preface**

The awakened conscience of the sixteenth century betook itself to "the righteousness of God." There it found refuge, at once from condemnation and from impurity. Only by "righteousness" could it be pacified; and nothing less than that which is divine could meet the case. At the cross this "righteousness" was found; human, yet divine: provided for man, and presented to him by God, for relief of conscience and justification of life. On the one word tetelestai "It is finished," as on a heavenly resting-place, weary souls sat down and were refreshed. The voice from the tree did not summon them to do, but to be satisfied with what was done. Millions of bruised consciences there found healing and peace.

The belief of that finished work brought the sinner into favour with God; nor did it leave him in uncertainty as to this. The justifying work of Calvary was God's way, not only of bringing pardon, but of

securing certainty. It was the only perfect thing which had ever been presented to God in man's behalf; and so peculiar was this perfection, that it might be used by man in his transactions with God, as if it were his own.

The knowledge of this sure justification was life from the dead to multitudes. All over Europe, from the Apennines to the Grampians, from the Pyrenees to the Carpathians, went the glad tidings that man is justified freely, and that God wishes him to know he is justified. It was not merely a new thought for man's intellect, but a new discovery for his soul, (1) As to the true source of spiritual health, viz. the setting of man's conscience right with God; (2) As to the continuation of that health, viz. the keeping of the conscience right. The fruit of this was not merely a healthy personal religion, but a renovated intellect and a noble literature, and, above all, a pure worship. It was an era of resurrection. The graves were opened; and the congregation of the dead became the church of the living. Christendom awoke and arose. The resurrection-dew fell far and wide; nor has it yet ceased to fall.

For ages Christianity had grovelled in the dust, smothered with semi-pagan rites; ready to die, if not already dead; bound hand and foot by a semi-idolatrous priesthood, unable to do aught for a world which it had been sent to regenerate. Now "it was lifted up from the earth, and made to stand upon its feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it."

A new conscience was born; and with a new conscience came in new life and power. Nothing had been seen like this since the age of apostles.

The doctrine of another's righteousness reckoned to us for justification before God is one of the links that knot together the first

and the sixteenth centuries, the Apostles and the Reformers. The creeds of the Reformation overleap fifteen centuries, and land us at once in the Epistle to the Romans. Judicial and moral cleansing was what man needed; and in that epistle we have both the imputed and imparted righteousness; the former the root or foundation of the latter. Not the one without the other; both together, inseparable; but each in its own order.

It was not Luther merely who took up the old watchword, "The just shall live by faith," and thus found the answer of a good conscience toward God. To thousands of hearts it came like a voice from heaven, they knew not how. Sunshine from above had fallen upon one grand text; the text which the age needed: men recognized the truth thus supernaturally lighted up. "The nations came to its light, and kings to the brightness of its rising." The inquiring men of that age, though not borrowing from each other, betook themselves to this truth and text. From every kingdom of Europe came the same voice; and every Protestant Confession bore witness to the unanimity of awakened Christendom. The long-needed, long-missing truth had been found; and eureka was the cry of gladness were heard announcing its discovery.

Our fathers saw that this truth was the basis of all real spiritual life. That which was superficial, and morbid, and puny, and second-rate, might do with some less deep, less broad foundation; but all that is healthy, and noble, and daring, and happy, and successful in religion must rest here. "The just shall live by faith."

Religion is fashionable in our age. But is it that which sprang up, after centuries of darkness, among our fathers in Europe? Is it that of apostles and prophets? Is it the calm yet thorough religion which did such great deeds in other days? Has it gone deep into the conscience?

Has it filled the heart? Has it pervaded the man? Or has it left the conscience unpacified, the heart unfilled, the man unchanged, save with some external appliances of religiousness, which leaves him hollow as before? There is at this moment many an aching spirit, bitterly conscious of this hollowness. The doctrine, the profession, the good report of others, the bustle of work, will not fill the soul. God Himself must be there, with His covering righteousness, His cleansing blood, His quickening Spirit. Without this, religion is but a shell: holy services are dull and irksome. Joy in God, which is the soul and essence of worship, is unknown. Sacraments, prayer-meetings, religious services, labours of charity, will not make up for the living God.

How much of unreality there may be in the religious life of our age, it is for each individual to determine for himself, that he may not be deceived nor lose his reward.[\(1\)](#)

All unreality is weakness as well as irksomeness; and the sooner that we are stripped of unreality the better, both for peace and for usefulness.

Men with their feet firmly set on Luther's rock, "the righteousness of God," filled with the Spirit, and pervaded with the peace of God, do the great things in the church; others do the little.

The men of robust spiritual health are they who, like Luther, have made sure of their filial relationship to God. They shrink from no battle, nor succumb to any toil. The men who go to work with an unascertained relationship give way in the warfare, and faint under the labour: their life is not perhaps a failure or defeat; but it is not a victory, it is not a triumph.

"We do not war after the flesh," and "our weapons are not carnal" (2 Cor 10:3,4). Our battle is not fought in the way that the old man would have us to fight it. It is "the fight of faith" (1 Tim 6:12). It is not by doubting but by believing that we are saved; it is not by doubting but by believing that we overcome. Faith leads us first of all to Abel's "more excellent sacrifice" (Heb 11:4). By faith we quit Ur and Egypt and Babylon, setting our face to the eternal city (Heb 11:16). By faith we offer up our Isaacs, and worship "leaning on the top of our staffs," and "give commandment concerning our bones." By faith we choose affliction with the people of God, and despise Egypt's treasures. By faith we keep our passover; pass through the Red Sea; overthrow Jerichos; subdue kingdoms; work righteousness; stop the mouth of lions; quench the violence of fire; turn to flight the armies of the aliens, and refuse deliverance in the day of trial, that we may obtain a better resurrection (Heb 11:35).

It is "believing" from first to last. We begin, we go on, we end in faith. The faith that justifies is the faith that overcomes (1 John 5:4). By faith we obtain the "good report" both with God and man. By faith we receive forgiveness; by faith we live; by faith we work, and endure, and suffer; by faith we win the crown,-a crown of righteousness, which shall be ours in the day of the appearing of Him who is OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

THE GRANGE, EDINBURGH,  
November, 1872.

(1) One who knows the "religious world" well, and passed through its hollowness, thus writes: "It is just two years since He came in a way as certainly miraculous as ever He spake with a voice to Paul or any other, and ran His plough through my heart, breaking up and tearing into shreds my old 'Christian' and 'professor' life, showing me death,

death amidst all, and leading me, though with terrible struggles and opposition from the old heart and its pride, into something like a knowledge of Himself, the living personal Jesus; though, alas, how feeble, how dark, how slow, has been the progress!

Before that, I was in a condition in which I verily believe (though it may seem unkind and morbid to say so) the great part of the professing church is at the present day, ministers as well as people. I know the kind of intercourse I had with many who pass for as good Christians as are to be found; and I know this, that very many who could talk hotly about doctrine, who would laugh and make merry, smile at my foolish jesting, showed no inclination whatever to join in speaking of the personal living Lord Himself, after He came by His strong arm of power, and made me wish more to speak of Him. (cont.)

I think it is well that you should be told such things. Cry aloud, spare not; show to the house of Israel their sins. There is far too much assuming even on the part of the faithful ones, that many of their flock are only in a low state, and that the mere calling them to go out of the world is enough. No. While there may be an isolated case of this sort, I believe that where worldliness and inconsistency are so widespread as they are, where so many are known only by profession, and by no other single mark or fruit of the Lord's people, it tells of something worse. The ploughshare must be sent deeper. It must bring up earth which has not yet been searched.

A great number are awakened and interested in youth, who by and by find a sort of peace, through some kind of wrong preaching or daubing with untempered mortar, along with the blindness of their own heart. Such peace is not founded on personal contact with the living One; and when business, or advancing years, or worldly

entanglements come in, their vessel will not hold in. What have they to fall back upon? They do not like to abandon their profession; nay, there hangs about them a sort of spurious and galvanic life, which blinds them. But they know not the Lord of life. The good Lord help you to deal with such souls; and may He anoint you afresh, and give you His own wisdom and discernment to speak so as to draw souls, and call them to new life in the Lord."

## **Chapter 1**

### **How Shall Man Be Just with God?**

#### **God's Answer to Man's Question**

How may I, a sinner, draw near to Him in whom there is no sin, and look upon His face in peace?

This is the great question which, at some time or other, every one of us has asked. This is one of the awful problems which man in all ages has been attempting to solve. There is no evading it: he must face it.

That man's answers to this question should have been altogether wide of the mark, is only what might have been expected; for he does not really understand the import of the question which he, with much earnestness perhaps, is putting, nor discern the malignant character of that evil which he yet feels to be a barrier between him and God.

That man's many elaborate solutions of the problem which has perplexed the race since evil entered should have been unsatisfactory, is not wonderful, seeing his ideas of human guilt are so superficial; his thoughts of himself so high; his views of God so low.

But that, when God has interposed, as an interpreter, to answer the question and to solve the problem, man should be so slow to accept the divine solution as given in the word of God, betrays an amount of unteachableness and self-will which is difficult to comprehend. The preference which man has always shown for his own theories upon this point is unaccountable, save upon the supposition that he has but a poor discernment of the evil forces with which he professes to battle; a faint knowledge of the spiritual havoc which has been wrought in himself; a very vague perception of what law and righteousness are; a sorrowful ignorance of that Divine Being with whom, as lawgiver and judge, he knows that he has to do; and a low appreciation of eternal holiness and truth.

Man has always treated sin as a misfortune, not a crime; as disease, not guilt; as a case for the physician, not for the judge. Herein lies the essential faultiness of all mere human religions or theologies. They fail to acknowledge the judicial aspect of the question, as that on which the real answer must hinge; and to recognise the guilt or criminality of the evil-doer as that which must first be dealt with before any real answer, or approximation to an answer, can be given. God is a Father; but He is no less a Judge. Shall the Judge give way to the Father, or the Father give way to the Judge?

God loves the sinner; but He hates the sin. Shall He sink His love to the sinner in His hatred of the sin, or His hatred of the sin in His love to the sinner?



God has sworn that He has no pleasure in the death of a sinner (Eze 33:11); yet He has also sworn that the soul that sinneth, it shall die (Eze 18:4). Which of the two oaths shall be kept? Shall the one give way to the other? Can both be kept inviolate? Can a contradiction, apparently so direct, be reconciled? Which is the more unchangeable and irreversible, the vow of pity or the oath of justice?

Law and love must be reconciled, else the great question as to a sinner's intercourse with the Holy One must remain unanswered. The one cannot give way to the other. Both must stand, else the pillars of the universe will be shaken.

The reconciliation man has often tried; for he has always had a glimpse of the difficulty. But he has failed; for his endeavors have always been in the direction of making law succumb to love.

The reconciliation God has accomplished; and, in the accomplishment, both law and love have triumphed. The one has not given way to the other. Each has kept its ground; nay, each has come from the conflict honored and glorified. Never has there been love like this love of God; so large, so lofty, so intense, so self-sacrificing. Never has law been so pure, so broad, so glorious, so inexorable.

There has been no compromise. Law and love have both had their full scope. Not one jot or tittle has been surrendered by either. They have been satisfied to the full; the one in all its severity, the other in all its tenderness. Love has never been more truly love, and law has never been more truly law, than in this conjunction of the two. It has been reconciliation, without compromise. God's honour has been maintained, yet man's interests have not been sacrificed. God has done it all; and He has done it effectually and irreversibly.

Man could not have done it, even though he could have devised it. But truly he could do neither. God only could have devised and done it.

He has done it by removing the whole case into His own courts of law, that it might be settled there on a righteous basis. Man could not have gone into court with the case, save in the certainty that he would lose it. God comes into court, bringing man and man's whole case along with Him, that upon righteous principles, and in a legal way, the case may be settled, at once in favour of man and in favour of God. It is this judicial settlement of the case that is God's one and final answer to man's long unanswered question, "How shall man be just with God?" "Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God?" (Micah 6:6).

God provides the basis of the reconciliation; a basis which demonstrates that there is no compromise between law and love, but the full expression of both; a basis which establishes both the authority and the paternity of Jehovah, as Lawgiver and Father; a basis which reveals in infinite awfulness the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the spotless purity of the statute, the unbending character of God's governmental ordinances; and which yet secures, in and by law, the righteous overflow of His boundless love to the lost sons of Adam.

This basis of reconciliation between law and love God has Himself not only provided, but brought into His own courts of law; proposing to the sinner that all the questions between Himself and the sinner should be settled on this basis, -so equitable, so friendly, so secure; and settled in judicial form, by a legal process, in which verdict is given in favour of the accused, and he is clean absolved, -"justified

from all things."

The consent of parties to the acceptance of this basis is required in court. The law consents; the Lawgiver consents; Father, Son, and Spirit consent; and man, the chief party interested, is asked for his consent. If he consents, the whole matter is settled. The verdict is issued in his favour; and henceforth he can triumph, and say, "It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?"

Sin is too great an evil for man to meddle with. His attempts to remove it do but increase it, and his endeavours to approach God in spite of it aggravate his guilt. Only God can deal with sin, either as a disease or a crime; as a dishonour to Himself, or as a hinderer of man's approach to Himself. He deals with it not in some arbitrary or summary way, by a mere exercise of will or power, but by bringing it for adjudication into His own courts of law. As judge, seated on His tribunal, He settles the case, and settles it in favour of the sinner, -of any sinner on the earth that will consent to the basis which He proposes. Into this court each one may freely come, on the footing of a sinner needing the adjustment of the great question between him and God. That adjustment is no matter of uncertainty or difficulty; it will at once be granted to each applicant; and the guilty man with his case, however bad, thus legally settled, retires from court with his burden removed and his fears dispelled, assured that he can never again be summoned to answer for his guilt. It is righteousness that has reconciled God to him, and him to God.

As sin is too great an evil for any but God to deal with, so is righteousness too high for man to reach; too high for any but God to bring down and place at our disposal. God has brought down, and brought nigh, the righteousness. Thus the guilt which we have contracted is met by the righteousness which God has provided; and

the exclusion from the divine fellowship, which the guilt produced, is more than reversed by the new introduction which the righteousness places at our disposal.

May I then draw near to God, and not die? May I draw near, and live? May I come to Him who hateth sin, and yet find that the sin which He hateth is no barrier to my coming, no reason for my being shut out from His presence as an unclean thing? May I renew my lost fellowship with Him who made me, and made me for Himself? May I worship in His holy place, with safety to myself, and without dishonour to Him?

These are the questions with which God has dealt, and dealt with so as to ensure a blessed answer to them all; an answer which will satisfy our own troubled consciences as well as the holy law of God. His answer is final and it is effectual. He will give no other; nor will He deal with these questions in any other way than He has done. He has introduced them into His courts of law, that there they may be finally adjusted; and out of these courts into which God has taken them who can withdraw them? Or what end would be served by such a withdrawal on our part? Would it make the settlement more easy, more pleasant, more sure? It would not. It would augment the uncertainty, and make the perplexity absolutely hopeless.

Yet the tendency of modern thought and modern theology is to refuse the judicial settlement of these questions, and to withdraw them from the courts into which God has introduced them. An extrajudicial adjustment is attempted; man declining to admit such a guilt as would bring him within the grasp of law, and refusing to acknowledge sin to be of such a nature as to require a criminal process in solemn court; yet admitting the necessity or desirableness of the removal of the sore evil under which humanity is felt to be

labouring, and under which, if unremoved, it must ere long dissolve.

The history of six thousand years of evil has been lost on man. He refuses to read its awful lesson regarding sin, and God's displeasure against the sinner, which that history records. The flood of evil that has issued forth from one single sin he has forgotten. The death, the darkness, the sorrow, the sickness, the tears, the weariness, the madness, the confusion, the bloodshed, the furious hatred between man and man, making earth a suburb of hell,-all this is overlooked or misread; and man repels the thought that sin is crime, which God hates with an infinite hate, and which He, in His righteousness, must condemn and avenge.

If sin is such a surface thing, a trifle, as men deem it, what is the significance of this long sad story? Do earth's ten thousand graveyards, where human love lies buried, tell no darker tale? Do the millions upon millions of broken hearts and heavy eyes say that sin is but a trifle? Does the moaning of the hospital or the carnage of the battlefield, the blood-stained sword, and the death-dealing artillery, proclaim that sin is a mere casualty, and the human heart the seat of goodness after all? Does the earthquake, the volcano, the hurricane, the tempest, speak nothing of sin's desperate evil? Does man's aching head, and empty heart, and burdened spirit, and shaded brow, and weary brain, and tottering limbs, not utter, in a voice articulate beyond mistake, that sin is GUILT, that that guilt must be punished,-punished by the Judge of all,-not as a mere "violation of natural laws," but as a breach of the eternal law, which admits of no reversal, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die"? For without law, sin is nothing. "The strength of sin is the law" (1 Cor 15:56); and he who makes light of sin must defend moral confusion and injustice; he who refuses to recognize sin as guilt, must dissolve the law of the universe, or ascribe imbecility and injustice to the Judge of all.

The world has grown old in sin, and has now more than ever begun to trifle with it, either as a necessity which cannot be cured, or a partial aberration from good order which will rectify itself ere long. It is this tampering with evil, this refusal to see sin as God sees it, as the law declares it, and as the story of our race has revealed it, that has in all ages been the root of error, and of wide departure from the faith once delivered to the saints. Admit the evil of sin, with all its eternal consequences, and you are shut up to a divine way of dealing with it. Deny the evil of sin, and the future results of that evil, and you may deny the whole revelation of God, set aside the cross, and abrogate the law.

"By the law is the knowledge of sin." Therefore the connection between sin and law must be maintained, both in condemnation and in pardon. God's interposition in behalf of man must be a confirmation, not a relaxation of the law; for law cannot change, even as God cannot change or deny Himself.

Favor to the sinner must also be favor to the law. Favor to the sinner which would simply establish law, or leave its sanctities untouched, would be much; but favor to him which would deepen its foundations, and render it more venerable, more awful than before, is unspeakably higher and surer. Even so has it been. Law has not suffered at the hands of love, nor love been cramped and frozen by law. Both have had full scope, fuller scope than if man had never fallen.

I know that love is not law, and that law is not love. In law, properly, no love inheres. It is like the balance which knows not whether it be gold or iron that is laid upon it. Yet in that combination of the judicial and the paternal, which God's way of salvation exhibits, law has become the source and vehicle of love, and love law's upholder

and honourer; so that even in this sense and aspect "love is the fulfilling of the law."[\(1\)](#)

The law that was against the sinner has come to be upon the sinner's side. It is now ready to take his part in the great controversy between him and God, provided he will conduct his case on the new principles which God has introduced for the settlement of all variances between Himself and the sinner; or rather, provided he will put that case into the hands of the divine Advocate, who alone knows how to conduct it aright, and to bring it to a successful issue,--who is both "propitiation" and "Advocate,"--the "propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:2), "the Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

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(1)"of law there can be no less acknowledged than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world; all things in heaven do her homage, the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempted from her power; both angels and men, and creatures of what condition soever, though each in different sort and manner, yet all, with uniform consent, admiring her as the mother of their peace and joy." --Hooker, Eccl Pol. B. 1 sec 16.

## **Chapter 2**

### **God's Recognition of Substitution**

The mere bringing the question into the courts of law would have availed nothing, had there not been provision made for so ordering their processes and judgments that the sinner might be righteously

acquitted; that God might be 'just and the justifier' (Rom 3:26), "a just God and a Saviour" (Isa 45:21); that law might be brought to be upon the sinner's side; his absolver, and not his condemner.

This provision has been made by means of substitution, or transference of the penalty from him who had incurred it to One who had not.

In human courts, no such provision can be allowed, save in regard to the payment of debt. In that case there is no difficulty as to the exchange of person and of property. If the creditor receives his money from a third party, he is satisfied, and the law is satisfied, though the debtor himself has not paid one farthing. To a certain extent, this is substitution; so that the idea of such a thing is not unknown in common life, and the principle of it not unacknowledged by human law.

But beyond this the law of man does not go. Substitution in any wider aspect is something about which man has never attempted to legislate. Stripe for stripe is human law; "by His stripes we are healed" is superhuman, the result of a legislation as gracious as it is divine.

Substitution is not for man to deal with: its principle he but imperfectly understands; its details he cannot reach. They are far too intricate, too far-reaching, and too mysterious for him to grasp, or, having grasped, to found any system of legislation upon them. In this, even though willing, he must ever be helpless.

But God has affirmed substitution as the principle on which He means to deal with fallen man; and the arrangements of His holy tribunal, His righteous governmental processes, are such as to bring



this effectually and continually into play. It is through substitution that His righteous government displays its perfection in all its transactions with the sinner.

God has introduced the principle of substitution into His courts. There He sits as judge, "just and justifying"; acting on the principle of transference or representation; maintaining law, and yet manifesting grace: declaring that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23); that "by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom 3:20); yet presenting a divine Surety, as "a PROPITIATION through faith in His blood, to declare His RIGHTEOUSNESS for the remission of sins that are past" (Rom 3:25).

Salvation by substitution was embodied in the first promise regarding the woman's seed and His bruised heel. Victory over our great enemy, by His subjecting Himself to the bruising of that enemy, is then and there proclaimed. The clothing of our first parents with that which had passed through death, in preference to the fig-leaves which had not so done, showed the element of substitution as that on which God had begun to act in His treatment of fallen man. Abel's sacrifice revealed the same truth, especially as contrasted with Cain's. For that which made Abel's acceptable, and himself accepted, was the death of the victim as substituted for his own; and that which rendered Cain's hateful, and himself rejected, was the absence of that death and blood. The slain firstling was accepted by God as, symbolically, Abel's substitute, laid on the altar, till He should come, the "woman's seed," "made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal 4:4,5).

From the beginning God recognized this principle in His dealings

with man; the Just dying for the unjust; the blessed One becoming a curse that the cursed might be blessed. In all subsequent sacrifices it was the same. Noah's burnt-offering was like Abel's; and Abraham's resembled Noah's. Transference of guilt from one who could not bear the penalty without being eternally lost, to One who could bear it, and yet come forth from under it, free and glorious,-this was the deep truth into which God educated the patriarchs, as that which lay at the foundation of His procedure with the sinner. The consumption of Abraham's sacrifice by the divine fire told him that the divine displeasure which should have rested on him for ever, had fallen upon a substitute and been exhausted, so that there remained no more wrath, no darkness, "no condemnation" for him; nothing but deliverance and favor and everlasting blessedness.

But it was the arrangements of the tabernacle that brought out most fully this great principle of God's actings to the children of Adam.

In the passover-blood, the idea was chiefly that of protection from peril. The lamb stood sentinel at the door of each family; the blood was their "shield and buckler." There might be trembling hearts within, wondering perhaps how a little blood could be so efficacious, and make their dwelling so impregnable; disquieted, too, because they could not see the blood, but were obliged to be content with knowing that God saw it (Exo 12:13); yet no amount of fearfulness could alter the potency of that sprinkled blood, and no weakness of faith could make that God-given shield less efficacious against "the enemy and the avenger." The blood,-the symbol of substitution,-was on the lintel; and that was enough. They did not see it, nor feel it; but they knew that it was there, and that sufficed. God saw it, and that was better than their seeing it. They were safe; and they knew that they were so. They could feast upon the lamb in peace, and eat their bitter herbs with thankful joy. They could sing by anticipation the

Church's song, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

But still it was not in Egypt, but in the wilderness; not in their paschal chamber, but in the sanctuary of their God, that they were to learn the full and varied truth of pardon, and cleansing, and acceptance, and blessing through a substitute.

The old burnt-offering of the patriarchs, on the footing of which these fathers had in ages past drawn near to God, was split into many parts; and in the details of these we see the fulness and variety of the substitution.

The various sacrifices are well connected with the altar; and even that which was "burnt without the camp" was connected with the altar. It was no doubt carried forth without the camp, and burnt with fire (Lev 6:30, 16:27); but "the blood was brought into the tabernacle of the congregation, to reconcile withal in the holy place." "The blood of the bullock was brought in, to make atonement in the holy place." Their connection with the altar is sufficient of itself to show the truth of substitution contained in them, for the altar was the place of transference. But in each of them we find something which expresses this more directly and fully.

In the burnt-offering we see the perfection of the substitute presented in the room of our imperfection, in not loving God with our whole heart.

In the meat-offering we have the perfection of the substitute, as that on which, when laid upon the altar, God feeds, and on which He invites us to feed.

In the peace-offering we find the perfection of the substitute laid on

the same altar as an atonement, reconciling us to God; removing the distance and the enmity, and providing food for us out of that which had passed through death; for "He is our peace."

In the sin-offering we see the perfection of the substitute, whose blood is sprinkled on the altar, and whose body is burnt without, as securing pardon for unconscious sins,-sins of ignorance.

In the trespass-offering there is the same perfection of the substitute, in His atoning character, procuring forgiveness for conscious and willful sin.

In the drink-offering we have the perfection of the substitute poured out on the altar, as that by which God is refreshed, and by which we are also refreshed. "His blood is drink indeed."

In the incense we have the "sweet savor" of the substitute going up to God in our behalf, the cloud of fragrance from His life and death with which God is well pleased, enveloping us and making us fragrant with a fragrance not our own; absorbing all in us that is displeasing or hateful, and replacing it with a sweetness altogether perfect and divine.

In the fire we see the holy wrath of the Judge consuming the victim slain in the sinner's room. In the ashes we have the proof that the wrath had spent itself, that the penalty was paid, that the work was done. "It is finished," was the voice of the ashes on the altar.

In all this we see such things as the following: (1) God's displeasure against sin; (2) that displeasure exhausted in a righteous way; (3) the substitute presented and accepted; (4) the substitute slain and consumed; (5) the transference of the wrath from the sinner to his

representative; (6) God resting in His love over the sinner, and viewing him in the perfection of his substitute; (7) the sinner reconciled, accepted, complete, enjoying God's favour, and feeding at His table on that on which God had fed; on that which had come from the altar, and had passed through the fire.

Thus God's acceptance of this principle, in His preparation of acceptable worshippers for His sanctuary, shows the fitness and value of it, as well as the divine intention that it should be available for the sinner in his drawing near to God. In this way it is that God makes the sinner "perfect as pertaining to the conscience" (Heb 9:9), gives him "no more conscience of sins" (Heb 10:2), and "purges his conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (Heb 9:14). For that which satisfies the holiness of God cannot but satisfy the conscience of the sinner. God, pointing to the altar, says, "That is enough for me"; the sinner responds, and says, "It is enough for me."

As in the Epistle to the Hebrews we have this principle of substitution applied to the sanctuary, so in that to the Romans we find it applied to the courts of law. In the former we see God making the sinner perfect as a worshipper; in the latter, righteous as a servant and a son. In the one it is priestly completeness; in the latter it is judicial righteousness. But in both, the principle on which God acts is the same. And as He acts on it in receiving us, so does He invite us to act in coming to Him.

It is this truth that the gospel embodies; and it is this truth that we preach, when, as ambassadors for Christ, we pray men in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. God's free love to the sinner is the first part of our message; and God's righteous way of making that free love available for the sinner is the second. What God is, and what Christ has done, make up one gospel. The belief of that gospel is

eternal life. "All that believe are justified from all things" (Acts 13:39).

With a weak faith and a fearful heart many a sinner stands before the altar. But it is not the strength of his faith, but the perfection of the sacrifice, that saves; and no feebleness of faith, no dimness of eye, no trembling of hand, can change the efficacy of our burnt-offering. The vigor of our faith can add nothing to it, nor can the poverty of it take anything from it. Faith, in all its degrees, still reads the inscription, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin"; and if at times the eye is so dim that it cannot read these words, through blinding tears or bewildering mist, faith rests itself on the certain knowledge of the fact that the inscription is still there, or at least that the blood itself (of which these words remind us) remains, in all its power and suitableness, upon the altar unchanged and uneffaced. God says that the believing man is justified; who are we, then, that we should say, "We believe, but we do not know whether we are justified"? What God has joined together, let not man put asunder.

The question as to the right way of believing is that which puzzles many, and engrosses all their anxiety, to the exclusion of the far greater questions as to the person and work of Him who is the object of their believing. Thus their thoughts run in a self-righteous direction, and are occupied, not with what Christ has done, but with what they have yet to do, to get themselves connected with His work.

What should we have said to the Israelite, who, on bringing his lamb to the tabernacle, should puzzle himself with questions as to the right mode of laying his hands on the head of the victim, and who should refuse to take any comfort from the sacrifice, because he was not sure whether he had laid them aright;-on the proper place, in the right direction, with adequate pressure, or in the best attitude? Should we

not have told him that his own actings concerning the lamb were not the lamb, and yet that he was speaking as if they were? Should we not have told him that the lamb was everything, his touch nothing, as to virtue or merit or recommendation? Should we not have told him to be of good cheer; not because he had laid his hands on the victim in the most approved fashion, but because they had touched that victim, however lightly and imperfectly, and thereby said, Let this lamb stand for me, answer for me, die for me? The touching had no virtue in itself, and therefore the excellency of the act was no question to come up at all: it simply intimated the man's desire that this sacrifice should be taken instead of himself, as God's appointed way of pardon; it was simply the indication of his consent to God's way of saving him, by the substitution of another. The point for him to settle was not, Was my touch right or wrong, light or heavy? but, Was it the touch of the right lamb,-the lamb appointed by God for the taking away of sin?

The quality or quantity of faith is not the main question for the sinner. That which he needs to know is that Jesus died and was buried, and rose again, according to the Scriptures. This knowledge is life everlasting.

## **Chapter 3**

### **The Completeness of the Substitution**

In person and in work, in life and in death, Christ is the sinner's Substitute. His vicariousness is co-extensive with the sins and wants

of those whom He represents, and covers all the different periods as well as the varied circumstances of their lives.

He entered our world as the Substitute. "There was no room for Him in the inn" (Luke 2:7),-the inn of Bethlehem, the city of David, His own city. "Though rich, for our sakes He had become poor" (2 Cor 8:9). In poverty and banishment His life began. He was not to be allowed either to be born or died, save as an outcast man. "Without the gate" (Heb 13:12) was His position, as He entered and as He left our earth. Man would not give even a roof to shelter or a cradle to receive the helpless babe. It was as the Substitute that He was the outcast from the first moment of His birth. His vicarious life began in the manger. For what can this poverty mean, this rejection by man, this outcast condition, but that His sin-bearing had begun? [\(1\)](#)

The name, too, that met Him as He came into our world intimated the same truth: "Thou shalt call His name JESUS, for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt 1:21). His name proclaimed His mission and His work to be salvation; "Jehovah the Savior" (Jesus) is that by which the infant is called. As the Savior, He comes forth from the womb; as the Savior, He lies in the manger; and if He is the Savior, He is the Substitute. The name Jesus was not given to Him merely in reference to the cross, but to His whole life below. Therefore did Mary say, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior (Luke 1:46,47). Therefore also did the angel say to the shepherds, "Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11).

Scarcely is He born when His blood is shed. Circumcision deals with Him as one guilty, and needing the sign of cleansing.[\(2\)](#) He knew no sin, yet He is circumcised. He was not born in sin, nor shapen in iniquity, but was "the holy thing" (Luke 1:35); yet He is circumcised



as other children of Abraham, for "He took on Him the seed of Abraham" (Heb 2:16). Why was He circumcised if not as the Substitute? The rite proclaimed His vicarious birth, as truly as did the cross His vicarious death. "He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor 5:21). This was the beginning of that obedience in virtue of which righteousness comes to us; as it is written, "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Rom 5:19). For He Himself testified concerning His baptism, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" (Matt 3:15); and what was true of His baptism was no less true of His circumcision. The pain and the blood and the bruising of His tender body, connected with that symbol of shame, are inexplicable save on the supposition that even in infancy He was the vicarious one, not indeed bearing sin in the full sense and manner in which He bore it on the cross (for without death, sin-bearing could not have been consummated), but still bearing it in measure, according to the condition of His years. Even then He was "the Lamb of God."

His banishment into Egypt is referred to once and again by the old divines as part of that life of humiliation by which He was bearing our sins. As the banished one, He bore our banishment that we might return to God. He passed through earth as an outcast, because He was standing in the outcast's place; -"hurried up and down," says an old writer, "and driven out of His own land as a vagabond" (Flavel). In each part of His sin-bearing life there is something to meet our case. By the first Adam we were made exiles from God and paradise; by the last Adam we are brought back from our wanderings, restored to the divine favor, and replaced in the paradise of God.

His baptism is the same in import with His circumcision. He needed not the symbol of death and cleansing; for He was wholly pure, not liable to death on His own account. Why, then, should this sign of washing the unclean be applied to Him, if He was not then standing in the room of the unclean? What had water to do with the spotless One? What had "the figure of the putting away of the filth of the flesh, and of the answer of a good conscience toward God" (1 Pet 3:21), to do with Him who had no filth of the flesh to put away, and on whose conscience not the very shadow of dispeace had ever rested? But He was the Substitute; and into all the parts and circumstances of our life He enters, fulfilling all righteousness in the name of those whom He had come to save. The water was poured upon Him as standing in our room, and fulfilling our obligations.(3)

In the Psalms we find Him giving utterance to His feelings while bearing sins that were not His own, but which were felt by Him as if they were His own. Again and again He confesses sin.

But what had the Holy One to do with confession, or with strong crying and tears? What connection had He with the horrible pit and the miry clay, with the overwhelming floods and waves, with the deep waters, and the dust and darkness, and the lowest pit? Why shrank He from the assembly of the wicked that enclosed Him, from the "bulls that compassed Him, the strong bulls of Bashan that beset Him round," from the power of the dogs, from the sword, from the lion's mouth, from the horns of the unicorns? Why, during those days of His flesh, was He subjected to all this? and why were the powers of earth and hell let loose against Him? Because He was the Substitute, who had taken our place and assumed our responsibilities, and undertaken to do battle with our enemies. In these Psalms we find the seed of the woman at war with the seed of the serpent, and undergoing the varied anguish of the bruised heel.

He speaks not merely of the anguish of the cross when the full flood of wrath descended on Him, but of His lifetime's daily griefs: "I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up: while I suffer Thy terrors, Jam distracted" (Psa 88:15). "My soul is full of troubles, and my life draweth nigh unto the grave," He said in the Psalms; just as afterwards He cried out, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." "Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction... Thy fierce wrath goeth over me, Thy terrors have cut me off... Lover and friend hast Thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness." Thus was He "despised and rejected of men" (i.e. the despised and rejected of men), "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isa 53:3). And of the meaning of all this we can have no doubt, when we remember that He was always the sinless One bearing our sins, carrying them up to the cross as well as bearing them upon the cross (1 Pet 2:24, anênegken ); also that it is written of Him, "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows" (Isa 53:4); and yet again, that it is written expressly with reference to His daily life, "He healed all that were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, HIMSELF TOOK OUR INFIRMITIES, AND BARE OUR SICKNESSES" (Matt 8:17).(4) Vicariousness, or substitution, attached itself to each part of His life as truly as to His death.(5) Our burden He assumed when He entered the manger, and laid it aside only at the cross. The utterance, "It is finished," pointed back to a whole life's sin-bearing work.

The confessions of our sins which we find in the Psalms (where, as "in a bottle," God has deposited the tears of the Son of man, Psa 56:8) are the distinctest proofs of His work as the Substitute. Let one example suffice: "O LORD, rebuke me not in Thy wrath, neither chasten me in Thy hot displeasure; for Thine arrows stick fast in me, and Thy hand presseth me sore. There is no soundness in my flesh

because of Thine anger, neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over mine head; as an heavy burden, they are too heavy for me" (Psa 38:1-4).

These confessions must be either those of the sinner or the sin-bearer. They suit the former; and they show what views of sin we should entertain, and what our confessions should be. But they suit the latter no less; and as they occur in those Psalms which are quoted in the New Testament as specially referring to Christ, we must take them as the confessions of the sin-bearer, and meant to tell us what He thought of sin when it was laid upon Him simply as a substitute for others. The view thus given us of the completeness of the substitution is as striking as it is satisfying. We see here our Noah building His wondrous ark for the salvation of His household. We see its beginning, middle, and end. We see its different parts, external and internal; each plank as it is laid, each nail as it is driven in. Its form is perfect; its structure in all details is complete; its strength and stability are altogether divine. Yet with what labour and amid what mockings is this ark constructed! Amid what strong crying and tears, what blood and agony, is it completed! Thus, however, we are assured of its perfection and security. Through the deep waters of this evil world it floats in peace. No storm can upset it, no billow break it, nor so much as loosen one of its planks. They who have fled to it as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, are everlastingly safe.

When the Lord said, "Now is my soul troubled" (John 12:27); and when, again, He said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matt 26:38), He spoke as the sin-bearer. For what construction can we possibly put upon that trouble and sorrow, but that they were for us?(6) Men, false to the great truth of a sin-bearing Christ, may say that in the utterance of this anguish He was merely

giving us an example of patient endurance and self-sacrifice; but they who own the doctrine of Christ "suffering for sin, the just for the unjust," will listen to these bitter cries as to the very voice of the Substitute, and learn from them the completeness of that work of satisfaction, for the accomplishment of which He took our flesh, and lived our life, and died our death upon the tree.

But the completeness of the substitution comes out more fully at the cross. There the whole burden pressed upon Him, and the wrath of God took hold of Him, and the sword of Jehovah smote Him; He poured out His soul unto death, and He was cut off out of the land of the living.

Then the work was done. "It is finished." The blood of the burnt-offering was shed. The propitiation was made; the transgression finished; and the everlasting righteousness brought in.

All that follows is the fruit or result of the work finished on the cross. The grave is the awful pledge or testimony to His death as a true and real death; but it forms no part of the substitution or expiation.<sup>(7)</sup> Ere our surety reached the tomb, atonement had been completed. The resurrection is the blessed announcement of the Father that the work had been accepted and the surety set free; but it was no part either of the atonement or the righteousness. The ascension and the appearing in the presence of God for us with His own blood, are the carrying out of the atonement made upon Calvary; but they are no part of the expiation by means of which sin is forgiven and we are justified. All was finished, once and for ever, when the surety said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

There are some who would separate propitiation from the cross, who maintain that the three days' entombment was part of the sin-

bearing. But the cry from the cross, "It is finished," silences all such theories. The altar is the only place of expiation; and it is death that is the wages of sin. Burial was but the visible proof of the reality of the death. The surety's death once given instead of ours, the work is done. The fire consumed the sacrifice; and the ashes which remain are not the prolongation of that sacrifice, but the palpable proof that the fire has exhausted itself, that wrath is spent, and that nothing can now be added to or taken from the perfection of that sacrifice, through which pardon and righteousness are henceforth to flow to the condemned and the ungodly.

"Justified by His blood" is the apostolic declaration; and as a result of this, "saved from wrath through Him" (Rom 5:9). Here we rest; sitting down beneath the shadow of the cross to receive the benefit of that justifying, saving, protecting sacrifice.

It is at and by the cross that God justifies the ungodly. "By His stripes we are healed" (Isa 53:5); and the symbol of the brazen serpent visibly declares this truth. It was the serpent when uplifted that healed the deadly bite, not the serpent after it was taken down and deposited in the tabernacle. As from that serpent,-the figure of Him who was "made a curse for us,"-so from the cross health and life flow in. Not resurrection, but crucifixion, is the finishing of transgression and the making of an end of sin.

"Reconciled to God by the death of His Son" (Rom 5:10) is another of the many testimonies to the value and efficacy of the cross. Reconciliation is not connected with resurrection. The "peace was made by the blood of His cross" (Col 1:20). The fruits and results of the peace-offering may be many and various, but they are not the basis of reconciliation. That basis is the sacrificial blood-shedding. What can be more explicit than these three passages, which

announce justification by the blood, reconciliation by the death, and peace by "the blood of the cross"?

In the cross we see the Priest and priesthood; in the resurrection, the King and royal power. To the Priest belong the absolution and the cleansing and the justifying; to the King, the impartation of blessing to the absolved, the cleansed and the justified.

To the cross, therefore, do we look and cleave; knowing that out of its death cometh life to us, and out of its condemnation pardon and righteousness. With Christ were we crucified; and in this crucifixion we have "redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."

Three times over in one chapter (Lev 1:9,13,17) we read these words, "It is a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire of a sweet savour unto the LORD"; and the apostle, referring to these words, says, "Christ hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour" (Eph 5:2). This sweet savour came from the brazen altar, or altar of burnt-offering. It was the sweet odour of that sacrifice that ascended to God, and that encompassed the worshipper, so that he was covered all over with this sacrificial fragrance, presenting him perfect before God, and making his own conscience feel that he was accepted as such, and treated as such. Thus, by that burnt-offering there is proclaimed to us justification in a crucified Christ

The manifold blessings flowing from resurrection and ascension are not to be over-looked; but nowhere does Scripture teach justification by these. The one passage sometimes quoted to prove this, declares the opposite (Rom 4:25); for the words truly translated run thus: "He was delivered because we had sinned, and raised again because of

our justification." It was because the justifying work was finished that resurrection was possible. Had it not been so, He must have remained under the power of the grave. But the cross had completed the justification of His church. He was raised from the dead. Death could no longer have dominion over Him. The work was finished, the debt paid, and the surety went free: He rose, not in order to justify us, but because we were justified. In raising Him from the dead, God the Father cleared Him from the imputed guilt which had nailed Him to the cross and borne Him down to the tomb. "He was justified in the Spirit" (1 Tim 3:16). His resurrection was not His justification, but the declaration that He was "justified"; so that resurrection, in which we are one with Him, does not justify us, but proclaims that we are justified,-justified by His blood and death.(8)

In so far, then, as substitution is concerned, we have to do with the cross alone. It was, indeed, the place of death; but on that very account it was also to us a place of life and the pledge of resurrection.

The words of the apostle (Rom 6:6,7) are very explicit on this point: "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Here we have three things connected directly with the cross: (1) The death of the old man; (2) the destruction of the body of sin; (3) deliverance from the life-bondage of sin. Then he adds, "For he who dieth is freed from sin." The word "freed" is literally "justified," (*dedikaiôtai*, has been judicially released, legally set free, having paid the full penalty) teaching us that death is the exhaustion of the penalty and the justification of the sinner; so that justification in a crucified Christ is the teaching of the Spirit here.

The words of another apostle are no less clear (1 Pet 4:1): "Christ suffered for us in the flesh;...he that hath suffered in the flesh hath



ceased from sin." Here Christ on the cross is set before us, suffering the just for the unjust; and having thus suffered, He has exhausted the penalty which He was bearing; and having exhausted it, His connection with sin has ceased: he is now in the state described elsewhere, "without sin" (Heb 9:28). The word "ceased" means more properly "has rest."[\(9\)](#) The life of our surety was one of sorrow and unrest, for our penalty lay upon Him; but when this penalty was paid by His death, He "rested." The labor and the burden were gone; and as one who knew what entering into rest was (Heb 4:10), He could say to us, "I will give you rest." He carried His life-long burden to the cross, and there laid it down, "resting from His labors." Or rather, it was there that the law severed the connection between Him and the burden; loosing it from His shoulders, that it might be buried in His grave. From that same cross springs the sinner's rest, the sinner's disburdening, the sinner's absolution and justification.

Not for a moment are we to lose sight of the blessings flowing from the resurrection, or to overlook and undervalue the new position into which we are brought by it. The "power of the resurrection" (Phil 3:10) must be fully recognized and acted on for its own results. We are crucified with Christ. With Him we died, were buried, and rose again. "Risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead" (Col 2:12). "He hath quickened us together with Christ... and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:5,6). Such are the terms in which the apostle describes the benefits of Christ's resurrection, and in which he reveals to us the oneness with Him who died and rose. But nowhere does he separate our justification from the cross; nowhere does he speak of Christ meeting our legal responsibilities by His resurrection; nowhere does he ascribe to His resurrection that preciousness in whose excellency we stand complete. Acceptance, and completeness in our standing before God,

are attributed to the cross and blood and death of the Divine Substitute.

Poor as my faith in this Substitute may be, it places me at once in the position of one to whom "God imputeth righteousness without works." God is willing to receive me on the footing of His perfection; and if I am willing to be thus received, in the perfection of another with whom God is well pleased, the whole transaction is completed. I AM JUSTIFIED BY HIS BLOOD. "As He is, so am I (even) in this world,"-even now, with all my imperfections and evils.

To be entitled to use another's name, when my own name is worthless; to be allowed to wear another's raiment, because my own is torn and filthy; to appear before God in another's person,-the person of the Beloved Son ,-this is the summit of all blessing. The sin-bearer and I have exchanged names, robes, and persons! I am now represented by Him, my own personality having disappeared; He now appears in the presence of God for me (Heb 9:24). All that makes Him precious and dear to the Father has been transferred to me. His excellency and glory are seen as if they were mine; and I receive the love, and the fellowship, and the glory, as if I had earned them all. So entirely one am I with the sin-bearer, that God treats me not merely as if I had not done the evil that I have done; but as if I had done all the good which I have not done, but which my Substitute has done. In one sense I am still the poor sinner, once under wrath; in another I am altogether righteous, and shall be so for ever, because of the Perfect One, in whose perfection I appear before God. Nor is this a false pretense or a hollow fiction, which carries no results or blessings with it. It is an exchange which has been provided by the Judge, and sanctioned by law; an exchange of which any sinner upon earth may avail himself and be blest.

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(1) The Heidelberg Catechism (used in the Scotch Church, along with Calvin's, till superseded by the Westminster) asks, "What profit takest thou by Christ's holy conception and nativity?" and answers, "That He is our Mediator, and doth cover my sins with His innocency and perfect holiness, in which I was conceived, that they may not come into the sight of God."

(2) "These ceremonial observances were so many confessions of sin. Christ, then, who was made sin for us, conformed to these" (Ames, *Medulla Theologica*, B. 1. ch. 21). "Hereby (by circumcision) He was represented to the world not only as a subject, but also as a sinner. For though He was pure and holy, yet this ordinance passing upon Him seemed to imply as if corruption had indeed been in Him, which must be cut off by mortification....Thus was He represented as a sinner to the world, though most holy and pure in Himself" (Flavel, *Fountain of Life-Sermon* 19). "He was circumcised, and kept the law to deliver us from the condemnation of it....Therefore we must seek our righteousness, not in the law, but in Christ, who hath fulfilled the same, and given us freely His fulfilling" (Latimer on Matt 2:1,2).

(3) The old hymns have not lost sight of those truths. As specimens, I give the following: -

"Stillat excisos pueri per artus -- Efficacious blood drops from  
Efficax noxas abolere sanguis; -- The pierced limbs of the boy  
Obligat morti pretiosa totum -- To abolish punishments;  
Stilla cruorem." -- A precious drop requires the whole bloodshed to death.

Again:

"Vix natus, ecce lacteum -- Behold the infant, scarcely born,  
Profundit Infans sanguinem, -- Sheds the milk blood,  
Libamen est hoc funeris -- A sample of death,  
Amoris hoc praeludium." -- A prelude of love.

And again:

"Dixit; et Patris veneratus iram -- He spoke; and having respected  
Sustinet vulnus silicis cruentae; -- The wrath of the Father endures  
the wound of the bloody rock;  
Et jugum legis subit ipse, servis -- And he himself submits to the  
yoke of the law  
Ut juga demat." -- In order to take away the yokes for his servants. --  
Editor

Little as these hymns contain of the finished work of the substitution,  
occasionally the great truth breaks out in connection with the  
different events in the Lord's history.

(4) The evangelist here translates directly from the Hebrew, and  
differs from the Septuagint.

(5) The Heidelberg Catechism asks, "What believest thou when thou  
sayest, He suffered?" and the answer is, "That He, all the time of His  
life which He led on earth, but especially at the end thereof,  
sustained the wrath of God, both in body and soul, against the sin of  
mankind, that He might by His passion, as the only propitiatory  
sacrifice, deliver our body and soul from everlasting damnation, and  
purchase unto us the favour of God, righteousness, and everlasting  
life."

(6) The old catechetical exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism  
brings out this fully: "The Godhead hath so strengthened the human  
nature, and upheld it, that it could bear the weight of the wrath of  
God against sin. It hath also given such dignity to the short sufferings  
of the human nature, that it hath satisfied for the eternal punishment  
which we had deserved... What suffered He in His soul? Very heavy  
and terrible torments, anxieties, pains, sorrows, distresses, arising  
from the sense of God's wrath... When and how long hath Christ

suffered? The whole time of His life which He led on earth, but especially at the end thereof. The evangelical histories testify of banishments, Satan's temptations, poverty, disgrace, infirmities, hunger, thirst, fear, perils of life; especially in the garden of Gethsemane, in the judgment hall, on Golgotha... He not only suffered for sin, but He felt God against Him in that suffering as an angry judge... Hath He also purchased righteousness for us? Yes, so that the Father freely giveth and bestoweth the same on us, and reckoneth it unto us; so that the satisfaction and righteousness of Christ being imputed to us, we may stand in God's judgment."

(7) "To what end was He buried? That thereby He might make manifest that He was dead indeed" (Heidelberg Catechism).

(8) "What other benefits receive we by the sacrifice and death of Christ? That by virtue of His death our old man is crucified, slain, and buried together with Him, that henceforth evil lusts and desires may not reign in us, but we may offer ourselves unto Him a sacrifice of thanksgiving....How doth the resurrection of Christ profit us? First, by His resurrection He vanquished death, that He might make us partakers of that righteousness which He had purchased for us; secondly, we are stirred up by His power to a new life" (Heidelberg Catechism).

(9) See Kypke's Observations in N.T, who quotes some striking passages in classical Greek to illustrate this. See also Bengel and Winer.

# Chapter 4

## **The Declaration of the Completeness**

The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is a prophetic vision of the cross.

The book of Leviticus had given Israel in detail the standing symbols which were all to be transformed into spiritual substances or verities in Christ crucified. And this chapter of the prophet gives a summary of these truths, in Levitical language, connecting them all with the seed of the woman, and His bruising upon the tree.

For more than three thousand years the "bruised heel" had been held up before the eye of the world, and specially of Israel (in their sacrifices), as their deliverance and hope. But now the interpretation is given in more explicit language. Its meaning, as expressing (in the varied details of this chapter) the transference of the sinner's guilt to the Surety; as setting forth also the mysterious person of the Man of sorrows, and, under all this, revealing the deep free love of God to man,-is here proclaimed with a clearness and fulness such as had not hitherto been vouchsafed either to the patriarchs or to Israel. Nowhere is the work of the Messiah the sin-bearer more explicitly revealed. The just One suffering for the unjust is the theme of this prophetic burden.

Abruptly the prophet breaks forth in his description of Messiah, seed of the woman, son of Adam, son of Abraham, son of David: "He shall grow up before Him a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground." The soil and the air of earth are alike uncongenial to this shoot from the stem of Jesse. Its affinities are all with a purer climate

than ours.

He rises up in the midst of us, but not to be appreciated and honored; not to be admired, or loved. "He hath no form or comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him." The light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not. "He is [the] despised and rejected [one] of men"; i.e. of all men, the most despised and rejected: for He came to His own, and His own received Him not.

Here is the beginning of His vicarious life , -a life of reproach among the sons of men. "A Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

Whence all this life-long sadness? When angels visit earth, are they thus sorrowful? Does the air of earth infect them with its troubles? Do they weep, and groan, and bleed? Are they assailed with the blasphemies of earth? If not, why is it thus? Why is the holy Son of God, from His childhood, subjected to this contempt, and bowed down beneath this burden? Why is the cup of gall and wormwood set beside His cradle? and why, day by day, in youth and manhood, has He to drink the bitter draught? Angels see the sights and hear the sounds of earth, as they attend us in their ministries, or execute the errands of their King: yet they are not saddened; nor, when they return to their dwellings of light, do they require the tears to be wiped from their eye, or the sweat from their brow. How can we account for the difference between Messiah and the angels, save the fact that His sin-bearing character made Him accessible to and penetrable by grief, in a way such as no angel could be?

The difficulty of such a case was obvious; and accordingly the prophet meets it in the next verse. It is our griefs that He was bearing; it was our sorrows that He was carrying. These were the things

that made Him the Man of sorrows. They that saw Him could not understand the mystery. They said, God has smitten him for his sins, and afflicted him for some hidden transgression that we know not. But, no; "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." The wounding, the bruising, the chastening, and the scourging had their beginnings before He reached the cross; but it was there that they were all completed by "the obedience unto death."

"The LORD [Jehovah] hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all"; or, bath made to rush or strike upon Him the punishment of us all.

"It was exacted, and He became answerable,  
And (therefore) He opened not His mouth.  
As a lamb to the slaughter He is led;  
And as a sheep before her shearers is dumb,  
So He opened not His mouth.  
From prison and from judgment He is taken,  
And His generation (manner of life) who declareth?"

These are the scenes before the Cross; while He was on His way to it. He was dumb before His judges, because He had made Himself legally responsible for our debt or guilt. Nor was there any one to come forward and declare His innocence. He was carrying, too, our sins to the cross. After this we have the cross itself:

"He was cut off out of the land of the living;  
For the transgressions of my people He was stricken."

The sin-bearing of the cross is fully brought out here. There He hung as the Substitute, "the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to



God."

"And there was appointed Him a grave with the wicked,  
But with the rich man was He in death."

There was assigned to Him a place with the wicked not only on the cross, but in His burial; He was condemned not only to die an ignominious death, but to have a like sepulchre. From this latter, however, He was delivered by the rich man of Arimathea, who unexpectedly came forward and begged the body, which would otherwise have been consigned to a malefactor's grave. He was "with the rich in His death"; that is, when He died, or after His death, when He was taken down from the cross.

"Yet it pleased Jehovah to bruise Him,  
He bath put Him to grief."

Jehovah was well pleased with His bruising,-nay, took pleasure in bruising Him. Never was Messiah more the "beloved Son" than when suffering on the cross; yet Jehovah was "well pleased" to put Him to grief. Though the consciousness of communion was interrupted for a time, when he cried, "Why has Thou forsaken me?" yet there was no breaking of the bond. There was wrath coming down on Him as the Substitute, but love resting on Him as the Son. Both were together. He knew the love, even while He felt the wrath; nay, it was the knowledge of the love that made Him cry out in amazement and anguish, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

"Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin;"

or, more exactly, "a trespass-offering"; a sacrifice for willful, conscious sin. Of this trespass-offering it is written, "The priest shall

make an atonement for him before the Lord, and it shall be forgiven him for anything of all that he hath done in trespassing therein" (Lev 6:7). The various offerings of the tabernacle and the altar all center in and cluster round the cross. It is THE SOUL that is here said to be the trespass-offering; implying that when the soul was parted from the body, when Christ commended His spirit to His Father, then the trespass-offering was completed. Atonement was made, once for all. Before the body of the Surety had reached the tomb, the great work was done. The lying in the grave was the visible and palpable sign or pledge of the work having been already finished; and resurrection was the Father's seal from above set to the excellency of that completed sacrifice, and to the perfection of Him by whom it had been accomplished on the cross.

"Upon the labor of His soul He shall look,  
He shall be satisfied."

Christ, in the days of His flesh, often used language like this regarding His soul: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matt 26:38); "Now is my soul troubled" (John 12:27); "The Son of man came. ..to give His soul a ransom for many" (Matt 20:28); "The good shepherd giveth His soul for the sheep" (John 10:11); "I lay down my soul for the sheep" (John 10:15). Thus the life, the soul, the blood, are connected together; and with that which was accomplished by them in life and in death He is satisfied Whether it is Himself that is satisfied, or the Father, matters not. The truth taught is the same.

"By His knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many;  
For He shall bear their iniquities."

It is the Father that here speaks. He calls Messiah, "My right-eous

Servant," and proclaims that by giving the knowledge of Himself He shall justify many. The knowledge of Christ is that which secures our justification; the knowledge of Christ as the sin-bearer: for it is added, as the justifying thing in this knowledge, "He shall bear their iniquities"; thus again linking justification with the cross, and the finished work there.

The last verse is very remarkable, as bringing out fully the Father's reasons for glorifying His Son; reasons connected entire-ly with the cross and the sin-bearing there:

"Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great,  
And He shall divide the spoil with the strong,  
Because He hath poured out His soul unto death.  
And He was numbered with the transgressors;  
And He bare the sin of many,  
And made intercession for the transgressors."

So that the resurrection, with all the subsequent glory and honor conferred on Him, is the recompense and result of His justifying work on the cross. On that tree of death and shame the work was FINISHED. There He poured out His soul; there He was numbered with the transgressors; there He bare the sin of many; there He made intercession for the transgressors, when He cried out, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." [\(1\)](#)

"It is finished" were His words as He died. The justifying work is done! If anything else besides this finished work is to justify, then Christ has died in vain.

"It is finished," He said, and gave up the ghost. "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit"; and to the Father that spirit went. The

Father received it; and in receiving it, bore testimony to the completeness of the work. The Roman soldiers, "perceiving that he was dead already," may be said to have testified to the completion of the work of pouring out His soul unto death. The taking down from the cross was another testimony. Joseph and Nicodemus were like the Levites carrying away the ashes from the altar. The burial was another testimony. The resurrection began the divine and visible testimony to this same thing. The ascension, and "sitting" at the Father's right hand, were the attestations from above, the heavenly responses to the voice from the cross, "It is finished." All after this was the result of that finished work. The presentation of His blood was not to complete the sacrifice, but to carry out what was already done. The sprinkling of the blood (at whatever time that may have been done) was the application of the sacrifice, not the sacrifice itself.

"It is finished!" He who makes this announcement on the cross is the Son of God; it is He who but the day before had said in the prospect of this consummation, "I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do." He knows what He says when He utters it; and He is "the faithful and true witness." His words are true, and they are full of meaning.

He makes this announcement before the Father, as if calling on Him to confirm it. He makes it before heaven and earth, before men and angels, before Jew and Gentile. He makes it to us. Listen, O sons of men! The work that saves is perfected. The work that justifies is done.

The completeness thus announced is a great and momentous one. It is one in which all the ends of the earth have an interest. Had it been left unfinished, then what hope for man or for man's earth? But it is begun, carried on, consummated; and no flaw is found in it; no

part is left out; not a jot or tittle has failed. It is absolutely perfect.

This perfection or consummation proclaims to us such things as these: the completion of the Father's purpose, the completion of atonement, the completion of the justifying work, the completeness of the sin-bearing and law-fulfilling, the completeness of the righteousness, the completeness of the covenant and the covenant seal. All is done, and done by Him who is Son of man and Son of God; perfectly and for ever done; nothing to be added to it or taken from it, by man, by Satan, or by God. The burial of the Substitute does not add to its completeness; resurrection forms no part of that justifying work. It was all concluded on the cross.

It is so finished that a sinner may at once use it for pardon, for rest, for acceptance, for justification. Standing beside this altar where the great burnt-offering was laid and consumed to ashes, the sinner feels that he is put in possession of all blessing. That which the altar has secured passes over to him simply in virtue of his taking his place at the altar, and thus identifying himself with the victim. There the divine displeasure against sin has spent itself; there righteousness has been obtained for the unrighteous; there the sweet savor of rest is continually ascending from God; there the full flood of divine love is ever flowing out; there God meets the sinner in His fullest grace, without hindrance or restraint; there the peace which has been made through blood-shedding is found by the sinner; there reconciliation is proclaimed, and the voice that proclaims it from that altar reaches to the ends of the earth; there the ambassadors of peace take their stand to discharge their embassy, pleading with the sons of men far off and near, saying, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

The resurrection was the great visible seal set to this complete-ness. It was the Father's response to the cry from the cross, "It is finished." As at baptism He spoke from the excellent glory, and said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"; so did He speak, though not with audible voice, at the resurrection, bearing testimony thereby not only to the excellency of the Person, but to the completeness of the work of His only-begotten Son. The resurrection added nothing to the propitiation of the cross; it proclaimed it already perfect, incapable of addition or greater completeness.

The ascension added to this testimony, and especially the sitting at God's right hand. "This man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, SAT DOWN at the right hand of God" (Heb 10:12). "When He had by Himself purged our sins, SAT DOWN on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb 1:3). The standing posture of the ancient priests showed that their work was an unfinished one. The sitting down of our High Priest intimated to all heaven that the work was done, and the "eternal redemption obtained." And what was thus intimated in heaven has been proclaimed on earth by those whom God sent forth in power of the Holy Ghost, to tell to men the things which eye had not seen nor ear heard. That "sitting down" contained in itself the gospel. The first note of that gospel was sounded at Bethlehem, from the manger where the young child lay; the last note came from the throne above, when the Son of God returned in triumph from His mission of grace to earth, and took His seat upon the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

Between these two extremities, the manger and the throne, how much is contained for us! All the love of God is there. The exceeding riches of divine grace are there. The fullness of that power and wisdom and righteousness, which have come forth, not to destroy, but to save, is there. These are the two boundary walls of that

wondrous storehouse out of which we are to be filled throughout the eternal ages.

Of what is contained in this treasure-house we know something here, in some small measure; but the vast contents are beyond all measurement and all conception. The eternal unfolding of these to us will be perpetual gladness. Apart from the excellency of the inheritance, and the beauty of the city, and the glory of the kingdom, which will make us say, "Truly the lines have fallen unto us in pleasant places," there will be, in our ever-widening knowledge of "the unsearchable riches of Christ," light and replenishment and satisfaction, which, even were all external brightness swept away, would be enough for the soul throughout all the ages to come.

The present glory of Christ is the reward of His humiliation here. Because He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross, therefore God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him the name that is above every name. He wears the crown of glory, because He wore the crown of thorns. He drank of the brook by the way, therefore he has lifted up the head (Psa 110:7).

But this is not all. That glory to which He is now exalted is the standing testimony before all heaven that His work was finished on the cross. "I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do," He said; and then He added, "Now, o Father, glorify Thou me with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was" (John 17:4,5).

The proofs of the completeness of the sacrificial work upon the cross are very full and satisfying. They assure us that the work was really finished, and, as such, available for the most sinful of men. We shall find it good to dwell upon the thought of this completeness, for the

pacifying of the conscience, for the satisfying of the soul, for the removal of all doubt and unbelief, and for the production and increase of faith and confidence.

There are degrees of rest for the soul, and it is in proportion as we comprehend the perfection of the work on Calvary that our rest will increase. There are depths of peace which we have not yet sounded, for it is "peace which passeth all understanding"; and into these depths the Holy Spirit leads us, not in some miraculous way, or by some mere exertion of power, but by revealing to us more and more of that work, in the first knowledge of which our peace began.

We are never done with the cross, nor ever shall be. Its wonders will be always new, and always fraught with joy. "The Lamb as it had been slain" will be the theme of our praise above. Why should such a name be given to Him in such a book as the Revelation, which in one sense carries us far past the cross, were it not that we shall always realize our connection with its one salvation; always be looking to it even in the midst of glory; and always learning from it some new lesson regarding the work of Him "in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace"? What will they who here speak of themselves as being so advanced as to be done with the cross, say to being brought face to face with the Lamb that was slain, in the age of absolute perfection, the age of the heavenly glory?

Thou fool! Dost thou not know that the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ endureth for ever, and that thou shalt eternally glory in it, if thou are saved by it at all?

Thou fool! Wilt thou not join in the song below, "To Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood"? Wilt thou not



join in the song above, "Thou was slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood"? And dost thou not remember that it is from "the Lamb as it had been slain" that "the seven spir-its of God are sent forth into all the earth"? (Rev 5:6). [\(2\)](#)

It is the Lamb who stands in the midst of the elders (Rev 5:6), and before whom they fall down. "Worthy is the Lamb" is the theme of celestial song. It is the Lamb that opens the seals (6:1). It is before the Lamb that the great multitude stand clothed in white (7:9). It is the blood of the Lamb that washes the raiment white (7:14). It is by the blood of the Lamb that the victory is won (12:11). The book of life belongs to the Lamb slain (13:8). It was a Lamb that stood on the glorious Mount Zion (14:1). It is the Lamb that the redeemed multitude are seen following (14:4); and that multitude is the first-fruits unto God and unto the Lamb (14:4). It is the song of the Lamb that is sung in heaven (15:3). It is the Lamb that wars and overcomes (17:14). It is the marriage of the Lamb that is celebrated, and it is to the marriage-supper of the Lamb that we are called (19:7,9). The church is the Lamb's wife (21:9). On the foundations of the heavenly city are written the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb (21:14). Of this city the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple (21:23). Of that city the Lamb is the light (21:23). The book of life of the Lamb, and the throne of the Lamb (21:27; 22:1,3), sum up this wondrous list of honors and dignities belonging to the Lord Jesus as the crucified Son of God.

Thus the glory of heaven revolves round the cross; and every object on which the eye lights in the celestial city will remind us of the cross, and carry us back to Golgotha. Never shall we get beyond it, or turn our backs on it, or cease to draw from it the divine virtue which it contains.

The tree, be it palm, or cedar, or olive, can never be independent of its roots, however stately its growth, however plentiful its fruit. The building, be it palace or temple, can never be separated from its foundation, however spacious or ornate its structure may be. So, never shall the redeemed be independent of the cross, or cease to draw from its fullness.

In what ways our looking to the cross hereafter will benefit us; what the shadow of that tree will do for us in the eternal kingdom, I know not, nor do I venture to say. But it would seem as if the cross and the glory were so inseparably bound together, that there cannot be the enjoyment of the one without the remembrance of the other. The completeness of the sacrificial work on Calvary will be matter for eternal contemplation and rejoicing, long after every sin has been, by its cleansing efficacy, washed out of our being for ever.

Shall we ever exhaust the fullness of the cross? Is it a mere stepping-stone to something beyond itself? Shall we ever cease to glory in it (as the apostle gloried), not only because of past, but because of present and eternal blessing? The forgiveness of sin is one thing; but is that all? The crucifixion of the world is another; but is that all? Is the cross to be a relic, useless though venerable, like the serpent of brass laid up in the tabernacle; to be destroyed perhaps at some future time, and called Nehushtan? (2 Kings 18:4). Or is it not rather like the tree of life, which bears twelve manner of fruits, and yields its fruit every month, by the banks of the celestial river? Its influence here on earth is transforming; but even after the transformation has been completed, and the whole church perfected, shall there not be a rising higher and higher, a taking on of greater and yet greater comeliness, a passing from glory to glory; and all in connection with the cross, and through the never-ending vision of its wonders?

Of the new Jerusalem it is said, "The LAMB is the light [or lamp] thereof' (Rev 21:23). The Lamb is only another name for Christ crucified: so that thus it is the cross that is the lamp of the holy city; and with its light, the gates of pearl, the jasper wall, the golden streets, the brilliant foundations, and the crystal river, are all lighted up. The glow of the cross is everywhere, penetrating every part, and reflected from every gem; and by its peculiar radi-ance transporting the dwellers of the city back to Golgotha, as the fountainhead of all this splendor.

It is light from Calvary that fills the heaven of heavens. Yet it is no dim religious light: for the glory of God is to lighten it (Rev 21:23); and its light is "like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper-stone, clear as crystal; and there is no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light" (Rev 22:5). Yes, we shall never be done with the cross and the blood; though, where all are clean and perfect in every sense, these will not be used for purging the conscience or justifying the ungodly.

It is the symbol both of a dying and of a risen Christ that we find in the Revelation. The "lamb as it had been slain" indicates both. But the prominence is given to the former. It is the slain Lamb that has the power and authority to open the seals; implying that it was in His sin-bearing or sacrificial character that He exer-cised this right, and that it was His finished work on which this right rested, and by which it was acquired. It is as the Lamb that He is possessed with all wisdom and strength,—"the seven horns and the seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God" (Rev 5:6); the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of omniscience and omnipotence.

The Lamb is one of His special and eternal titles; the name by which He is best known in heaven. As such, we obey and honor and

worship Him; never being allowed to lose sight of the cross amid all the glories of the kingdom. As such we follow Him, and shall follow Him eternally, as it is written, "These are they that follow THE LAMB whithersoever He goeth" (Rev 14:4).

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(1) In these words, "they know not what they do," He is speaking as the sin-offering, which was specially for sins of ignorance.

(2) Thirty times does the word Lamb, as Christ's heavenly name, occur in the Apocalypse; bringing perpetually before the redeemed in glory the cross and the blood, as if to prevent the possibility of our losing sight of CHRIST CRUCIFIED.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Righteousness for the Unrighteous**

It is in righteousness and by righteousness that God saves the sinner.

He justifies the ungodly (Rom 4:5); but He does it in and by RIGHTEOUSNESS. For "the righteous Lord loveth righteousness" (Psa 11:7). He "justifies freely by His grace" (Rom 3:24); but still it is "in and by righteousness." His grace is righteous grace; it is grace which condemns the sin while acquitting the sinner; nay, which condemns the sin by means of that very thing which brings about the acquittal of the sinner. His pardon is righteous pardon, and therefore irreversible. His salvation is righteous salvation, and therefore everlasting.

It is as the righteous Judge that God justifies. He is "faithful and just" in forgiving sin (1 John 1:9). By His pardons He magnifies His righteousness; so that he who goes to God for forgiveness can use as his plea the righteousness of the righteous Judge, no less than the grace of the loving and merciful Lord God.

God loves to pardon because He is love; and He loves to pardon because He is righteous, and true, and holy. No sin can be too great for pardon, and no sinner can be too deep or old in sin to be saved and blest; because the righteousness out of which salvation comes is infinite. (1)

The sacrifices on which the sinner is called to rest are "the sacrifices of righteousness" (Deut 33:19; Psa 4:5). It is from "the God of our salvation" that this righteousness comes (Psa 24:5). It is with the "sacrifices of righteousness" that God is "pleased" (Psa 51:19). It is with righteousness that His priests are clothed (Psa 132:9). It is righteousness that looks down from heaven to bless us (Psa 85:11); and it is righteousness and peace that kiss each other in bringing deliverance to our world. It is the work of righteousness that is peace, and "the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever" (Isa 32:17).

It is with the "robe of righteousness" that Messiah is clothed, over and above the garments of salvation (Isa 61:10), when He comes to deliver earth; and when He proclaims Himself "mighty to save," it is when "speaking in righteousness" (Isa 63:1). When He came to "finish the transgression, and to make an end of sin, and to make reconciliation for iniquity," He came also to bring in "everlasting righteousness" (Dan 9:24).

"This is the name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jer 23:6); and as if to mark the way in which e

blesse and justifies, it is added in another place, "This is the name wherewith SHE shall be called, The Lord our righteousness" (Jer 33:16),-His name passing over to the sinner; the sinners name lost and forgotten in that of his Substitute. Oneness in name, in nature, in privilege, in position, in righteousness, and in glory with Messiah, his divine sin-bearer, is the sinner's portion. "Their righteousness is of ME, saith the Lord" (Isa 54:17); for "He, of God, is made unto righteousness" (1 Cor 1:30). The transference is complete and eternal. From the moment that we receive the divine testimony to the righteousness of the Son of God, all the guilt that was on us passes over to Him, and all His righteousness passes over to us; so that God looks on us as possessed of that righteousness, and treats us according to its value in His sight. Men may call this a mere "name" or "legal fiction"; but it is such a "name" as secures for us the full favor of the righteous God, who can only show favor to us in a righteous way; and it is such a "fic-tion" as law recognizes and God acts upon in dealing with the unrighteous as if they were righteous,-supremely, divinely right-eous, in virtue of their connection with Him, who, "though He knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD in Him" (2 Cor 5:21).

This is the "righteousness of God which is revealed from faith to faith" (2) (Rom 1:17). This is "the righteousness of God without the law which is manifested, and was witnessed by the law and the prophets" (Rom 3:21); "the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe" (Rom 3:22). (3). Thus, "in believing" (not in doing) this "righteousness of God" becomes ours; for the promise of it is "to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly" (Rom 4:5).

On our part there is the "believing"; on God's part, the "imput-ing" or reckoning. We believe, He imputes; and the whole transac-tion is

done. The blood (as "atoning" or "covering") washes off our guilt; the righteousness presents us before God as legally entitled to that position of righteousness which our surety holds, as being Himself not merely the righteous One, but "Jehovah OUR righteousness." We get the benefit of His perfection in all its complete-ness; not as infused into us, but as covering us: "Thy beauty was perfect through MY COMELINESS which I had put upon thee" (Eze 16:14). Applying here the words of the prophet concerning Jerusalem, we may illustrate and extend the figure used by the Holy Spirit as to the "perfection" of him whom this righteousness covers. Spread out, it is as follows:-

1. "I said to thee, Live" (Eze 16:6).
2. "I spread my skirt over thee" (verse 8).
3. "I entered into a covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine" (verse 8).
4. "I washed thee" (verse 9).
5. "I anointed thee" (verse 9).
6. "I clothed thee" (verse 10).
7. "I shod thee" (verse 10).
8. "I girded thee" (verse 10).
9. "I covered thee with silk" (verse 10).
10. "I decked thee with ornaments, bracelets, chains, jewels, a beautiful crown" (verse 12).
11. "Thou was exceeding beautiful" (verse 13).
12. "Thy renown went forth for thy beauty" (verse 14).

Such, in the symbols of Scripture, is a picture of the perfection (not our own) with which we are clothed, so soon as we believe in Him who is "Jehovah our righteousness." "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee" (Song 4:7).

"He that believeth is not condemned" (John 3:18). This is the negative side; and even were there no more for us, this would be blessedness, seeing our portion was by nature that of "children of wrath." But there is more; for it is written, "All that believe are justified from all things" (Acts 13:39); and "Christ is the end (or fulfilling) of the law for RIGHTEOUSNESS to every one that believeth" (Rom 10:4). "As by the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF ONE, the free gift came upon all men unto JUSTIFICATION OF LIFE" (Rom 5:18).

The strength or kind of faith required is nowhere stated. The Holy Spirit has said nothing as to quantity or quality, on which so many dwell, and over which they stumble, remaining all their days in darkness and uncertainty. It is simply in believing,-feeble as our faith may be,-that we are invested with this righteousness. For faith is no work, nor merit, nor effort; but the cessation from all these, and the acceptance in place of them of what another has done,-done completely, and for ever. The simplest, feeblest faith suffices; for it is not the excellence of our act of faith that does aught for us, but the excellence of Him who suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. His perfection suffices to cover not only that which is imperfect in our characters and lives, but that which is imperfect in our faith, when we believe on His name.

Many a feeble hand,-perhaps many a palsied one,-was laid on the head of the burnt-offering (Lev 1:4); but the feebleness of that palsied touch did not alter the character of the sacrifice, or make it less available in all its fullness for him who brought it. The priest would not turn him away from the door of the tabernacle because his hand trembled; nor would the bullock fail to be "accepted for him, to make atonement for him" (Lev 1:4), because his fingers might barely



touch its head by reason of his feebleness. The burnt-offering was still the burnt-offering, and the weakest touch sufficed to establish the connection between it and him, because even that feeble touch was the expression of his consciousness that he was unfit to be dealt with on the footing of what he was himself, and of his desire to be dealt with by God on the footing of another, infinitely worthier and more perfect than himself.

On our part there is unrighteousness, condemning us; on God's part there is righteousness, forgiving and blessing us. Thus unrighteousness meets righteousness, not to war with each other, but to be at peace. They come together in love, not in enmity; and the hand of righteousness is stretched out not to destroy, but to save.

It is as the unrighteous that we come to God; not with goodness in our hands as a recommendation, but with the utter want of goodness; not with amendment or promises of amendment, but with only evil, both in the present and the past; not presenting the claim of contrition or repentance or broken hearts to induce God to receive us as something less than unrighteous, but going to Him simply as unrighteous; unable to remove that unrighteousness, or offer anything either to palliate or propitiate. (4)

It is the conscious absence of all good things that leads us to the fountain of all goodness. That fountain is open to all who thus come; it is closed against all who come on any other footing. It is the want of light and life that draws us to the one source of both; and both of these are the free gifts of God.

He who comes as partly righteous is sent empty away. He who comes acknowledging unrighteousness, but at the same time trying to neutralize it or expiate it by feelings, and prayers, and tears, is equally rejected. But he who comes as an unrighteous man to a

righteous yet gracious God, finds not only ready access, but plentiful blessing. The righteous God receives unrighteous man, if man presents himself in his own true character as a sinner, and does not mock God by pretending to be something less or better than this.

For then the divinely provided righteousness comes in to cover the unrighteous, and to enable God to receive him in love, and justify him before earth and heaven.

In all this we find such things as the following; each of them bringing out a separate aspect of the answer to the great question, "How can man be just with God?"

1. The Justifier;--"It is God that justifieth." The sentence of acquittal must come from His lips, and be registered in His books.
2. The justified;--Man, the sinner, under wrath, the ungodly, the condemned.
3. The justifying fact;--The death of Him whose name is Jehovah our righteousness.
4. The justifying instrument;--Faith. Not strong faith, or great faith, or perfect faith, but simply faith, or believing. "We are justified by faith."
5. The justifying medium;--The righteousness of God. This is the "best robe" which is prepared for the prodigal, by which he is clothed and beautified, and made fit to enter his Father's house, and sit down at his Father's table. Christ is Himself our justification. In Him we "stand." In Him we are "found." Him we "put on," and with Him we are clothed, by Him we are protected as by a shield, in Him we take refuge as in a strong tower.

"Found in Him." What then? Our own "self" has disappeared; and instead there is Christ, the beloved Son in whom God is well pleased. Found in ourselves, there was nothing but wrath; found in Him there

is nothing but favor. We are hidden in Christ. God seeks for us; and when at last He discovers us in our hiding-place, it is not we that He finds, but Christ; so complete is the exchange of persons, so perfect and so glorious the disguise.

Yet it is not a disguise which shall ever be taken off, nor of which we shall have cause to be ashamed. It remains ours for ever. It is an everlasting righteousness. (5)

Jehovah is satisfied with Christ's obedience. He is well pleased with His righteousness. And when we, crediting His testimony to that obedience and that righteousness, consent to be treated by Him on the footing of its perfection, then is He satisfied and well pleased with us.

Jehovah is satisfied, more than satisfied, with Christ's fulfilling of the law which man had broken. For never had that law been so fulfilled in all its parts as it was in the life of the God-man. For man to fulfill it, would have been much; for an angel to fulfill it, would have been more; but for Him who was God and man to fulfill it, was yet unspeakably more. So satisfied is Jehovah with this divine law-fulfilling, and with Him who so gloriously fulfilled it, that He is willing to pass from or cancel all the law's sentences against us; nay, to deal with us as partakers of or identified with this law-ful-filling, if we will but agree to give up all personal claims to His favor, and accept the claims of Him who hath magnified the law and made it honorable.

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(1)"How art thou righteous before God? Only by a true faith in Jesus Christ; insomuch that if my conscience accuse me that I have grievously transgressed against all the commandments of God, nor have kept any one of them, and, moreover, am still prone to evil; yet,

notwithstanding, the full and perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ is imputed and given to me, without any merit of mine, of the mere mercy of God, even as if I had never committed any sin, or as if no spot at all did cleave to me, yea, as if I myself had perfectly performed that obedience which Christ performed for me.... Why is Christ's sacrifice and obedience called the material cause of our justification? For that it is the same for which we are made righteous (Rom 5:19).-Is Christ's death and last passion only imputed to us, or also the obedience of His life? Both. His satisfaction by punishment meriteth for us the remission of sin. This is His passive obedience. Then there is the obedience called active obedience.... We owed to God not only punishment for the transgression, but also a perfect obedience. All this hath Christ satisfied for us. But our justification is most ascribed to Christ's suffering, blood-shedding, and death" (Heidelberg Catechism).

(2)That is: "Therein is the righteousness of God, which is by faith, revealed to be believed."

(3)That is: The righteousness which God has provided for us, the righteousness of Him who is God, and which comes to us by believing in Christ, is presented to all without distinction, and is put upon all who believe for a robe or covering; as it is written "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 13:14); and again, "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal 3:27).

(4)"I may boldly glory of all the victory which He obtaineth over the law, sin, death, the devil; and may challenge to myself all His works, even as if they were my own, and I myself had done them.... Wherefore, when the law shall come and accuse thee that thou dost not observe it, send it to Christ, and say, There is that man who hath fulfilled the law; to Him I cleave; He hath fulfilled it for me, and hath given His fulfilling unto me. When it heareth these things, it will be quiet. If sin come, and would have thee by the throat, send it to Christ, and say, As much as thou mayest do against Him, so much

right shalt thou have against me; for I am in Him, and He is in me. If death creep upon thee and attempt to devour thee, say unto it, Good mistress Death, dost thou know this man? Come, bite out His tooth: hast thou forgotten how little thy biting prevailed with Him once? Go to! if it be a pleasure unto thee, encounter Him again. Thou hast persuaded thyself that thou shouldest have prevailed somewhat against Him when He did hang between two thieves, and died an ignominious death; but what didst thou gain thereby? Thou didst bite, indeed, but it turned worst to thyself. I pertain to this man; I am His, and He is mine, and where He abideth I will abide. Thou couldst hurt Him nothing; therefore let me alone....'

Hereof we may easily understand what kind of works those be which make us entire and righteous before God. Surely they are the works of another...Salvation hath come unto all by Jesus Christ, as by the works of another; wherefore this is diligently to be noted, that our felicity doth not consist in our own works, but in the works of another, namely, of Christ Jesus our Savior, which we obtain through faith only in Him... Before God this thy righteousness is of no estimation. Thou must set in place thereof another, namely mine. This God my Father doth allow. I have appeased the wrath of God, and of an angry Judge have made Him a gentle, merciful, and gracious Father. Believe this, and it goeth well with thee; thou art then safe, entire, and righteous. Beware that thou presume not to deal before God with thine own works. But if thou wilt do anything with Him, creep into me, put on me, and thou shalt obtain of my Father whatsoever thou desirest."- LUTHER, Sermon on John 20:24-29

(5)In this there is no confusion of personalities; no transfer of moral character; no exchange of inherent sin on the one hand, or inherent righteousness on the other; no literal or physical identity; but a judicial verdict or sentence is given in our favor, constituting us partakers in law of all the results or fruits of the work of Him whom

God, as Judge, appointed our Substitute. "As we are made guilty of Adam's sin, which is not inherent in us, but only imputed to us; so are we made righteous by the righteousness of Christ, which is not inherent in us, but only imputed to us" (Owen).

The legal or judicial gift of benefits is certainly different from the personal meriting of them; but the benefits are not less real, nor their possession less sure. That they should come to us in a righteous way, with the consent and sanction of law, is the great thing. The reality is to be measured by the actual possession and enjoyment of the benefits, and not by the way in which they come. The security for them lies in this, that they reach us in a legal and honorable way.

## **Chapter 6**

### **The Righteousness of God Reckoned to Us**

This "everlasting righteousness" comes to us through believing. We are "justified by faith" (Rom 5:1), the fruit of which is "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

It is of this "everlasting righteousness" that the Apostle Peter speaks when he begins his second epistle thus: "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet 1:1). [\(1\)](#)

This righteousness is "reckoned" or "imputed" to all who believe; so that they are treated by God as if it were actually theirs. They are

entitled to claim all that which such righteousness can merit from God, as the Judge of righteous claims. It does not become ours gradually, or in fragments or drops; but is transferred to us all at once. It is not that so much of it is reckoned to us (so much to account, as men in business say) in proportion to the strength of our faith, or the warmth of our love, or the fervor of our prayers; but the whole of it passes over to us by imputation: we are "accepted in the Beloved" (Eph 1:6); we are "complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power" (Col 2:10). In its whole quality and quantity it is transferred to us. Its perfection represents us before God; and its preciousness, with all that that preciousness can purchase for us, henceforth belongs to us (1 Pet 1:7). [\(2\)](#)

The stone, the chief cornerstone, elect and precious,-this stone in all its preciousness is ours, not only for resting on, not only for acceptance, but for whatever its divine value can purchase for us. Possessed of this preciousness (imputed, but still ours), we go into the heavenly market, and buy what we need without stint or end. We get everything upon the credit of His name, and because not only has our unworthiness ceased to be recognized by God in His dealings with us, but our demerit been supplanted by the merit of One who is absolutely and divinely perfect. In His name we carry on all our transactions with God, and obtain all that we need by simply using it as our plea. The things that He did not do were laid to His charge, and He was treated as if He had done them all; so the things that He did do are put to our account, and we are treated by God as if we had done them all.

This is the scriptural meaning of reckoning or imputing, both in the Old Testament and the New. Let us look at a few of these.

Genesis 15:6: "It was imputed to him for righteousness;" i.e. it was so reckoned to him, that in virtue of it he was treated as being what he was not.

Genesis 31:15: "Are we not counted of him strangers?" Are we not treated by him as if we were strangers, not children?

Leviticus 7:18: "Neither shall it be imputed unto him that offereth it." The excellence of the peace-offering shall not be counted to him.

Numbers 18:27: "Your heave-offering shall be reckoned unto you as though it were the corn of the threshing-floor." It shall be accepted by God as if it were the whole harvest, and ye shall be treated by Him accordingly.

2 Samuel 19:19: "Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me, neither do thou remember that which thy servant did perversely." Do not deal with me according to my iniquity.

Psalms 32:2: "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity"; to whom God does not reckon his iniquities, but treats him as if they were not (see also Psalm 106:31).

Romans 4:3: "It was counted to him for righteousness."

Romans 4:5: "His faith is counted for righteousness"; i.e., not as the righteousness, or as the substitution for it, but as bringing him into righteousness.

Romans 4:6: "Unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works."

Romans 4:8: "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."



Romans 4:11: "That righteousness might be imputed to them also."

Romans 4:24: "To whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead."

2 Corinthians 5:19: "Not imputing their trespasses unto them."

Galatians 3:6: "It was accounted to him for righteousness."

Thus the idea of reckoning to one what does not belong to him, and treating him as if he really possessed all that is reckoned to him, comes out very clearly. (3) This is God's way of lifting man out of the horrible pit and the miry clay; of giving him a standing and a privilege and a hope far beyond that which mere pardon gives, and no less far above that which the first Adam lost. To be righteous according to the righteousness of the first Adam, would have been much; but to be righteous according to the righteousness of the last Adam, the Lord from heaven, is unspeakably and inconceivably more.

"It is God that justifies"; and He does so by imputing to us a righteousness which warrants Him as the Judge to justify the unrighteous freely.

It is not simply because of this righteousness that Jehovah justifies; but by legally transferring it to us, so that we can use it, and plead it, and appear before God in it, just as if it were wholly our own. Romanists and Socinians have set themselves strongly against the doctrine of "imputed righteousness." But there it stands, written clearly and legibly in the divine word. There it stands, an essential part of the great Bible truth concerning sacrifice and substitution and suretyship. It is as deeply written in the book of Leviticus as in the

Epistle to the Romans. It spreads itself over all Scripture; and rises gloriously into view in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, where the "obedience unto death" which makes up this righteousness was completed. (4) There He, who as our substitute took flesh and was born at Bethlehem,-who as our substitute passed through earth, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,-consummated His substitution, and brought in the "everlasting righteousness"; the righteousness of which the apostle spoke when he reasoned that, "as by the disobedience of one many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Rom 5:19); and when he proclaimed his abnegation of all other righteousnesses: "and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is by the faith of Christ, even the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phil 3:9). This is "the gift of righteousness" regarding which he says: "If by one man's offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ" (Rom 5:17). The one man's offense rests upon all men "to condemnation" (Rom 5:18); so the one Man's righteousness, as the counteraction or removal of this condemnation, is available and efficacious "unto justification of life." The imputation of the first Adam's sin to us, and of the last Adam's righteousness, are thus placed side by side. The transference of our guilt to the Divine Substitute, and the transference of that Substitute's righteousness or perfection to us, must stand or fall together.

This righteousness of God was no common righteousness. It was the righteousness of Him who was both God and man; and therefore it was not only the righteousness of God, but in addition to this it was the righteousness of man. It embodied and exhibited all uncreated and all created perfection. Never had the like been seen or heard of in heaven or on earth before. It was the twofold perfection of

Creatorhood and Creatorship in one resplendent center, one glorious Person; and the dignity of that Person gave a perfection, a vastness, a length and breadth, a height and depth, to that righteousness which never had been equaled, and which never shall be equaled for ever. It is the perfection of perfection; the excellency of excellency; the holiness of holiness. It is that in which God preeminently delighteth. Never had His law been so kept and honored before. Son of God and Son of man in one person, He in this twofold character keeps the Father's law, and in keeping it provides a righteousness so large and full, that it can be shared with others, transferred to others, imputed to others, and God be glorified (as well as the sinner saved) by the transference and imputation. Never had God been so loved as now; with all divine love and with all human love. Never had God been so served and obeyed, as now He has been by Him who is "God manifest in flesh." Never had God found one before, who for love to the holy law was willing to become its victim that it might be honored; who for love to God was willing not only to be made under the law, but by thus coming under it, to subject Himself to death, even the death of the cross; who for love to the fallen creature was willing to take the sinner's place, to bear the sinner's burden, to undergo the sinner's penalty, to assume the sinner's curse, to die the sinner's death of shame and anguish, and to go down in darkness to the sinner's grave.

The objections against imputation all resolve themselves into objections against substitution in any form. Vicarious suffering is even more unreasonable to some than vicarious obedience; and the arguments used in assailing the former apply with greater force against the latter. Yet human law recognizes both; the "laws of nature" show the existence of both; and the divine law, as interpreted by the great Lawgiver Himself, acknowledges both. Man is willing to act on the principle of substitution or representation by another in

earthly transactions, such as the payment of debt, or the performance of duty, or the descent of property; but he is not so willing to admit it, or proceed upon it, in the great transaction between him and God as to condemnation and righteousness. That to which he objects not in temporal things, he repudiates in spiritual as unjust and unreasonable; giving one man the benefit of another's doings or another's sufferings; treating the man who has not paid the debt as if he had done so, because another has paid it for him; or recognizing the legal right of a man to large wealth or a vast estate, no part of which he had earned or deserved, but which had come to him as the gift and fruit of another's lifetime's toil.

Men object not to receive any kind or amount of this world's goods from another, though they have done nothing to deserve them, but everything to make them unworthy of them; but they refuse to accept the favor of God, and a standing in righteousness before Him, on the ground of what a Substitute has done and suffered. In earthly things they are willing to be represented by another, but not in heavenly things. The former is all fair, and just, and legal; the latter is absurd, an insult to their understanding, and a depreciation of their worth! Yet if they prized the heavenly as much as they do the earthly blessing, they would not entertain such scruples nor raise such objections as to receiving it from another as the result of his work. If God is willing that Christ should represent us, who are we, that we should refuse to be represented by Him? If God is willing to deal with us on the footing of Christ's obedience, and to reckon that obedience to us as if it had been our own, who are we, that we should reject such a method of blessing, and call it unjust and impossible? This principle or theory of representation, of one man being treated far beyond his deserts in virtue of his being legally entitled to use the name or claims of another, runs through all earthly transaction; and why should it not in like manner pervade the heavenly?

Rejection of "imputed righteousness" because the words do not actually occur in Scripture, is foolish and weak. Such terms as Christianity, the Trinity, the Eucharist, Plenary Inspiration, are not to be found in the Bible; yet, inasmuch as the thing, or object, or truth which these words truly and accurately cover is there, the term is received as substantially accurate, and made use of without scruple. Such an objection savors more of little-minded caviling than of the truth-seeking simplicity of faith. (5)

Refusal to accept the divine "theory" or doctrine of representation in and by another, indicates in many cases mere indifference to the blessing to be received; in others, resentment of the way in which that doctrine utterly sets aside all excellency or merit on our part. Men will win the kingdom for themselves; they will deserve eternal life; they will not take forgiveness or righteousness freely from another's hands; or be indebted to a Substitute for what they are persuaded they can earn by their personal doings. Because the plan of representation or substitution is distasteful and humbling, they call it absurd and unjust. They refuse a heavenly inheritance on such terms, while perhaps at the very moment they are accepting an earthly estate on terms as totally irrespective of their own labor or goodness.

The Judge must either be the justifier or the condemner. The Judge is Jehovah. It is His office to condemn, it is His office to justify. He does not condemn by infusing sin into the person who appears before Him; so He does not justify by infusing righteousness into the sinner whom He acquits. It is as Judge that He acquits. But He does not merely acquit or absolve. He goes beyond this. The marvelous way in which He has met the claims of justice, so as to enable Him to pronounce a righteous acquittal, enables Him to replace, either on

his own former place of innocence, or on a higher, the sinner whom He absolves so freely and so completely. It was by representation or substitution of the just for the unjust that He was enabled to acquit; and it is by the same representation or substitution that He lifts into a more glorious position the acquitted man.

The representative or substitute being the Son of God, and therefore of infinite dignity in His person, the excellency of that which He is and does, when conveyed or reckoned to another, gives that other a claim to be treated far higher than he could otherwise in any circumstances have possessed. Some may have expressed this transference in terms too strong and absolute, as if we actually became as righteous as He is, as near to God as He is, as infinitely the objects of the Father's love as He is. But though there may have been unwise utterances on this point, which have needlessly afforded cause of offense and objection, it remains true that the man who believes in Jesus Christ, from the moment that he so believes, not only receives divine absolution from all guilt, but is so made legally possessor of His infinite righteousness, that all to which that righteousness entitles becomes his, and he is henceforth treated by God according to the perfection of the perfect One, as if that perfection had been his own. "As He is, so are we [even] in THIS world" (1 John 4:17), that is, even now, in our state of imperfection, though men of unclean lips, and though dwelling among a people of unclean lips; as it is elsewhere written, "There is therefore NOW [even now] no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1). Not only are we "delivered from the wrath to come" (1 Thess 1:10); not only shall we "not come into condemnation" (John 5:24); not only are we "justified from all things" (Acts 13:39); but we are "made [literally, we 'become'] THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD in Him" (2 Cor 5:21).

The transaction is not one of borrowing. The perfection made over to us is given, not lent, by God. It becomes ours in law, ours for all legal ends; ours as efficaciously as if it had been from first to last our very own in deed.

The transaction is a real one between the sinner and God, and carries with it all legal consequences, just as if the sinner had really discharged his own debts and obtained a judicial absolver from all further claims whatever; a receipt in full from Him to whom the great debt was due.

The transaction is one to which all the parties concerned have consented, as being fully satisfied that injury has been done to none; nay, that all have been greatly more benefited by this mode of settlement than by the more direct one, of the parties punishable undergoing the punishment in their own persons. When thus not merely no injustice is done to any one, but when more than justice is done to all; when no one is defrauded, but when each gets far more than his due, how foolish, how preposterous, to speak of imputation as a violation of law, and a subversion of the principles of righteous government!

The transaction is not one of indifference to sin, or oblitative of the distinction between righteousness and unrighteousness. It is one which, of all that can be imagined, is most fitted to show the evil of evil, the malignity of sin, the divine hatred of all departure from perfection, the regard which God has to His law, His awful appreciation of justice, and His determination to secure, at any cost,-even the death of His Son,-the righteous foundations of the universe, and the sanctities of His eternal throne.

If the Christ of God, in His sorrowful life below, be but a specimen of suffering humanity, or a model of patient calmness under wrong, not

one of these things is manifested or secured. He is but one fragment more of a confused and disordered world, where everything has broken loose from its anchorage, and each is dashing against the other in unmanageable chaos, without any prospect of a holy or tranquil issue. He is an example of the complete triumph of evil over goodness, of wrong over right, of Satan over God,-one from whose history we can draw only this terrific conclusion, that God has lost the control of His own world; that sin has become too great a power for God either to regulate or extirpate; that the utmost that God can do is to produce a rare example of suffering holiness, which He allows the world to tread upon without being able effectually to interfere; that righteousness, after ages of buffeting and scorn, must retire from the field in utter helplessness, and permit the unchecked reign of evil.

If the cross be the mere exhibition of self-sacrifice and patient meekness, then the hope of the world is gone. We had always thought that there was a potent purpose of God at work in connection with the sin-bearing work of the holy Sufferer, which, allowing sin for a season to develop itself, was preparing and evolving a power which would utterly overthrow it, and sweep earth clean of evil, moral and physical. But if the crucified Christ be the mere self-denying man, we have nothing more at work for the overthrow of evil than has again and again been witnessed, when some hero or martyr rose above the level of his age to protest against evils which he could not eradicate, and to bear witness in life and death for truth and righteousness,-in vain.

The transaction is, in all its aspects, and in its bearings on all parties and interests, strictly and nobly righteous. It provides a righteous channel through which God's free love may flow down to man. It lays a righteous foundation for the pardon of sin. It secures a righteous



welcome for the returning sinner. It makes the justification of the justified even more righteous than his condemnation would have been; while it makes the condemnation of the condemned not only doubly righteous, but at once a vindication and an exhibition of infinite and immutable justice.

There can be no justification without some kind of righteousness; and according to the nature or value of that righteousness will the justification be. That justification will necessarily partake of the value of the righteousness which justifies. If the righteousness be poor and finite, our standing as justified men will be the same. If it be glorious and divine, even such will our standing be. God the justifier, acting according to the excellency of that righteousness, and recognising its claims in behalf of all who consent to be treated according to its value, deals with each believing man, weak as his faith may be, in conformity with the demands of that righteousness. All that it can claim for us we may ask and expect; all that it can claim for us God will assuredly bestow. He by whom, in believing, we consent to be represented, puts in the claim for us, in His name; and the demands of that name are as just as they are irresistible.

Our legal responsibilities as transgressors of the law are transferred to Him; and His legal claims, as the fulfiller of the law, pass over to us. It is not a transference of characters nor an exchange of persons that we mean by this; but a transference of liabilities, an exchange of judicial demands. Very strikingly is the case between the sinner and God put in our Lord's parable of the two debtors, of which these words are the sum: "When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both" (Luke 7:42). Here is our thorough bankruptcy, and God's full discharge. What can law say to us after this? "It is God that justifieth." We are bankrupts; our assets are nothing; God looks at the case, pities us, and clears everything.

The epithet "fictitious" which some have applied to this representation need not trouble or alarm us. The question with us is not, "Can we clear up fully the abstract principles which the transaction embodies?" but, "Does it carry with it legal consequences, by which we are set in a new standing before God, and entitled to plead, in all our dealings with God, the meritoriousness of an infinitely perfect life, the payment effected in behalf of those who had nothing to pay, by an infinitely perfect death?"

Thus 'grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord' (Rom 5:21). "Through (dia) righteousness," and also "through (dia) Jesus Christ our Lord"; the one the active instrument, the other the efficient cause: (1) God the justifier, (2) Christ the cause, (3) righteousness the instrument. God's free love has found for itself a righteous channel, along which it flows in all its fullness to the ungodly. For while all that the believing man receives, he receives from GRACE; yet it is not less true that all that he believes, he receives from RIGHTEOUSNESS; from the hand of a righteous God, acting according to the claims of a righteousness which is absolutely and divinely perfect.

He who refuses to be represented by another before God, must represent himself, and draw near to God on the strength of what he is in himself, or what he has done. How he is likely to fare in such an approach, let his own conscience tell him, if he will not believe the explicit declaration of the Holy Spirit, that "through Him (Christ) we have access by one Spirit to the Father" (Eph 2:18); or Christ's own affirmation concerning this: "I am the way," and "I am the door" (John 10:9, 14:6).

As for him who, conscious of unfitness to draw near to God by reason of personal imperfection, is willing to be represented by the Son of

God, and to substitute a divine claim and merit for a human; let him know that God is willing to receive him with all his imperfection, because of the perfection of another, legally transferred to him by the just God and Judge; that God is presenting to him a righteousness not only sufficient to clear him from all guilt, and to pay his penalty to the full, but to exalt him to a new rank and dignity, such as he could not possibly acquire by the labors or prayers of goodnesses of ten thousand such lives as his own.

"Christ is all and in all" (Col 3:11). He who knows this, knows what fully satisfies and cheers. He who knows this best has the deepest and truest peace: for he has learned the secret of being always a sinner, yet always righteous; always incomplete, yet always complete; always empty, and yet always full; always poor, and yet always rich. We would not say of that fullness, "Drink deep or taste not," for even to taste is to be blest. But we say, Drink deep; for he who drinks deepest is the happiest as well as the holiest man. [\(6\)](#)

Recognition of the PERFECTION of the Lord Jesus Christ, as to the personal excellency, official suitableness, and vicarious value, is that only which satisfies the heart and conscience of the sinner. It satisfies the former by presenting it with the most lovable of all lovable objects on which a heart can rest; the latter by furnishing it with that which can alone remove from the trembling conscience every possible ground for claim. True knowledge of the person of Him who is "the Christ of God," appreciation of His completed sacrifice, and living attachment to Himself, can alone meet the evil condition into which man has sunk; not only lifting him out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay; not only setting his feet upon the eternal rock; but raising him up into a region of peace and holiness such as no less costly means could have accomplished for the fallen son of Adam.

"He who knew no sin was made sin for us." On this basis we build for eternity. The assumption of all our legal responsibilities by a divine Substitute is that which brings us deliverance. These responsibilities were great, and no effort of ours to rid ourselves of them could possibly succeed. They must all be fully met. Such judicial claims as are brought against the sinner cannot be waived. They are righteous claims, and must be settled righteously. God offers to settle them for us, by transferring them to One who can be answerable for them. The basis of this eternal settlement was laid at the cross, and on that basis God is willing to deal with any sinner for the complete canceling of all his liabilities.

The second man came, as the Righteous One, to undo by His righteousness all that the first man, as the unrighteous one, had done by his unrighteousness. Yet such is the power of sin, that it took thirty-three years of righteousness to undo what one act of unrighteousness had done. One act of disobedience to one statute had done the evil; a lifetime's obedience to the whole law of God is required for the undoing. Only by this can man be replaced in that condition of righteousness in which God can accept him, and the law recognize him as entitled to blessing.

Our characters are not transferred to Christ, but our liabilities are; and in our acceptance of God's mode of transference, we make the complete exchange by which we are absolved from all guilt, and enter into a state of "no condemnation." Sin reckoned to Christ as our substitute, and righteousness reckoned to us as the acceptors of that substitute: this is deliverance, and peace, and life eternal.

"Labour therefore diligently, that not only out of the time of temptation, but also in the danger and conflict of death, when thy conscience is thoroughly afraid with the remembrance of thy sins

past, and the devil assaulteth thee with great violence, going about to overwhelm thee with heaps, floods, and whole seas of sins, to terrify thee, to draw thee from Christ, and to drive thee to despair; that then, I say, thou mayest be able to say with some confidence, Christ the Son of God was given, not for the righteous and holy, but for the unrighteous and sinners. If I were righteous, and had no sin, I should have no need of Christ to be my reconciler, why then, o thou peevish holy Satan, wilt thou make me to be holy, and to seek righteousness in myself, when in very deed I have nothing in me but sins, and most grievous sins? Not feigned or trifling sins, but such as are against the first table; to wit, great infidelity, doubting, despair, contempt of God, hatred, ignorance, and blaspheming of God, unthankfulness, abusing of God's name, neglecting, loathing, and despising the word of God, and such like."-LUTHER.

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(1)"TO them that have obtained like precious faith with us," i.e. with us Jews, who have believed now, and with all our fathers of the past ages, "through (or more properly in) the righteousness of Him who is our God and Savior." Thus that which is elsewhere called "the righteousness of God" is here called "the righteousness of our God and Savior," i.e. of Christ. So that "the righteousness of Christ" is a scriptural expression.

(2)In the high priest's breastplate were twelve precious stones, on which the names of the twelve tribes were written. The names thus graven shone with all the glory of the gems which contained them. Thus are our names written on the breastplate of the greater High Priest, not only for remembrance, but for glory. They are enveloped in His glory, and shine as if all that glory were their own. The luster of the sardius, and the topaz, and the diamond, chased in gold, took away that which was dark and earthly about the name, or the person, or the tribe; so the more resplendent luster of the heavenly gems which glitter in the breastplate of the great Intercessor, not only

hides all that is unlustrous in us, but gives to us a beauty such as belongs only to Him.

(3) See the Greek of Isa 53:3,4. "He was despised, and we esteemed Him not"; i.e. refused to reckon Him to be what He was. "We did not esteem Him stricken, smitten of God"; we reckoned Him to be under the curse of God. The word in these two sentences is the same as is elsewhere rendered 'imputed.'

(4) "Justifying righteousness is the doing and suffering of Christ when He was in the world. This is clear, because we are said to be justified by His obedience-His obedience to the law (Rom 5:19,10:4). This righteousness resides in and with the person of Christ; it is of a justifying virtue only by imputation, i.e. by God's reckoning it to us, even as our sins made the Lord Jesus a sinner, nay sin, i.e. by God's reckoning it to Him. The righteousness of God, i.e. a righteousness of God's completing, a righteousness of God's bestowing, a righteousness that God gives unto and puts upon all them that believe,-a righteousness that stands in the works of Christ, and that is imputed both by the grace and justice of God. The righteousness by which we stand just before God, from the curse, was performed long ago by the person of Christ." - BUNYAN'S Sermon on Justification by Imputed Righteousness.

(5) Thus old Anthony Burgess, in 1655, wrote regarding imputation: 'The righteousness the believer hath is imputed. It is an accounted or reckoned righteousness to him; it is not that which he hath inherently in himself, but God through Christ doth esteem of him as if he had it, and so deals with him as wholly righteous. This is a passive, not an active righteousness, -a righteousness we receive, not that we do. This doctrine of imputed righteousness is by all erroneous persons to be judged to be like the abomination of desolation. However heretical persons contradict one another in other things, yet against this they are unanimously conspiring. It is well enough known what reproaches and mocks are put upon it by

the Popish party, calling it the putative and chimerical righteousness. The Socinians abominate it. The Castellians flout at it, saying they have an imputed learning, and imputed modesty, that hold imputed righteousness. The Arminians, though they grant faith to be accounted for righteousness, yet think it an idol of the Protestants' brain to say that Christ's righteousness is imputed to us, and say that it is nowhere expressed in Scripture. Let this satisfy us, that the Scripture doth often mention an imputed righteousness, and therefore that it should not be a matter of reproach, but worthy of all acceptance, and certainly, seeing none of us have such an inherent righteousness within ourselves as is able to endure before so perfect and holy a God, we ought greatly to rejoice in the goodness and mercy of God, who hath provided such glorious robes for us, that when we were wholly naked and undone, hath procured a righteousness for us that neither men nor angels could bring about."

(6)"Think not that to live always on Christ for justification is a low and beggarly thing,-a staying at the foundation. For, let me tell you, depart from a sense of the meritorious means of your justification before God, and you will quickly grow light, and frothy, and vain; you will be subject to errors and delusions, for this is not to 'hold the head,' from which nourishment is administered. Why not live upon Christ alway; and especially as He standeth the Mediator between God and the soul, defending thee with the merit of His blood, and covering thee with His infinite righteousness from the wrath of God and the curse of the law? Can there be any greater comfort ministered to thee, than to know that thy person stands just before God; just, and justified from all things that would otherwise swallow thee up? Is peace with God and assurance of heaven of so little respect with thee, that thou slightest the very foundation thereof, even faith in the blood and righteousness of Christ." - BUNYAN, Justification by Imputed Righteousness.

# Chapter 7

## Not Faith, But Christ

Our justification is the direct result of our believing the gospel; our knowledge of our own justification comes from believing God's promise of justification to every one who believes these glad tidings. For there is not only the divine testimony, but there is the promise annexed to it, assuring eternal life to every one who receives that testimony. There is first, then, a believed Gospel, and then there is a believed promise. The latter is the "appropriation," as it is called; which, after all, is nothing but the acceptance of the promise which is everywhere coupled with the gospel message. The believed gospel saves; but it is the believed promise that assures us of this salvation.

Yet, after all, faith is not our righteousness. It is accounted to us in order to (eis) righteousness (Rom 4:5), but not as righteousness; for in that case it would be a work like any other doing of man, and as such would be incompatible with the righteousness of the Son of God; the "righteousness which is by faith." Faith connects us with the righteousness, and is therefore totally distinct from it. To confound the one with the other is to subvert the whole gospel of the grace of God. Our act of faith must ever be a separate thing from that which we believe.

God reckons the believing man as having done all righteousness, though he has not done any, and though his faith is not righteousness. In this sense it is that faith is counted to us for, or in



order to, righteousness,-and that we are "justified by faith." Faith does not justify as a work, or as a moral act, or a piece of goodness, nor as a gift of the Spirit, but simply because it is the bond between us and the Substitute; a very slender bond in one sense, but strong as iron in another. The work of Christ for us is the object of faith; the Spirit's work in us is that which produces this faith: it is out of the former, not of the latter, that our peace and justification come. Without the touch of the rod the water would not have gushed forth; yet it was the rock, and not the rod, that contained the water.

The bringer of the sacrifice into the tabernacle was to lay his hand upon the head of the sheep or the bullock, otherwise the offering would not have been accepted for him. But the laying on of his hand was not the same as the victim on which it was laid. The serpent-bitten Israelite was to look at the uplifted serpent of brass in order to be healed. But his looking was not the brazen serpent. We may say it was his looking that healed him, just as the Lord said, "Thy faith hath saved thee"; but this is figurative language. It was not his act of looking that healed him, but the object to which he looked. So faith is not our righteousness: it merely knits us to the righteous One, and makes us partakers of His righteousness. By a natural figure of speech, faith is often magnified into something great; whereas it is really nothing but our consenting to be saved by another: its supposed magnitude is derived from the greatness of the object which it grasps, the excellence of the righteousness which it accepts. Its preciousness is not its own, but the preciousness of Him to whom it links us.

Faith is not our physician; it only brings us to the Physician. It is not even our medicine; it only administers the medicine, divinely prepared by Him who "healeth all our diseases." In all our believing, let us remember God's word to Israel: "I am Jehovah, that healeth

thee" (Exo 14:26). Our faith is but our touching Jesus; and what is even this, in reality, but His touching us?

Faith is not our savior. It was not faith that was born at Bethlehem and died on Golgotha for us. It was not faith that loved us, and gave itself for us; that bore our sins in its own body on the tree; that died and rose again for our sins. Faith is one thing, the Savior is another. Faith is one thing, and the cross is another. Let us not confound them, nor ascribe to a poor, imperfect act of man, that which belongs exclusively to the Son of the Living God.

Faith is not perfection. Yet only by perfection can we be saved; either our own or another's. That which is imperfect cannot justify, and an imperfect faith could not in any sense be a righteousness. If it is to justify, it must be perfect. It must be like "the Lamb, without blemish and without spot." An imperfect faith may connect us with the perfection of another; but it cannot of itself do aught for us, either in protecting us from wrath or securing the divine acquittal. All faith here is imperfect; and our security is this, that it matters not how poor or weak our faith may be: if it touches the perfect One, all is well. The touch draws out the virtue that is in Him, and we are saved. The slightest imperfection in our faith, if faith were our righteousness, would be fatal to every hope. But the imperfection of our faith, however great, if faith be but the approximation or contact between us and the fullness of the Substitute, is no hindrance to our participation of His righteousness. God has asked and provided a perfect righteousness; He nowhere asks nor expects a perfect faith. An earthenware pitcher can convey water to a traveler's thirsty lips as well as one of gold; nay, a broken vessel, even if there be but "a shard to take water from the pit" (Isa 30:14), will suffice. So a feeble, very feeble faith, will connect us with the righteousness of the Son of God; the faith, perhaps, that can only cry, "Lord, I believe; help mine

unbelief."

Faith is not satisfaction to God. In no sense and in no aspect can faith be said to satisfy God, or to satisfy the law. Yet if it is to be our righteousness, it must satisfy. Being imperfect, it cannot satisfy; being human, it cannot satisfy, even though it were perfect. That which satisfies must be capable of bearing our guilt; and that which bears our guilt must be not only perfect, but divine. It is a sin-bearer that we need, and our faith cannot be a sin-bearer. Faith can expiate no guilt; can accomplish no propitiation; can pay no penalty; can wash away no stain; can provide no righteousness. It brings us to the cross, where there is expiation, and propitiation, and payment, and cleansing, and righteousness; but in itself it has no merit and no virtue.

Faith is not Christ, nor the cross of Christ. Faith is not the blood, nor the sacrifice; it is not the altar, nor the laver, nor the mercy-seat, nor the incense. It does not work, but accepts a work done ages ago; it does not wash, but leads us to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. It does not create; it merely links us to that new thing which was created when the "everlasting righteousness" was brought in (Dan 9:24).

And as faith goes on, so it continues; always the beggar's outstretched hand, never the rich man's gold; always the cable, never the anchor; the knocker, not the door, or the palace, or the table; the handmaid, not the mistress; the lattice which lets in the light, not the sun.

Without worthiness in itself, it knits us to the infinite worthiness of Him in whom the Father delights; and so knitting us, presents us perfect in the perfection of another. Though it is not the foundation

laid in Zion, it brings us to that foundation, and keeps us there, "grounded and settled" (Col 1:23), that we may not be moved away from the hope of the gospel. Though it is not "the gospel," the "glad tidings," it receives these good news as God's eternal verities, and bids the soul rejoice in them; though it is not the burnt-offering, it stands still and gazes on the ascending flame, which assures us that the wrath which should have consumed the sinner has fallen upon the Substitute.

Though faith is not "the righteousness," it is the tie between it and us. It realizes our present standing before God in the excellency of His own Son; and it tells us that our eternal standing, in the ages to come, is in the same excellency, and depends on the perpetuity of that righteousness which can never change. For never shall we put off that Christ whom we put on when we believed (Rom 12:14; Gal 3:27). This divine raiment is "to everlasting." It waxes not old, it cannot be rent, and its beauty fadeth not away.

Nor does faith lead us away from that cross to which at first it led us. Some in our day speak as if we soon got beyond the cross, and might leave it behind; that the cross having done all it could do for us when first we came under its shadow, we may quit it and go forward; that to remain always at the cross is to be babes, not men.

But what is the cross? It is not the mere wooden pole, or some imitation of it, such as Romanists use. These we may safely leave behind us. We need not pitch our tent upon the literal Golgotha, or in Joseph's garden. But the great truth which the cross embodies we can no more part with than we can part with life eternal. In this sense, to turn our back upon the cross is to turn our back upon Christ crucified,-to give up our connection with the Lamb that was slain. The truth is, that all that Christ did and suffered, from the manger to

the tomb, forms one glorious whole, no part of which shall ever become needless or obsolete; no part of which can ever leave without forsaking the whole. I am always at the manger, and yet I know that mere incarnation cannot save; always at Gethsemane, and yet I believe that its agony was not the finished work; always at the cross, with my face toward it, and my eye on the crucified One, and yet I am persuaded that the sacrifice there was completed once for all; always looking into the grave, though I rejoice that it is empty, and that "He is not here, but is risen"; always resting (with the angel) on the stone that was rolled away, and handling the grave-clothes, and realizing a risen Christ, nay, an ascended and interceding Lord; yet on no pretext whatever leaving any part of my Lord's life or death behind me, but unceasingly keeping up my connection with Him, as born, living, dying, buried, and rising again, and drawing out from each part some new blessing every day and hour.

Man, in his natural spirit of self-justifying legalism, has tried to get away from the cross of Christ and its perfection, or to erect another cross instead, or to set up a screen of ornaments between himself and it, or to alter its true meaning into something more congenial to his tastes, or to transfer the virtue of it to some act or performance or feeling of its own. Thus the simplicity of the cross is nullified, and its saving power is denied.

For the cross saves completely, or not at all. Our faith does not divide the work of salvation between itself and the cross. It is the acknowledgment that the cross alone saves, and that it saves alone. Faith adds nothing to the cross, nor to its healing virtue. It owns the fullness, and sufficiency, and suitableness of the work done there, and bids the toiling spirit cease from its labors and enter into rest. Faith does not come to Calvary to do anything. It comes to see the glorious spectacle of all things done, and to accept this completion

without a misgiving as to its efficacy. It listens to the "It is finished!" of the Sin-bearer, and says, "Amen." Where faith begins, there labor ends,-labor, I mean, "for" life and pardon. Faith is rest, not toil. It is the giving up all the former weary efforts to do or feel something good, in order to induce God to love and pardon; and the calm reception of the truth so long rejected, that God is not waiting for any such inducements, but loves and pardons of His own goodwill, and is showing that good will to any sinner who will come to Him on such a footing, casting away his own performances or goodneses, and relying implicitly upon the free love of Him who so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son.

Faith is the acknowledgment of the entire absence of all goodness in us, and the recognition of the cross as the substitute for all the want on our part. Faith saves, because it owns the complete salvation of another, and not because it contributes anything to that salvation. There is no dividing or sharing the work between our own belief and Him in whom we believe. The whole work is His, not ours, from the first to last. Faith does not believe in itself, but in the Son of God. Like the beggar, it receives everything, but gives nothing. It consents to be a debtor for ever to the free love of God. Its resting-place is the foundation laid in Zion. It rejoices in another, not in itself. Its song is, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by His mercy He saved us."

Christ crucified is to be the burden of our preaching, and the substance of our belief, from first to last. At no time in the saint's life does he cease to need the cross; though at times he may feel that his special need, in spiritual perplexity or the exigency of conflict with evil, may be the incarnation, or the agony in the garden, or the resurrection, or the hope of the promised advent, to be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe.

But the question is not, "What truths are we to believe?" but, What truths are we to believe FOR JUSTIFICATION?

That Christ is to come again in glory and in majesty, as Judge and King, is an article of the Christian faith, the disbelief of which would almost lead us to doubt the Christianity of him who disbelieves it. Yet we are not in any sense justified by the second advent of our Lord, but solely by His first. We believe in His ascension, yet our justification is not connected with it. So we believe His resurrection, yet we are not justified by faith in it, but by faith in His death,-that death which made Him at once our propitiation and our righteousness.

"He was raised again on account of our having been justified" (Rom 4:25) is the clear statement of the word. The resurrection was the visible pledge of a justification already accomplished.

"The power of His resurrection" (Phil 3:10) does not refer to atonement, or pardon, or reconciliation; but to our being renewed in the spirit of our minds, to our being "begotten again unto a living hope, by the resurrection from the dead" (1 Pet 1:3). That which is internal, such as our quickening, our strengthening, our renewing, may be connected with resurrection and resurrection power; but that which is external, such as God's pardoning, and justifying, and accepting, must be connected with the cross alone.

The doctrine of our being justified by an infused resurrection-righteousness, or, as it is called, justification in a risen Christ, [\(1\)](#) is a clear subversion of the Surety's work when "He died for our sins, according to the Scriptures," or when "He washed us from our sins in His own blood," or when He gave us the robes "washed white in the

blood of the Lamb."

It is the blood that justifies (Rom 5:9). It is the blood that pacifies the conscience, purging it from dead works to serve the living God (Heb 9:14). It is the blood that emboldens us to enter through the veil into the holiest, and go up to the sprinkled mercy-seat. It is the blood that we are to drink for the quenching of our thirst (John 6:55). It is the blood by which we have peace with God (Col 1:20). It is the blood through which we have redemption (Eph 1:7), and by which we are brought nigh (Eph 2:13), by which we are sanctified (Heb 13:12). It is the blood which is the seal of the everlasting covenant (Heb 13:20). It is the blood which cleanses (1 John 1:7), which gives us victory (Rev 12:11), and with which we have communion in the Supper of the Lord (1 Cor 10:16). It is the blood which is the purchase-money or ransom of the church of God (Acts 20:28).

The blood and the resurrection are very different things; for the blood is death, and the resurrection is life.

It is remarkable that in the book of Leviticus there is no reference to resurrection in any of the sacrifices. It is death throughout. All that is needed for a sinner's pardon, and justification, and cleansing, and peace, is there fully set forth in symbol,-and that symbol is death upon the altar. Justification by any kind of infused or inherent righteousness is wholly inconsistent with the services of the tabernacle, most of all justification by an infused, resurrection-righteousness.

The sacrifices are God's symbolical exposition of the way of a sinner's approach and acceptance; and in none of these does resurrection hold any place. If justification be in a risen Christ, then assuredly that way was not revealed to Israel; and the manifold offerings so



minutely detailed, did not answer the question: How may man be just with God? nor give to the worshippers of old one hint as to the way by which God was to justify the ungodly.

"Christ in us, the hope of glory" (Col 1:27), is a well-known and blessed truth; but Christ IN US, our justification, is a ruinous error, leading man away from a crucified Christ—a Christ crucified FOR US. Christ for us is one truth; Christ in us is quite another. The mingling of these two together, or the transposition of them, is the nullifying of the one finished work of the Substitute. Let it be granted that Christ in us is the source of holiness and fruitfulness (John 15:4); but let it never be overlooked that first of all there be Christ FOR US, as our propitiation, our justification, our righteousness. The risen Christ in us, our justification, is a modern theory which subverts the cross. Washing, pardoning, reconciling, justifying, all come from the one work of the cross, not from resurrection. The dying Christ completed the work for us from which all the above benefits flow. The risen Christ but sealed and applied what, three days before, He had done once for all.

It is somewhat remarkable that in the Lord's Supper (as in the passover) there is no reference to resurrection. The broken body and the shed blood are the Alpha and Omega of that ordinance. In it we have communion (not with Christ as risen and glorified, but) with the body of Christ and the blood of Christ (1 Cor 10:16), that is, Christ upon the cross. "This do in remembrance of me." "As oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." If, after we have been at the cross, we are to pass on and leave it behind us, as no longer needed, seeing we are justified by the risen Christ in us, let those who hold that deadly error say why all reference to resurrection should be excluded from the great feast; and why the death of the Lord should be the one object presented to

us at the table.

"Life in a risen Christ" is another way of expressing the same error. If by this were only meant that resurrection has been made the channel or instrument through which the life and justification are secured for us on and by the cross ,-as when the apostle speaks of our being begotten again unto a lively hope by the "resurrection of Christ from the dead," or when we are said to be "risen with Christ,"-one would not object to the phraseology. But when we find it used as expressive of dissociation of these benefits from the cross, and derivation of them from resurrection solely, then do we condemn it as untrue and antisciptural. For concerning this "life" let us hear the words of the Lord: "The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:51). "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him" (John 6:53-56).

This assuredly is not the doctrine of "life in a risen Christ," or "a risen Christ in us, our justification and life." I do not enter on the exposition of these verses. I simply cite them. They bear witness to the cross. They point to the broken body and shed blood as our daily and hourly food, our life-long feast, from which there comes into us the life which the Son of man, by His death, has obtained for us. That flesh is life-imparting, that blood is life-imparting; and this not once, but for evermore. It is not incarnation on the one hand, nor is it resurrection on the other, on which we are thus to feed, and out of which this life comes forth; it is that which lies between these two,-death,-the sacrificial death of the Son of God. It is not the personality nor the life-history of the Christ of God which is the special

quickener and nourishment of our souls, but the blood-shedding. Not that we are to separate the former from the latter, but still it is on the latter that we are specially to feed, and this all the days of our lives.

"Christ, our passover, has been sacrificed for us." Hence we rest, protected by the paschal blood, and feeding on the paschal lamb, with its unleavened bread and bitter herbs, from day to day. "Let us keep the feast" (1 Cor 5:8). Wherever we are, let us keep it. For we carry our passover with us, always ready, always fresh. With girded loins and staff in hand, as wayfarers, we move along, through the rough or the smooth of the wilderness, our face toward the land of promise.

That paschal lamb is CHRIST CRUCIFIED. As such He is our protection, our pardon, our righteousness, our food, our strength, our peace. Fellowship with Him upon the cross is the secret of a blessed and holy life.

We feed on that which has passed through the fire; on that which has come from the altar. No other food can quicken or sustain the spiritual life of a believing man. The unbroken body will not suffice; nor will the risen or glorified body avail. The broken body and shed blood of the Son of God form the viands on which we feast; and it is under the shadow of the cross that we sit down to partake of these, and find refreshment for our daily journey, strength for our hourly warfare. His flesh is meat indeed; His blood is drink indeed.

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(1) Mr. Irving, Dr. Newman, and the followers of Mr. Darby, are the modern upholders of this new form of an old heresy. Formerly it was simply justification by an infused righteousness, now it is by an

infused righteousness derived from Christ's resurrection. See Dr. Newman's sermon, Christ's Resurrection the Source of Justification.

## **Chapter 8**

### **What the Resurrection of the Substitute has Done**

Death is not resurrection; and the benefits of the Surety's death are not the same as those of His resurrection. Yet let us not overlook the "glorious things" spoken concerning the latter.

Our justified life, or our life as justified men, is certainly in one sense resurrection-life, produced and sustained by resurrection-power. But not for a moment is that justified life severed from the cross, nor is the justified man to lose sight of his indebtedness to the cross for justification.

That we are risen with Christ is the truth of God. Oneness with Him who rose is our privilege and our standing. But oneness is not substitution; and it is not by the former, but the latter, that we are justified. Resurrection points us back to a finished substitution, and seals its blessings to us.

"Justified in the Spirit" is one of the apostle's references to Christ's resurrection. As He was brought again from the dead by the blood of the everlasting covenant (Heb 13:20), so was He justified in or by the Spirit in raising Him from the dead. He died as a criminal, and went down to the grave as such; but the Spirit raises Him, and thereby

declares Him righteous, free from the imputed guilt under which He went down to the tomb.

But let us look a little more minutely into Christ's resurrection, lest we should be led to undervalue it. The resurrection must not hide the cross; neither must the cross hide the resurrection.

The words of the angel to the woman are meant for us: "He is not here; for He is risen" (Matt 28:6).

Man did all that he could to hinder the resurrection of the Son of God. He had succeeded in slaying the Prince of life; and he is resolved that, if he can help it, the dead shall not arise. Samson is in prison, and must be kept there. The great stone, the watch, the Roman seal, are all proofs of this determination.

But he knows not his prisoner. He might as well bind the whirlwind with a cord of silk, or shut up the lightening in one of his chambers, and say to it, Thou shalt not go forth. Death itself, stronger than man, could not hold its prey. Ere the dawn of the third day, the earthquake shook the tomb (the earthquake of Psalm 18:6,7), the angel of the Lord descended, the stone was rolled away, the seal was broken, and the dead came forth.

Even His own believe not that He will rise. They would not try to hinder His resurrection, but, treating it as a thing incredible, they act as those who believe that all is over, and that the cross has destroyed their hopes. They would not close the sepulcher, nor seal it; nay, they would roll away the stone and break the seal: but this is only to anoint Him for His final burial. It is not the expression of hope, but of despair.

But the tomb of the Son of God is the place of light, not of darkness; of hope, not of despair; of life, not of death. They come to look on the dead, they find the living. The seekers of the crucified Jesus find the risen Son of God. The garments of death are all that the tomb contains; the linen clothes, still stained with blood, and the carefully-folded napkin,-folded by angels' hands, if not by His own. They had brought their myrrh and aloes and spices to keep corruption from entering; forgetful that it is the Incorruptible whose body they are thus needlessly though lovingly embalming, and ignorant of the meaning of the ancient promise, "Thou wilt not suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption."

But friend and enemy are both at fault. The unbelief of the former and the resistance of the latter are met equally with a strange surprise. For God's thoughts are not our thoughts, nor His ways our ways. The angel of the Lord descends; he rolls back the stone; he sits upon it, to show himself in his brightness to the watchers; he opens the gate, that the Holy One may go forth. Not that he raises or assists in raising the Son of God. That is beyond the mightiest of these mighty ones, those angels that excel in strength. But he is honored to have a share in the scene, as porter or door-keeper of that glorious shrine. With him came the earthquake,-the second that had occurred during these three days: the first being when the Prince of life entered the chambers of death, and at the open door many of the dead saints of other days came forth; the second being when this same Prince of life left these chambers, and burst the bands of death, shaking creation with the tread of His feet as He marched forth in triumph.

The earthquake and the brightness were too terrible for man to bear. "For fear of him, the keepers did shake, and became as dead men." Nor does he try to allay their terror. Let them tremble on. But for

those who are seeking the crucified One he has words of love and peace. To the keepers he was as the lightening; to the women he was as the dayspring from on high. "Fear not ye; I know that ye seek Jesus, who was crucified."

That which follows is the angel's message to these women; and to us no less in these last days. It is the reason for the cheer, the comfort he had spoken. It is the blessed contents of the cup, the ingredients of the heavenly wine, which he was giving them to drink of. And the substance of it is, "Jesus lives." The comfort with which the Lord Himself once comforted the sorrowing father of Capernaum was, "The maid is not dead, but sleepeth"; so the comfort ministered by the angel is like this, only it goes far beyond it: "He is not dead; nay, He sleepeth not: He has awakened; He has risen." And as the Lord calmed the fears of His disciples once with, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid"; so did the angel here: or as in Patmos the Lord allayed the alarm of the beloved disciple with, "Fear not, I am the First and the Last; I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore"; so does the angel soothe the fear of the trembling women: "Fear not ye; He is not here; He is risen: come, see the place where the Lord lay."

Let us mark, then, the glad tidings which the angel brings us regarding Him who died and was buried.

He is not here. This is the only place regarding which it could be accounted good news to say, Christ is not here. Christ is here, was good news at Bethany, at Jericho, at Nain, at Capernaum, or on the sea of Galilee; but Christ is not here, is the good news from Joseph's tomb. A present Christ would be accounted the joy and security of other places; it is an absent Christ that is announced as the blessing, the consolation here. He is not here, is one of the gladdest sounds

that ever fell on human ears. Were He still here, what and where should we have been?

And who is it that you are seeking here? The mortal or the immortal? And what place is this in which you expect to find the Son of God? In a grave? Is this the place for immortality? Is it likely that there should be life in the dwellings of death? Why seek ye the living among the dead? No; not here,-not here; not in this place of death can the Prince of life be found. He was here, indeed; but He is not. These rock walls and this rock gate cannot hold Him. He was in Gethsemane, in Pilate's palace, on the cross; but not now. These He has visited, but in none of them has He remained. He has left them all behind. With Him it is all life, and incorruption, and glory now. He is not here!

If not here, where? That we soon discover when we follow Him to Emmaus and to Galilee. But even though we knew not, does it matter, save for this, that we may learn that His disappearance has not been a forsaking of earth, nor a turning His back upon the children of men? His disappearance from the tomb is only the carrying out of His love.

He is risen. He was laid down upon that rocky floor; but only to rest there for a day. For that tomb was His first earthly resting-place; all before that was weariness. Having rested there for a short season, He rises; and with renewed strength, into which hereafter no element of weariness can enter, He resumes His work. He has not been carried off, either by friend or enemy; He has been raised by the Father, as the righteous One; the fulfiller of His purpose; the finisher of His work; the destroyer of death; the conqueror of him who has the power of death; the Father's beloved Son, in whom He is well pleased. This true temple has been destroyed, only to be rebuilt in



greater and more undecaying magnificence. This true Siloam has only for three days intermitted the flow of its missioned waters, that it might gush forth in larger fullness. This true Sun has only for three days been darkened, that it might be relighted in its incorruptible glory.

He is risen! Yes; and now we see more fully the meaning of His own words, spoken at a tomb, and over one whom death had bound, "I am the resurrection and the life"; Himself at once the raiser and the raised, the quickener and the quickened, the possessor and the giver of an infinite life,-a higher kind of life than that which the first Adam knew,-a life which can force its way into the dungeons of death, transforming them, by its resistless power, into the dwellings, the palaces, the temples of immortality and glory.

He is risen! He has tasted death, but He has not seen corruption; for He is the Holy One of God, and upon holiness corruption cannot fasten. As the beloved of the Father, He rises from the dead; for therefore doth the Father love Him, because He giveth His life for the sheep. And in this resurrection we read the Father's testimony to His Sonship; the Father's seal set to His completed propitiation; the Father's declaration of satisfaction and delight in the work of Calvary.

It was henceforth with a risen Master that the disciples had to do. It was a risen Christ who was their companion on the way to Emmaus; it was a risen Christ who entered the upper chamber with "Peace be to you" on His lips; it was a risen Christ who appeared to five hundred brethren at once; it was a risen Christ that saluted them by the sea of Galilee, and prepared for them their morning meal on the fire of coals; it was a risen Christ with whom they companied during the forty days when He went out and in among them. And it is now

with a risen Christ that we have to do in the pathways of our daily pilgrimage. At every turn of the way, resurrection meets us in the person of the Lord Jesus, and says to us, "Because I live, ye shall live also." For the life that is in Him is resurrection-life.

It is with this risen life that faith connects us, from the moment that we believe in Him who died and rose again. Let us note, then, such things as these:

1. The security of this risen life. It is not mere life out of nothingness, as in the case of the first Adam, but life out of death. And it is this life which Scripture presents to us as higher, fuller, and more secure. The soil out of which the tree of immortality springs is not the common soil of earth; it is the mold of the graveyard, the dust of the tomb. This far securer life, this life that no death can touch, comes to us from the risen life of Him who died and rose again. The faith that knits us to Him makes us partakers of His resurrection-life; nay, does it so fully that His resurrection becomes ours: we are risen with Him, and with Him have put on a divine immortality.

2. The power of the risen life. It was as the risen One that He spoke, "All power is given unto me." It was as possessor of this power the He went forth from the sepulcher; a power like that by which He overcame death; "the power of an endless life." This corn of wheat had fallen into the ground and died; and though sown in weakness, it was raised in power. It was with this power of the risen life that He ascended on high, leading captivity captive. It is this power of the risen life that He now wields upon the throne. It is in this power of the risen life that He comes again in His glory; Redeemer, king, Judge of all. It is this power of the risen life that He puts forth in His Church,-that He exercises in the begetting us again to a lively hope, and in sustaining each begotten one in a world of hostility and death,

amid fightings without and fears within. It is to the power of this risen life that we betake ourselves in the day of weakness and conflict; so that, strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might, we are made more than conquerors.

3. The love of the risen life. Resurrection was a new and higher stage of being; and with the perfection of life, there came the perfection of the love. The instrument was now more perfectly tuned, and fitted both for containing and giving forth new measures of love. The love of the risen life is the largest and highest of all. It is of this love that we are made partakers; a love beyond all that is earthly and human; a love that passeth knowledge.

4. The sympathies of the risen life. Resurrection does not form a gulf or throw up a wall between us and the risen One. It is not the Shepherd withdrawing from His flock to some inaccessible height. It is the filling up of every gulf, the throwing down of every wall; it is the Shepherd bringing Himself into closer and fuller sympathy with His flock. True, they are evil, and He is good; they are earthly, and He is heavenly. But that which resurrection laid aside was not anything of true humanity. It was but the sinless infirmities which weighed down His true humanity, and kept its sympathies from coming out into full development and play. The risen life, then, is the life of truest and largest sympathy. In its perfection there is the perfection of sympathy, the development of the full round of fellow-feeling existing in the being of the Word made flesh.

5. The affinities of the risen life. The resurrection breaks no bounds save those of mortality. It is the strengthening, not the weakening, of the links that fasten the Son of God to us, and us to the Son of God. Resurrection ties are the strongest of all. The risen life of Christ alters none of the affinities between Himself and His saints; it has

not lessened the number of the points at which we come in contact with Him; it has not made Him less human, nor stopped certain channels of communication between us and Him. His immortality has not unlinked Him from those who are still in the flesh. His risen life has not shaken or loosened the relationship He bears to the unrisen. All that He was before, He is still, with something superadded of new love, new power, new perfection, new glory. The difference between His unrisen and His risen life is only that between the sun at dayspring and at noon. Let us rejoice at the remembrance of His risen life as the truest, the fittest, the most blessed for us. The more that we realize our own mortality, the more let us feel the preciousness and the suitableness of His immortality as the risen One; and the more let us realize the identity between us and Him, in virtue of which not merely we shall rise, but we have risen with Him.

6. The joys of the risen life. In the tomb the Man of sorrows left all His sorrows, as He left all our sins. There they were buried with Him. At His resurrection His full joy began; and in the Psalms this connection between His resurrection and His joy is more than once proclaimed. In the sixteenth the two things are placed very strikingly together; for after it is said, "Thou wilt not suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption," it is added, "Thou wilt show me the path of life (resurrection); in Thy presence is fullness of joy" (see Psalm 30:3-5; 116:3-7). For Him resurrection was joy, not merely because it ended His connection with death, but because it introduced Him into the fullness of joy,-a joy peculiar to the risen life, and of which only a risen man can be capable. Into the joy of His risen life we in some measure enter here by faith; but the fullness of that risen joy is yet in reserve for us, awaiting the resurrection of the just, when the body as well as the head shall have done with tribulation and with death for ever.

7. The hopes of the risen life. We are "begotten again to a lively (or living and life-giving) hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet 1:3). With Christ's resurrection and with His risen life our "hope" is connected,-a "hope" which contains and imparts "life" here; a "hope" which, like a flower from the bud, opens out into the fullness of the glorious life hereafter. The hope of which we are partakers through the risen life of the second Adam far transcends any hope which the unrisen life of the first Adam could have given. It is the hope of an inheritance, a kingdom, a city, a glory, such as belongs only to the risen offspring of the second Adam, such as can be possessed only by the redeemed and the risen. The resurrection of the Son of God is to us the earnest and the pledge of this blessed hope. Hence our watchword is, "Christ in us, the hope of glory."

For the Church of God, the words "He is risen" are full of health and gladness. The more that we dwell upon our Surety's resurrection, the more shall we realize the life and immortality which have been brought to light by His gospel. The oftener that we visit His empty tomb, and see for ourselves that He is not here, He is risen, the more shall we be penetrated by that wondrous truth that we are risen with Him, and that this fellowship in resurrection is as truly the source of spiritual life, health, and holiness, as of joy unspeakable and full of glory.

For each sad sinner, still buried in the grave of sin, the words contain a gospel,-glad tidings of great joy. The empty tomb of Jesus gives forth a voice which reaches to the very ends of the earth. Everlasting life through Him who died and rose again; forgiveness and righteousness and reconciliation through the accepted work of the great Substitute, finished on the cross, but sealed and attested by resurrection; peace with God through Him who left the tomb. and

went up to the Father's right hand, as at once the maker and the giver of peace;-all this we preach, without condition or restriction, to a world lying in wickedness, that each condemned one may hear and live! Through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins! Take the free pardon now; and in taking it, exchange at once, without one moment's delay or uncertainty, life for death, liberty for bondage, Sonship for alienation, joy for sorrow,-a hope that maketh not ashamed, for heaviness here and eternal despair hereafter. He is risen, sinner, He is risen!

Go, deal with this risen Christ; go, transact the great business for eternity with Him; go, receive life and blessings at His hands: for truly He is the same Savior still as when, by the sea of Galilee, He said to sinners, as far off as you can be, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest."

## **Chapter 9**

### **The Pardon and the Peace Made Sure**

"Christ for us," the obedient in the room of the disobedient, is the first part of our message. His assumption of the legal claims, which otherwise would have made good against us, is the security for our deliverance. That deliverance becomes an actual thing to us immediately upon our consenting to allow Him to undertake our case.

"Christ in us" is the second part of our gospel. This second is of mighty moment, and yet is not to be confounded with the first. That which is done for us is not the same as that which is done in us. By

the former we are constituted righteous, by the latter we are made holy. The one is properly the Gospel, in the belief of which we are saved; the other, the carrying out of that gospel in the soul.

Christ "for us" is our justification. "Christ in us, and we in Christ," is our holiness. The former is the external substitution; the latter, the internal energy or operation, taking its rise from the former, yet not to be confounded with it, or substituted for it.

Christ the substitute, giving His life for ours upon the cross, is specially the object of faith. The message concerning this sacrificial work is the gospel, the belief of which brings pardon to the guilty.

God has given us this gospel not merely for the purpose of securing to us life hereafter, but of making us sure of this life even now. It is a true and sure gospel; so that he who believes it is made sure of being saved. If it could not make us sure, it would make us miserable; for to be told of such a salvation and such a glory, yet kept in doubt as to whether they are to be ours or not, must render us truly wretched. What a poor gospel it must be, which leaves the man who believes it still in doubt as to whether he is a child of God, an unpardoned or a pardoned sinner! Till we have found forgiveness, we cannot be happy; we cannot serve God gladly or lovingly; but must be in some bondage or gloom.

This is the view of the matter which Scripture sets before us; telling us that salvation is a free, a sure, a present gift. "He that believeth is justified" (Acts 13:39). "He that believeth hath everlasting life" (John 3:36). The Bible gives no quarter to unbelief or doubting. It does not call it humility. It does not teach us to think better of ourselves for doubting. It does not countenance uncertainty or darkness.

This was the view taken of the subject by our fathers, from the Reformation downwards. They held that a man ought to know that he is justified; and that it was Popery to teach uncertainty, or to set aside the full assurance of faith, or to hold that this sureness was not to be had from the beginning of a man's conversion, but only to be gathered up in process of years, by summing up his good feelings and good deeds, and concluding from his own excellences that he must be one of the elect, a man in favor with God. Our fathers believed that the jailer at Philippi rejoiced as soon as he received the good news which Paul preached to him (Acts 16:34). Our fathers believed that, "being justified by faith, WE HAVE peace with God" (Rom 5:1), and that the life of a believing man is a life of known pardon; a life of peace with God; a life of which the outset was the settlement of the great question between himself and God; a life in which, as being a walk with God, the settlement of that question did not admit of being deferred or kept doubtful: for without felt agreement, without conscious reconciliation, intercourse was impossible.

All the Reformation creeds and confessions take this for granted; assuming that the doctrine of uncertainty was one of the worst lies of Popery, (1) the device and stronghold of a money-loving priesthood, who wished to keep people in suspense in order to make room for the dealings of priests and payments for pardon. If assurance be the right of every man who believes, then the priest's occupation is at an end; his craft is not only in danger, but gone. It was the want of assurance in his poor victims that enabled him to drive so prosperous a trade, and to coin money out of the people's doubts. It was by this craft he had his wealth, and hence the hatred with which Rome and her priests have always hated the doctrine of assurance. It took the bread out of their mouths. If God pardons so freely, so simply, so surely, so immediately upon believing, alas for the priesthood! Who will pay them for absolution? Who will go to them



to make sure that which God has already made sure in a more excellent way than theirs?

Romanists have always maintained that assurance is presumption; and it is remarkable that they quote, in defense of their opinion, the same passages which many modern Protestants do, such as, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling"; the apostle's expression about being "a castaway"; "Let him that thinketh he standeth"; and the like.

One of them, in reasoning with one of the English Reformers, speaks of "the presumptuous opinion of the certainty of grace and salvation, contrary to that which St. Paul counselleth, Philippians 2:12"; and the great Romish controversialists give the following reasons against assurance, which we abridge and translate:

(1) No man certainly ought to disbelieve God's mercy and Christ's merits; but on account of his own imperfections, he ought to be fearful about his own grace, so that no one can certainly know that he has found favor with God.

(2) It is not expedient that men should have certainty about their own grace; for certainty produces pride, while ignorance of this secret preserves and increases humility.

(3) Assurance is the privilege of only a few favored ones, to whom God has revealed the singular benefit of the pardon of their sins.

(4) The most perfect men, when dying, have been humbled because of this uncertainty; and if some of the holiest men have been uncertain, is it credible that all believers ought to have assurance of their justification?

(5) The best men fall from faith; therefore there can be no assurance.

(6) The following passages confute the error of assurance: 1 Corinthians 10:12; 2 Corinthians 6:1; Romans 11:20; Philippians 2:12.

Such are the Popish arguments against assurance, and the conclusion to which the Council of Trent came was: "If any man shall say that justifying faith is confidence in the mercy of God, who remitteth sins for Christ's sake, or that it is by such confidence alone that we are justified, let him be accursed."

Old John Foxe, who three hundred years ago wrote the history of the martyrs, remarks concerning the Pope's Church that it "left the poor consciences of men in perpetual doubt" (volume 1. page 78).

This is a true saying. But it is true of many who earnestly protest against the Church of Rome. They not only teach doctrines which necessarily lead to doubting, and out of which no poor sinner could extract anything but uncertainty; but they inculcate doubting as a humble and excellent thing; a good preparation, nay, an indispensable qualification, for faith. The duty of doubting is in their theology much more obligatory than that of believing. The propriety and necessity of being uncertain they strongly insist upon; the blessedness of certainty they undervalue; the sin of uncertainty they repudiate; the duty of being sure they deny.

This same John Foxe, after showing that a man is saved not by working, but by believing, gives us the following specimen of "the horrible blindness and blasphemy" of the Church of Rome: "That faith wherewith a man firmly believeth and certainly assureth himself, that for Christ's sake his sins be forgiven him, and that he shall possess eternal life, is not faith, but rashness; not the persuasion of the Holy Ghost, but the presumption of human audacity." The above extract is from a Popish book of the time, and is a fair specimen of the Romish hatred of the doctrine of assurance. Its language is almost the same as that employed by many Protestants of

our day.

The Romanists held that a man is to believe in the mercy of God and the merits of Christ, but that this belief brought with it no assurance of justification; though possibly, if the man lived a very holy life, God might before he died reveal His grace to him, and give him assurance; which is precisely what many Protestants hold.

In opposition to this, our forefathers not only maintained that a man is justified by faith, but that he ought to know that he is justified, and that this knowledge of justification is the great root of a holy life. The Romanists did not quarrel with the word assurance; they did not hold it to be impossible: they held that men might get it, nay, that some very holy men had got it. But they affirmed that the only means of reaching the grace of assurance was by a holy life; that with the slow development of a holy life, assurance might develop itself; and that in the course of years, a man by numbering his good deeds, and ascertaining the amount of his holiness, might perhaps come to the conclusion that he was a child of God; but perhaps not. They were very strenuous in contending for this life of religious suspense, sad and dismal as it must be; because conscious justification, such as Luther contended for, shut out priesthood and penance; giving a man the joy of true liberty and divine fellowship at once, without the intervention of another party or the delay of an hour.

This conscious justification started the man upon a happy life, because relieved from the burden of doubt and the gloom of uncertainty; it made his religion bright and tranquil, because springing so sweetly from the certainty of his reconciliation to God; it delivered him from the cruel suspense and undefined fears which the want of assurance carries always with it; it rescued him from all temptations to self-righteousness, because not arising from any good

thing in himself; it preserved him from pride and presumption, because it kept him from trying to magnify his own goodness in order to extract assurance out of it; it drew him away from self to Christ, from what he was doing to what Christ had done; thus making Christ, not self, the basis and the center of his new being; it made him more and more dissatisfied with self, and all that self contained, but more and more satisfied with Jesus and His fullness; it taught him to rest his confidence towards God, not on his satisfaction with self, not on the development of his own holiness, not on the amount of his graces and prayers and doings, but simply on the completed work of Him in whom God is well pleased.

The Romanists acquiesced in the general formula of the Protestants, that salvation was all of Christ, and that we are to believe on Him in order to get it. But they resisted the idea that a man, on believing, knows that he is saved. They might even have admitted the terms "justification by faith," provided it was conceded that this justification was to be known only to God, hidden from the sinner who believes. They did not much heed the mere form of words, and some of them went apparently a long way to the Protestant doctrine. But that which was essential to their system was, that in whatever way justification took place, it should be kept secret from the sinner himself, so that he should remain without assurance for years, perhaps all his life. Unconscious justification by faith suited their system of darkness quite as well as justification by works. For it was not the kind of justification that they hated, but the sinner's knowing it, and having peace with God simply in believing, without waiting for years of doing. No doubt they objected to free justification in the Protestant sense; but the force of their objection lies not so much against its being free, as against the sinner being sure of it. For they saw well enough, that if they could introduce uncertainty at any part of the process, their end was gained. For to remove such uncertainty

the Church must be called in; and this was all they wanted.

The doctrine, then, that makes uncertainty necessary, and that affirms that this uncertainty can only be removed by the development of a holy life, is the old Popish one, though uttered by Protestants. Luther condemned it; Bellarmine maintained it. And many of the modern objections to assurance, on the part of some Protestants, are a mere reproduction of old Romish arguments, urged again and again, against justification by faith.

There is hardly one objection made to a man's being sure of his justification which would not apply, and which have not been applied, against his being justified by faith at all. If the common arguments against assurance turn out valid, they cannot stop short of establishing justification by works. Salvation by believing, and assurance only by means of working, are not very compatible. The interval which is thus created between God's act of justifying us, and His letting us know that He has justified us, is a singular one, of which Scripture certainly takes no cognizance.

This interval of suspense (be it longer or shorter) which Romanists have created for the purpose of giving full scope to priestly interposition, and which some Protestants keep up in order to save us from pride and presumption, is not acknowledged in the Bible any more than purgatory. An intermediate state in the life to come, during which the soul is neither pardoned nor unpardoned, neither in heaven nor hell, is thought needful by Romanists for purging out sin and developing holiness; but then this interval of gloom is man's creation. An intermediate state in this life, during which a sinner, though believing in Jesus, is not to know whether he is justified or not, is reckoned equally needful by some Protestants, as a necessary means of producing, and through holiness leading perhaps ere life

close to assurance; but then of this sorrowful interval, this present purgatory, which would make a Christian's life so dreary and fearful, Scripture says nothing. It is a human delusion borrowed from Popery, and based upon the dislike of the human heart to have immediate peace, immediate adoption, and immediate fellowship.

The self-righteous heart of man craves an interval of the above kind as a space for the exercise of his religiousness, while free from the responsibility for a holy and unworldly life which conscious justification imposes on the conscience.

But it will be greatly worth our while to see what Romanists have said upon this subject; for their errors help us much in understanding the truth. It will be seen that it was against present peace with God that Rome contended; and that it was in defense of this present peace, this immediate certainty, that the Reformers did battle so strenuously, as a matter of life and death. The great Popish Assembly, the "Council of Trent," in 1547, took up these points concerning faith and grace. Nor was that body content with condemning assurance; they proclaimed it an accursed thing, and pronounced an anathema against every one who affirmed that justifying faith is "confidence in the mercy of God." They denounced the man as heretic who should hold "the confidence and certainty of the remission of sins."

Yet they had a theory of a justification by faith. We give it in their own words, as it corresponds strikingly with the process which is prescribed by some Protestants as the means of arriving, after long years, at the knowledge of our justification:

"The beginning of justification proceedeth from preventing grace. The manner of the preparation is, first to believe the divine

revelations and promises, and knowing oneself to be a sinner, to turn from the fear of God's justice to His mercy, to hope for pardon from Him, and therefore to begin to love Him and hate sin, to begin a new life, and keep the commandments of God. Justification follows this preparation."

This theory of a gradual justification, or a gradual approach to justification, is that held by many Protestants, and made use of by them for resisting the truth of immediate forgiveness of sin and peace with God.

Then comes another sentence of the Council which expresses truly the modern theory of non-assurance, and the common excuse for doubting, when men say, "We are not doubting Christ, we are only doubting ourselves." The Romish divines assert:

"No one ought to doubt the mercy of God, the merits of Christ, and the efficacy of the sacraments; but in regard to his own indisposition he may doubt, because he cannot know by certainty, of infallible faith, that he has obtained grace."

Here sinners are taught to believe in God's mercy and in Christ's merits, yet still to go on doubting as to the results of that belief, viz. sure peace with God. Truly self-righteousness, whether resting on works or on feelings, whether in Popery or Protestantism, is the same thing, and the root of the same errors, and the source of the same determination not to allow immediate certainty to the sinner from the belief of the good news.

This Popish Council took special care that the doctrine of assurance should be served with their most pointed curses. All the "errors of Martin" were by them traced back to this twofold root, that a man is

justified by faith, and that he ought to know that he is justified. They thus accuse the German Reformer of inventing his doctrine of immediate and conscious justification for the purpose of destroying the sinner's works of repentance, which by their necessary imperfection make room for indulgences. They call this free justification, a thing unheard of before,-a thing which not only makes good works unnecessary, but sets a man free from any obligation to obey the law of God.

It would appear that the learned doctors of the Council were bewildered with the Lutheran doctrine. The schoolmen had never discussed it, nor even stated it. It had no place either among the beliefs or misbeliefs of the past. It had not been maintained as a truth, nor impugned as a heresy, so far as they knew. It was an absolute novelty. They did not comprehend it, and of course misrepresented it. As to original sin, that had been so often discussed by the schoolmen, that all Romish divines and priests were familiar with it in one aspect or another. On it, therefore, the Council were at home, and could frame their curses easily, and with some point. But the Lutheran doctrine of justification brought them to a stand. Thus the old translator of Paul Sarpi's History puts it:

"The opinion of Luther concerning justifying faith, that is a confidence and certain persuasion of the promise of God, with the consequences that follow, of the distinction between the law and the gospel, etc., had never been thought of by any school writers, and therefore never confuted or discussed, so that the divines had work enough to understand the meaning of the Lutheran propositions."

Luther's doctrine of the will's bondage they were indignant at, as making man a stone or a machine. His doctrine of righteousness by faith horrified them, as the inlet of all laxity and wickedness.



Protestant doctrines were to them absurdities no less than heresies.

Nor was it merely the Church, the Fathers, and tradition that they stood upon. The schools and the schoolmen! This was their watchword; for hitherto these scholastic doctors had been, at least for centuries, the bodyguard of the Church. Under their learning, and subtleties, and casuistries, priests and bishops had always taken refuge. Indeed, without them, the Church was helpless, so far as logic was concerned. When she had to argue, she must call in these metaphysical divines; though generally by force and terror she contrived to supersede all necessity for reasoning.

Three men in the Council showed some independence: a Dominican friar, by name Ambrosius Catarinus; a Spanish Franciscan, by name Andreas de Vega; and a Carmelite, by name Antonius Marinarus. The "Heremites" of the order to which Luther originally belonged were especially blind and bitter, their leader Seripandus outdoing all in zeal against Luther and his heresy.

Compelled, in the investigation of the subject, to pass beyond Luther to Luther's Master, they were sorely puzzled. To overlook Him was impossible, for the Protestants appealed to Him; to condemn Him would have not been wise.

They were obliged to admit the bitter truth, that Paul had said that a man is justified by faith. They had maintained the strict literality of "This is my body"; must they admit the equal literality of 'justified by faith'? Or may this latter expression not be qualified and overlaid by scholastic ingenuity, or set aside by an authoritative denial in the name of the Church? At the Council of Trent both these methods were tried.

It was not Luther only who laid such stress upon the doctrine of free justification. His adversaries were wise enough to do the same. They saw in it the root or foundationstone of the whole Reformation. If it falls, Popery stands erect, and may do what she pleases with the consciences of men. If it stands, Popery is overthrown; her hold on men's consciences is gone; her priestly power is at an end, and men have directly to do with the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven, and not with any pretended vicar upon earth, or any of his priests or seven sacraments. "All the errors of Martin are resolved into that point," said the bishops of the Council; and they added, "He that will establish the Catholic doctrine must overthrow the heresy of righteousness by faith only."

But did not Paul say the same things as Luther has said? Did he not say, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness"? (Rom 4:20). Yes; but we may use some liberties with Paul's words, which we cannot do with Luther's. It would not do to refute Paul; but it is quite safe to demonstrate that Luther is wrong, and is at variance with the Church.

Let us then assail Luther; and leave Paul alone. Now Luther has said such things as the following:-

1. Faith without works is sufficient to salvation, and alone doth justify.
2. Justifying faith is a sure trust, by which one believeth that his sins are remitted for Christ's sake; and they that are justified are to believe certainly that their sins are remitted.
3. By faith only we are able to appear before God, who neither

regardeth nor hath need of our works; faith only purifying us.

4. No previous disposition is necessary to justification; neither doth faith justify because it disposeth us, but because it is a means or instrument by which the promise and grace of God are laid hold on and received.

5. All the works of men, even the most sanctified, are sin.

6. Though the just ought to believe that his works are sins, yet he ought to be assured that they are not imputed.

7. Our righteousness is nothing but the imputation of the righteousness of Christ; and the just have need of a continual justification and imputation of the righteousness of Christ.

8. All the justified are received into equal grace and glory; and all Christians are equally great with the Mother of God, and as much saints as she.

These were some of Luther's propositions which required to be confuted. That they looked wonderfully like the doctrines of the Apostle Paul, only made the confutation more necessary. That "faith justifies," the bishops said, we must admit, because the apostle has said so; but as to what faith is, and how it justifies, is hard to say. Faith has many meanings (some said nine, others fifteen; some modern Protestants have said the same); and then, even admitting that faith justifies, it cannot do so without good dispositions, without penance, without religious performances, without sacraments. By introducing all these ingredients into faith, they easily turned it into a work; or by placing them on the same level with faith, they nullified (without positively denying) justification by faith.

Ingenious men! Thus to overthrow the truth, while professing to admit and explain it. In this ingenious perversity they have had many successors, and that in churches which rejected Rome and its Council.

"Christ crucified" is the burden of the message which God has sent to man. "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures." The reception of this gospel is eternal life; the non-reception or rejection of it is everlasting death. "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." The belief of the gospel saves; the belief of the promise annexed to that gospel makes us sure of this salvation personally. It is not the belief of our belief that assures us of pardon, and gives us a good conscience towards God; but our belief of what God has promised to every one who believes His Gospel, -that is eternal life. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and THOU SHALT BE SAVED."

What is God to me? This is the first question that rises up to an inquiring soul. And the second is like unto it, -What am I to God? On these two questions hang all religion, as well as all joy and life to the immortal spirit.

If God is for me, and I am for God, all is well. If God is not for me, and if I am not for God, all is ill (Rom 8:31). If He takes my side, and if I take His, there is nothing to fear, either in this world or in that which is to come. If He is not on my side, and if I am not on His, then what can I do but fear? Terror in such a case must be as natural and inevitable as in a burning house or a sinking vessel.

Or, if I do not know whether God is for me or not, I can have no rest. In a matter such as this, my soul seeks certainty, not uncertainty. I

must know that God is for me, else I must remain in the sadness of unrest and terror. In so far as my actual safety is concerned, everything depends on God being for me; and in so far as my present peace is concerned, everything depends on my knowing that God is for me. Nothing can calm the tempest of my soul, save the knowledge that I am His, and that He is mine.

Our relationship to God is then to us the first question; and till this is settled, nothing else can be settled. It is the question of questions to us, in comparison of which all other personal questions are as moonshine. when the health of a beloved child is in danger; I seem for the time to lose sight of everything around me, wholly absorbed in the thought, Will he live, or will he die? I move about the house as one who sees nothing, hears nothing. I go to and I come from the sick-room incessantly, watching every symptom for the better or the worse. I eagerly inquire at the physician, Is there hope, or is there none? I am paralyzed in everything, and indifferent to the things which in other circumstances might interest me. What matters it to me whether it rains or shines, whether my garden-flowers are fading or flourishing, whether I am losing or making money, so long as I am uncertain whether that beloved child is to live or die?

And if uncertainty as to my child's health be so important to me, and so engrossing as to make me forget everything else; oh, what must be the engrossment attending the unsettled question of the life or death of my own immortal soul! I must know that my child is out of danger before I can rest; and I must know that my soul is out of danger before I can be quieted in spirit. Suspense in such a case is terrible; and, were our eyes fully open to the eternal peril, absolutely unendurable. Not to know whether we are out of danger, must be as fatal to peace of soul as the certainty of danger itself. Suspense as to temporal calamities has often in a night withered the fresh cheek of

youth, and turned the golden hair to gray. And shall time's uncertainties work such havoc with their transient terrors, and shall eternal uncertainties pass over us as the idle wind?

In the great things of eternity nothing but certainty will do; nothing but certainty can soothe our fears, or set us free to attend to the various questions of lesser moment which every hour brings up. The man who can continue to go about these lesser things, whilst uncertainty still hangs over his everlasting prospects, and the great question between his soul and God is still unsettled must be either sadly hardened or altogether wretched.

He who remains in this uncertainty remains a burdened and weary man. He who is contented with this uncertainty is contented with misery and danger. He who clings to this uncertainty as a right thing, can have no pretensions to the name of son, or child, or saint of God: for in that uncertainty is there any feature of resemblance to the son or the saint; anything of the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father; any likeness to the filial spirit of the beloved son of God?

He who resolves to remain in this uncertainty is a destroyer of his own soul; and he who tries to persuade others to remain in this uncertainty is a murderer of souls. He who does his best to make himself comfortable without the knowledge of his reconciliation and relationship to God, is a manifest unbeliever; and he who tries to induce others to be comfortable without this knowledge is something worse; if worse can be. That there are many among professing Christians who have not this knowledge, is a painful fact; that there are some who, instead of lamenting this, make their boast of it, is a fact more painful still; that there are even some who proclaim their own uncertainty in order to countenance others in it, is a fact the most painful of all.

Thus the questions about assurance resolve themselves into that of the knowledge of our relationship to God. To an Arminian, who denies election and the perseverance of the saints, the knowledge of our present reconciliation to God might bring with it no assurance of final salvation; for, according to him, we may be in reconciliation today, and out of it tomorrow; but to a Calvinist there can be no such separation. He who is once reconciled is reconciled for ever; and the knowledge of filial relationship just now is the assurance of eternal salvation. Indeed, apart from God's electing love, there can be no such thing as assurance. It becomes an impossibility.

By nature we have no peace; "there is no peace to the wicked." Man craves peace; longs for it. God has made it for us; presents it to us.

Many are the causes of dispeace; sin is the root of all. Where unpardoned sin is, there cannot be peace. Many are the subordinate causes. An empty soul; disappointment; wounded affection; worldly losses; bereavement; vexations, cares, weariness of spirit; broken hopes; deceitful friendships; our own blunders and failures; the misconduct or unkindnesses of others. These produce dispeace; these are the winds that ruffle the surface of life's sea.

Many are the efforts and appliances to obtain peace. Man's whole life is filled up with these. His daily cry is, "Give me peace!" He tries to get it in such ways as the following:-

1. By forgetting God. It is the remembrance of God that troubles a sinner. He could get over many of his disquietudes, if he could keep God at a distance. He tries to thrust Him out of his thoughts, his heart, his mind, his conscience. Though he could succeed, what would it avail? He would only bring himself more surely into the

number of those who shall be "turned into hell"; for they are they who "forget God." What will forgetting God do for a soul? What will it avail to thrust Him out of our thoughts?

2. By following the world. The heart must be filled by some one or in some way. Man betakes himself to the world, as that which is most congenial, and most likely to satisfy his cravings. Pleasure, gaiety, business, folly, change, gold, friends,-these man tries; but in vain. Peace comes not.

3. By working hard and denying self. The dispeace of a troubled conscience comes from the thought of evil deeds done, or good deeds left undone. This dispeace he tries to remove by trying to shake off the evil that is in him, and to introduce the good that is not in him. But the hard labor is fruitless. It does not pacify the conscience or assure him of pardon, without which there can be no peace.

4. By being very religious. He does not know that true religion is the fruit or result of peace found, not the way to it, or the price paid for it. He may be on his knees from morn to night, and may make long fastings and vigils, or prosecute his devotional performances till body and soul are worn out; but all will not do. Peace is as far off as ever.

He wants peace; but he takes his own way of getting it, not God's. He thinks there is a resting-place; but he overlooks the free love that said, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." (2) The peace of the cross, what is it? What does it do for us?

What is it? It is peace of conscience; peace with God; peace with the law of God; peace with the holiness of God. It is reconciliation, friendship, fellowship; and all this in a way which prevents the dread or possibility of future variance, or distance, or condemnation. For it



is not simply peace, but the peace of the cross; peace extracted from the cross; peace founded on and derived from what the cross reveals, and what the cross has done. It is peace whose basis is forgiveness, "no condemnation." It is peace which comes from our knowledge of the peace-making work of Calvary. It is true peace; sure peace; present peace; righteous peace; divine peace; heavenly peace; the peace of God; the peace of Christ; complete peace, pervading the whole being.

What does it do for us?

1. It calms our storms. In us tempests rage perpetually. The storms of the unforgiven spirit are the most fearful of all: the whirlwind, earthquake, rushing blast, lightning, raging waves,-these are the emblems of a human heart. But peace comes, and all is still. The great Peacemaker comes, and there is a great calm. The holy pardon which He bestows is the messenger of rest.

2. It removes our burdens. A sinner's heaviest burdens must ever be dread of God, want of conscious reconciliation with Him, uncertainty as to the eternal future. Peace with God is the end of all these. A sight of the cross relieves us of our burdens, and connection with the Sin-bearer assures us that these shall never be laid on us again.

3. It breaks our bonds. Sharp and heavy are the chains of sin; not merely because it is a disease preying upon our spiritual nature, but because it is guilt which must be answered for before a righteous Judge. Unpardoned guilt is both prison and fetters. Forgiveness brings with it peace; and with peace every chain is broken: our prison doors are opened; we walk forth into liberty.

4. It strengthens us for warfare. Without peace we cannot fight. Our

hands hang down, and our weapons fall from them. Our courage is gone. So long as God is our enemy, or so long as we know not whether God is our friend, we are disabled men. We are without heart, and without hope. But when reconciliation comes, and God becomes our assured friend, then we are strong; well nerved for battle; fearless in the conflict; full of hope and heart. "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

5. It cheers us in trial. The peace of God within is our chiefest consolation when sorrows crowd in upon us. Lighted up with this true lamp, we are not greatly moved because of the darkness without. Peace with God is our anchor in the storm; our strong tower in adverse times; the soother of our hearts, and the dryer up of our tears. We learn to call affliction light, and to find that it worketh for us an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Is my soul at rest? If so, whence has the rest come? If not, why is it not at rest? Is unrest a necessity, after Christ has said, "I will give you rest"?

Am I satisfied with the gospel? Is my heart content with Christ Himself, and my conscience with what He has done? If not content, why? What aileth me at Him and His work? Would I have something added to that work, or something taken from it? Is it not, at this moment, exactly the thing for me; exactly the thing which contains all the peace and rest I need? and am I not, at this moment, exactly the person whom it suits; to whom, without any change or delay, it offers all its fullness?

The propitiation and the righteousness finished on the cross, and there exhibited as well as presented to me freely, are such as entirely meet my case: offering me all that which is fitted to remove dispeace

and unrest from heart and conscience; revealing as they do the free love of God to the sinner, and providing for the removal of every hindrance in the way of that love flowing down; proclaiming aloud the rent veil, and the open way, and the gracious welcome, and the plenteous provision, and the everlasting life.

Peace does not save us, yet it is the portion of a saved soul.

Assurance does not save us; and they have erred who have spoken of assurance as indispensable to salvation. For we are not saved by believing in our own salvation, nor by believing anything whatsoever about ourselves. We are saved by what we believe about the Son of God and His righteousness. The gospel believed saves; not the believing in our own faith.

Nevertheless, let us know that assurance was meant to be the portion of every believing sinner. It was intended not merely that he should be saved, but that he should know that he is saved, and so delivered from all fear and bondage, and heaviness of heart.

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(1)What do you think of the doctrine of the Papists, whereby they teach the people to doubt and fear? It is a comfortless doctrine, placing a believer at his departure no higher than an unbeliever" (Heidelberg Catechism). Elsewhere in the same Catechism we have the following quotation: "What comfort have the Papists here? Continual doubting, an unquiet mind, and the wreck of conscience, They say:

Three things there are that trouble my mind:

The first, that I the grave must find;

The second troubleth me more yet,-That I know not the time of it;

The third above all troubleth me,-That whither I must I cannot see.  
(cont.)

What doth a believer set against this?

Three things there are that cheer my mind:

First, that in Christ I pardon find;

The second cheers me much more yet,-That Christ my Lord for me is fit;

The third above all cheereth me,-That I my place in heaven do see."

(2)"I believe these words on the divine testimony. My conscience bears witness to their truth. It is a good conscience; it agrees with God; and looks upon Him as reconciled perfectly. It fears to dishonor Him, by calling in question the infinite value of Christ's righteousness and atonement, or doubting of their being mine, while they are freely offered to me, while I find my want of them, and have my dependence upon them. Thus the peace of God rules, takes the lead in the conscience, rules always, the offer being always the same, the righteousness and atonement of Jesus always the same, my want of them always the same, and mine interest in them always the same; which I daily learn to maintain by all means, against all corruptions, enemies, and temptations from every quarter."- Old Writer.

# Chapter 10

## The Holy Life of the Justified

"To him that worketh not, but believeth," says the apostle, speaking of the way in which we are reckoned just before God.

Does he by this speech make light of good works? Does he encourage an unholy walk? Does he use a rash word, which had better been left unspoken?

No, truly. He is laying the foundation of good works. He is removing the great obstacle to a holy life, viz. the bondage of an unforgiven state. He is speaking, by the power of the Holy Ghost, the words of truth and soberness. The difference between working and believing is that which God would have us to learn, lest we confound these two things, and so destroy them both. The order and relation of these two things are here very explicitly laid down, so as to anticipate the error of many who mix up working and believing together, or who make believing the result of working, instead of working the result of believing.

We carefully distinguish, yet we as carefully connect the two. We do not put asunder what God has joined together; yet we would not reverse the divine order, nor disturb the divine relation, nor place that last which God has set first.

It was not to depreciate or discourage good works that the apostle spoke of "not working, but believing"; or of a man being "justified by faith, without the deeds of the law"; or of God "imputing

righteousness without works" (Rom 3:28; 4:6). It was to distinguish things that differ; it was to show the true use of faith, in connecting us, for justification, with what another has done; it was to stay us from doing anything in order to be justified. In this view, then, faith is truly a ceasing from work, and not a working; it is not the doing of anything in order to be justified, but the simple reception of the justifying work of Him who "finished transgression and made an end of sin": for THE ONE JUSTIFYING WORK was completed eighteen hundred years ago, and any attempt on our part to repeat or imitate this is vain. The one cross suffices.

Nor was it to undervalue good works that our Lord gave, what many may deem such a singular answer to the question of the Jews, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent" (John 6:29). They wanted to work their way into the favor of God. The Lord tells them that they may have that favor without waiting or working; by accepting at once His testimony to His only-begotten Son. Till then, they were not in a condition for working. They were as trees without a root; as stars whose motions, however regular, would be useless, if they themselves were unlighted.

To say to a groping, troubled spirit, You must first believe before you can work, is no more to encourage ungodliness or laxity of walk, than to say to an imprisoned soldier, You must first get out of your dungeon before you can fight; or to a swimmer, You must throw off that millstone before you can attempt to swim; or to a racer, You must get quit of these fetters before you can run the race.

Yet these expressions of the apostle have often been shrunk from; dreaded as dangerous; quoted with a guarding clause, or rather cited as seldom as possible, under the secret feeling that, unless greatly

diluted or properly qualified, they had better not be cited at all. But why are these bold utterances there, if they are perilous, if they are not meant to be as fearlessly proclaimed now as they were fearlessly written eighteen centuries ago? What did the Holy Spirit mean by promulgation of such "unguarded" statements, as some seem disposed to reckon them? It was not for nothing that they were so boldly spoken. Timid words would not have served the purpose. The glorious gospel needed statements such as these to disentangle the great question of acceptance; to relieve troubled consciences, and purge them from dead works, yet at the same time to give to works their proper place.

Perhaps some of Luther's statements are too unqualified; yet their very strength shows how much he felt the necessity of so speaking of works, as absolutely and peremptorily to exclude them from the office of justifying the sinner. He saw and testified how the Papacy, by mixing the two things together, had troubled and terrified men's consciences, and had truly become a "slaughter-house of souls."

In another's righteousness we stand; and by another's righteousness are we justified. All accusations against us, founded upon our unrighteousness, we answer by pointing to the perfection of the righteousness which covers us from head to foot, and in virtue of which we are unassailable by law, as well as shielded from wrath.

Protected by this perfection, we have no fear of wrath, either now or hereafter. It is a buckler to us, and we cry, "Behold, o God, our shield; look upon the face of Thine Anointed"; as if to say, Look not on me, but on my Substitute; deal not with me for sin, but with my Sin-bearer; challenge not me for my guilt, but challenge Him; He will answer for me. Thus we are safe beneath the shield of His righteousness. No arrow, either from the enemy or from conscience,

can reach us there.

Covered by this perfection, we are at peace. The enemy cannot invade us; or if he try to do so, we can triumphantly repel him. It is a refuge from the storm, a covert from the tempest, a river of water in a dry place, the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. The work of righteousness is peace; and in the Lord we have righteousness and strength.

Beautified with this perfection, which is the perfection of God, we find favour in His sight. His eye rests on the comeliness which He has put upon us; and as He did at viewing the first creation, so now, in looking at us as clothed with this divine excellency, He pronounces it "very good." He sees "no iniquity in Jacob, and no transgression in Israel." "The iniquity of Jacob may be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found" (Jer 50:20). This righteousness suffices to cover, to comfort, and to beautify.[\(1\)](#)

But there is more than this. We are justified that we may be holy. The possession of this legal righteousness is the beginning of a holy life. We do not live a holy life in order to be justified; but we are justified that we may live a holy life. That which man calls holiness may be found in almost any circumstances,--of dread, or darkness, or bondage, or self-righteous toil and suffering; but that which God calls holiness can only be developed under conditions of liberty and light, and pardon and peace with God. Forgiveness is the mainspring of holiness. Love, as a motive, is far stronger than law; far more influential than fear of wrath or peril of hell. Terror may make a man crouch like a slave and obey a hard master, lest a worse thing come upon him; but only a sense of forgiving love can bring either heart or conscience into that state in which obedience is either pleasant to the



soul or acceptable to God.

False ideas of holiness are common, not only among those who profess false religions, but among those who profess the true. For holiness is a thing of which man by nature has no more idea than a blind man has of the beauty of a flower or the light of the sun. All false religions have had their "holy men," whose holiness often consisted merely in the amount of pain they could inflict upon their bodies, or of food which they could abstain from, or of hard labor which they could undergo. But with God, a saint or holy man is a very different being. It is in filial, full-hearted love to God that much of true holiness consists. And this cannot even begin to be until the sinner has found forgiveness and tasted liberty, and has confidence towards God. The spirit of holiness is incompatible with the spirit of bondage. There must be the spirit of liberty, the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. When the fountain of holiness begins to well up in the human heart, and to fill the whole being with its transforming, purifying power, "We have known and believed the love that God has to us" (1 John 4:16) is the first note of the holy song, which, commenced on earth, is to be perpetuated through eternity.

We are bought with a price, that we may be new creatures in Christ Jesus. We are forgiven, that we may be like Him who forgives us. We are set at liberty and brought out of prison, that we may be holy. The free, boundless love of God, pouring itself into us, expands and elevates our whole being; and we serve Him, not in order to win His favour, but because we have already won it in simply believing His record concerning His Son. If the root is holy, so are the branches. We have become connected with the holy root, and by the necessity of this connection are made holy too.

Forgiveness relaxes no law, nor interferes with the highest justice. Human pardons may often do so: God's pardons never.

Forgiveness doubles all our bonds to a holy life; only they are no longer bonds of iron, but of gold. It takes off the heavy yoke, in order to give us the light and easy.

The love of God to us, and our love to God, work together for producing holiness in us. Terror accomplishes no real obedience. Suspense brings forth no fruit unto holiness. Only the certainty of love, forgiving love, can do this. It is this certainty that melts the heart, dissolves our chains, disburdens our shoulders, so that we stand erect, and makes us to run in the way of the divine commandments.

Condemnation is that which binds sin and us together. Forgiveness looses this fearful tie, and separates us from sin. The power of condemnation which the law possesses is that which makes it so strong and terrible. Cancel this power, and the liberated spirit rises into the region of love, and in that region finds both will and strength for the keeping of the law,--a law which is at once old and new: old as to substance ("Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart"); new as to mode and motive. "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom 8:2); that is, The law of the life-giving spirit which we have in Christ Jesus has severed the condemning connection of that law which leads only to sin and death. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh (i.e. unable to carry out its commandments in our old nature), God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit" (Rom 8:3,4).

The removal of condemnation is the dissolution of legal bondage, and of that awful pressure upon the conscience which at once enslaved and irritated; disenabling as well as disinclining us from all obedience; making holiness both distasteful and dreadful, to be submitted to only through fear of future woe.

Sin, when unforgiven, oppresses the conscience and tyrannizes over the sinner. Sin forgiven in an unrighteous way, would be but a slight and uncertain as well as imperfect relief. Sin righteously and judicially forgiven, loses its dominion. The conscience rises up from its long oppression, and expands into joyous liberty. Our whole being becomes bright and buoyant under the benign influence of this forgiving love of God. "The winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come" (Song 2:11,12).

Condemnation is the dark cloud that obscures our heavens. Forgiveness is the sunshine dissolving the cloud, and by its brilliance making all good things to grow and ripen in us.

Condemnation makes sin strike its roots deeper and deeper. No amount of terror can extirpate evil. No fear of wrath can make us holy. No gloomy uncertainty as to God's favour can subdue one lust, or correct our crookedness of will. But the free pardon of the cross uproots sin, and withers all its branches. The "no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" is the only effectual remedy for the deadly disease of an alienated heart and stubborn will.

The want of forgiveness, or uncertainty as to it, are barriers in the way of the removal of the heart's deep enmity to a righteous God. For enmity will only give way to love; and no suspense, however terrible,

will overcome the stout-hearted rebelliousness of man. Threats do not conquer hearts; nor does austerity win either confidence or affection. They who would trust to law to awaken trust, know nothing either of law or love; nor do they understand how the suspicions of the human heart are to be removed, and its confidence won. The knowledge of God simply as Judge or Lawgiver will be of no power to attract, of no avail to remove distrust and dread.

But the message, "God is love," is like the sun bursting through the clouds of a long tempest. The good news, "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins," is like the opening of the prisoner's dungeon-gate. Bondage departs, and liberty comes. Suspicion is gone, and the heart is won. "Perfect love has cast out fear." We hasten to the embrace of Him who loved us; we hate that which has estranged us; we put away all that caused the distance between us and Him; we long to be like one so perfect, and to partake of His holiness. To be "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4), once so distasteful, is henceforth most grateful and pleasant; and nothing seems now so desirable as to escape the corruptions that are in the world through lust.

We undergo many false changes, which look like holiness, but which are not really so. The poison-tree drops its leaves, yet remains the same. The sea of Sodom glistens in the sunshine with surpassing splendor, yet remains salt and bitter as before. Time changes us, yet does not make us holy. The decays of age change us, but do not break the power of evil. One lust expels another; frailty succeeds to frailty; error drives out error; one vanity pails, another comes freshly in its room; one evil habit is exchanged for a second, but our old man remains the same. The cross has not touched us with its regenerating power; the Holy Spirit has not purified the inner sources of our being and life.(2)

Fashion changes us; the example of friends changes us; society changes us; excitement changes us; business changes us; affection changes us; sorrow changes us; dread of coming evil changes us; yet the heart is just what it was. Of the numerous changes in our character or deportment, how many are deceitful, how few are real and deep! Only that which can go down into the very depths of our spiritual being can produce any change that is worthy of the name.

The one spell that can really transform us is THE CROSS. The one potent watchword is, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). The one physician for all our maladies is He who died for us, and the one remedy which He applies is the blood that cleanseth from all sin. The one arm of power that can draw us out of the horrible pit and the miry clay, is "the Spirit of holiness."

"For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (John 17:19). Christ presents Himself as the Holy One, Consecrated One, to God, that His people may partake of His sanctification, and be like Himself, saints, consecrated ones, men set apart for God by the sprinkling of the blood. Through the truth they are sanctified, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

"By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb 10:14); so that the perfection of His saints, both as to the conscience and as to personal holiness, is connected with the one offering, and springs out of the one work finished upon Calvary. "By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb 10:10). Here again the sanctification is connected with the offering of the body of Christ. Whatever place "the power of His resurrection" may hold in our spiritual history, it is the cross that is the source of all that varied fullness by which we are

justified and purified. The secret of a believer's holy walk is his continual recurrence to the blood of the Surety, and his daily intercourse with a crucified and risen Lord.

Nowhere does Scripture, either in its statements or doctrines or lives of the saints, teach us that here we get beyond our need of the blood, or may safely cast off the divine raiment that covers our deformity. Even should we say at any time, "I am free from sin," this would be no proof of our being really holy: for the heart is deceitful above all things, and there may be ten thousand sins lurking in us; seen by God, though unseen by ourselves. "I know nothing of myself" says the apostle; i.e. I am not conscious of any failure; "but," he adds, "I am not hereby justified"; i.e. this my own consciousness is no proof of my sinlessness: for "He that judgeth me is the Lord"; and the Lord may condemn me in many things in which I do not condemn myself.

Let me say to one who thinks he has reached sinlessness, "My friend, are you sure that you are perfectly holy? For nothing but absolute certainty should lead you to make so bold an affirmation regarding your freedom from all sin. Are you sure that you love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul? For unless you are absolutely sure of this, you have no right to say, I am perfectly holy; and it will be a perilous thing for you to affirm, I have no longer any need of the blood, and I refuse to go to the fountain for cleansing, seeing my going thither would be mockery. For the cross, the blood, the fountain, are for the imperfect, not for the perfect; for the unrighteous, not for the righteous; and if your self-consciousness is correct, you are no longer among the imperfect or the unrighteous. My friend, do you never sin, in thought, or in word, or in desire, or in deed? Have you never a wandering thought? Is your heart as warm and are your affections as heavenly as you could possibly desire them to be? What! not one stray thought from morn to night, from night to

morn? Not one wrong word, nor look, nor tone? What! no coldness, no want of fervor, no flagging of zeal, no momentary indulgence of self and sloth? What! no error (for error is sin), no false judgment, no failure of temper, no improper step, no imperfect plan; nothing to regret, nothing to wish unsaid or undone in the midst of a world like ours, with all its provocations, its crosses, its worries, its oppositions, its heated atmosphere of infectious evil? And art thou sure, quite sure, that all this is the case; and that thy conscience is so perfectly alive, so divinely sensitive, that the faintest expressions of evil in the remotest corner of thy heart would be detected? If so, thou art an extraordinary man, far above him who was less than the least of all saints; above him who said, 'The good that I would, that I do not; and the evil that I would not, that I do'; and one whose history will require to be written by some immortal pen, as that of the man who, after a few years believing, ceased to require any application to the cross, or to be indebted to the blood for cleansing, who could look at altar, and laver, and mercy-seat as one who had no longer any interest in their provisions; nay, as one to whom a crucified Christ was a thing of the past, of whom he had now no need as a Sin-bearer; or High Priest, or Advocate, or Intercessor, but only as a companion and friend."

God's processes are not always rapid. His greatest works rise slowly. Swiftmess of growth has been one of man's tests of greatness; not so is it with God. His trees grow slowly; the stateliest are the slowest. His flowers grow slowly; the brightest are the slowest. His creatures grow slowly, year by year; man, the noblest, grows the most slowly of all. God can afford to take His time. Man cannot. He is hasty and impatient. He will have everything to be like Jonah's gourd, or like one of those fabled oriental palaces, which magicians are said to call up by a word or a stamp, out of the sand. He forgets how slowly the palm tree and the cedar grow. They neither spring up in a night nor

perish in a night. He forgets the history of the temple: "Forty and six years was this temple in building." He insists that, because it is God's purpose that His saints should be holy, therefore they ought to be holy at once.

It is true that our standard is, and must be, perfection. For our model is the Perfect One. But the question is, Has God in Scripture anywhere led us to expect the rapidity of growth, the quick development of perfection in which some glory, and because of the confessed lack of which in others they look down on these others as babes or loiterers?

Is there in Scripture any instance of a perfect man, excepting Him who was always and absolutely without sin? If Christians were perfect, where is the warfare, and the adversary, and the sword, and the shield? Are angels exposed to this warfare when they visit earth? Or is it not our imperfection that in great measure produces this? And are we anywhere in Scripture led to believe that we are delivered from "the body of this death," from the battle of flesh and spirit, from the wrestling with principalities and powers, till death sets us free, or our Lord shall come?

Yet we are called with a holy calling (2 Tim 1:9); and as so called, are bound to take the highest standard for our model of life. The slowness or swiftness of the progress does not alter the standard, nor affect our aiming at conformity to it.

This progress, rapid or gradual, springs from the forgiveness we have received, and the new life imparted by the Holy Spirit. Our life is to be fruit-bearing; and the fruitfulness comes from our ascertained acceptance, our being "rooted and grounded in love." We taste and see that the Lord is good; that in His favour is life; that the joy of the



Lord is our strength; and so we move on and up, rising from one level to another. "We know and believe the love that God hath to us"; and we find in this the source of goodness, no less than of gladness and liberty.

The life of the justified should be a peaceful one. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God,--the God of peace, and the God of all grace. The world's storms have not been stilled, nor our way smoothed, nor our skies brightened, nor our enemies swept away; but the peace of God has come in and taken possession of the soul. We are cheered and comforted. God is for us, and who can be against us? The name of the Lord is our strong tower; we run into it, and are safe. No evil can happen to us; no weapon that is formed against us can prosper.

The life of the justified should be a holy one, all the more because of the extent of previous unholiness. "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor 6:11). All that these marvelous and mysterious words "holy" and "holiness" imply, is to be found in the life of one who has been "much forgiven." There is no spring of holiness so powerful as that which our Lord assumes: "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:11). Free and warm reception into the divine favour is the strongest of all motives in leading a man to seek conformity to Him who has thus freely forgiven him all trespasses. A cold admission into the paternal house by the father might have repelled the prodigal, and sent him back to his lusts; but the fervent kiss, the dear embrace, the best robe, the ring, the shoes, the fatted calf, the festal song,--all without one moment's suspense or delay, as well as without one upbraiding word, could not but awaken shame for the past, and true-hearted resolution to walk worthy of such a father, and of such a generous

pardon. "Revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries," come to the abhorrence of him round whom the holy arms of renewed fatherhood have been so lovingly thrown. Sensuality, luxury, and the gaieties of the flesh have lost their relish to one who has tasted the fruit of the tree of life.

The life of the justified should be a loving one. It is love that has made him what he is, and shall he not love in return? Shall he not love Him that begat, and him also that is begotten of Him? The deep true spring of love is thus revealed to us by the Lord Himself: "A certain creditor had two debtors; the one owed five hundred pence, the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, HE FRANKLY FORGAVE THEM BOTH. Tell me therefore, which of them will LOVE him most?" (Luke 7:41,42). Thus love produces love. The life of one on whom the fullness of the free love of God is ever shining must be a life of love. Suspense, doubt, terror, darkness, must straiten and freeze; but the certainty of free and immediate love dissolves the ice, and kindles the coldest spirit into the warmth of love. "We love Him because He first loved us." Love to God, love to the brethren, love to the world, spring up within us as the heavenly love flows in. Malevolence, anger, envy, jealousy, receive their death-blow. The nails of the cross have gone through all these, and their deadly wound cannot be healed. They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts. Sternness, coldness, distance, depart; and are succeeded by gentleness, mildness, guilelessness, meekness, ardor, long-suffering. The tempers of the old man quit us, we know not how; and in their place comes the "charity which suffereth long, and is kind, which envieth not, which vaunteth not itself, which is not puffed up, which doth not behave itself unseemly, which seeketh not her own, which is not easily provoked, which thinketh no evil, which rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth, which beareth all things, which believeth all

things, which never faileth" (1 Cor 13:4-8). Gentle and loving and simple should be the life of the justified; meek and lowly should they be, who have been loved with such a love.

The life of the justified should be an earnest one. For everything connected with his acceptance has been earnest on the part of God; and the free forgiveness on which he has entered, in believing, nerves, and cheers, and animates. It is a spring of courage, and hardihood, and perseverance. It makes the coward brave; it says to the weak, Be strong; to the indolent, Arise; making the forgiving man ready to face danger, and toil, and loss; arming him with a new-found energy, and crowning him with sure success. "Ready to spend and be spent" is his motto now. "I am debtor" is his watch-word, debtor first of all to Him who forgave me; after that, to the church of God, redeemed with the same blood, and filled with the same Spirit; and then after that to the world around, still sunk in sin and struggling with a thousand sorrows, under which it has no comforter, and of whose termination it has no hope. How thoroughly in earnest should be the life of one thus pardoned,--pardoned so freely, yet at such a cost to Him who "gave His life a ransom for many!"

The life of the justified should be a generous one. All connected with his justification has been boundless generosity on the part of God. He spared not His own Son, and will He not with Him also freely give us all things? The love of God has been of the largest, freest kind; and shall this not make us generous? The gifts of God have been all of them on the most unlimited scale; and shall not this boundless liberality make us liberal in the highest and truest sense? Can a justified man be covetous, or slow to part with his gold? God has given His Son; He has given His Spirit; He has given us eternal life; He has given us an everlasting kingdom. And shall these gifts not tell upon us? shall they not expand and elevate us? or shall they leave us

narrow and shriveled as before? Surely we are called to a noble life; a life far above the common walk of humanity; a life far above that of those who, disbelieving the liberality of God, are trying to merit His favour, or to purchase His kingdom by moral goodnesses or ceremonial performances of their own. Not unselfish merely, but self-denying men, we are called to be; not self-pleasers, nor man-pleasers, nor flesh-pleasers, nor world-pleasers; but pleasers of God, like Enoch (Heb 11:5), or like a greater than Enoch, as it is written, "Even Christ pleased not Himself" (Rom 15:3). "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and NOT TO PLEASE OURSELVES; let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification," i.e. to the edification or building up of the body of Christ (Rom 15:2). Selfishness, self-love, self-seeking, have been in all ages the scandal of the church of God. "All seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's" (Phil 2:21), was the sad testimony of the apostle to the Philippian church, even in early days: so little had God's marvelous love told even upon those who believed it; so obstinate was the contraction of the human heart, and so unwilling to yield to the enlarging pressure of an influence which men in common things deem irresistible. To love warmly, to give largely, to sympathize sincerely, to help unselfishly; these are some of the noble fruits to be expected from the belief of a love that passeth knowledge. Self-sacrifice ought not to seem much to those for whom Christ has died, and whom He now represents upon the throne. Generous deeds and gifts and words ought to be as natural as they are becoming in those who have been so freely loved, so abundantly pardoned, and so eternally blest. Narrow hearts are the fruits of a narrow pardon, and of an uncertain favour; poor gifts are the produce of stinted and grudging giving; but large-heartedness and open-handedness may surely be looked for from those whom the boundless liberality of God has made partakers of the unsearchable riches of Christ, and heirs of the kingdom which can not be moved.

The life of the justified should be a lofty one. Littleness, and meanness, and earthliness, do not become the pardoned. They must mount up on wings as eagles, setting their affection on things above. Having died with Christ and risen with Him, they sit with Him in heavenly places (Eph 2:6). In the world, and yet not of it, they rise above it; possessed of a heavenly citizenship (Phil 3:20), and expecting an unearthly recompense at the return of Him who has gone to prepare a place for them. High thoughts, high aims, high longings, become them of whom Christ was not merely the substitute upon the cross, but the representative upon the throne,--the forerunner, who has entered within the veil, and ever liveth to intercede for us. Shall he who has been freely justified grovel in the dust, or creep along the polluted soil of earth? Shall such a justification as he has received not be the source of superhuman elevation of character, making him unworldly in his hopes, in his tastes, in his works, in the discharge of his daily calling? Shall not such a justification act upon his whole being, and pervade his life; making him a thoroughly consistent man in all things; each part of his course becoming his name and prospects; and his whole man symmetrical, his whole Christianity harmonious?

The life of the justified is a decided one. It does not oscillate between goodness and evil, between Christ and the world. The justifying cross has come between him and all evil things; and that which released him from the burden of guilt has, in so doing, broken the bondage of sin. Even if at any time he feels as if he could return to that country from which he set out, the cross stands in front, and arrests his backward step. Between him and Egypt rolls the Red Sea, now flowing in its strength, so that he cannot pass. At the door of the theatre, or the ballroom, or the revel-hall, stands the cross, and forbids his entrance. The world is crucified to him, and he unto the

world, by the saving cross. His first look to the cross committed him. He began, and he cannot go back. It would be mean as well as perilous to do so. There is henceforth to be no mistake about him. His heart is no longer divided, and his eye no longer roams. He has taken up the cross, and he is following the Lamb. He has gone in at the strait gate, and is walking along the narrow way; and at the entrance thereof stands the cross barring his return. Over his entrance there was joy in heaven; and shall he at any time turn that joy into sorrow by even seeming to go back?

The life of the justified is a useful one. He has become a witness for Him who has thrown over him the shadow of His cross. He can tell what the bitterness of sin is, and what is the burden of guilt. He can speak of the rolling away of the stone from the sepulchre of his once dead soul, and of the angel sitting on that stone clothed in light. He can make known the righteousness which he has found, and in finding which he has been brought into liberty and gladness. Out of the abundance of his heart, and in the fullness of his liberated spirit, his mouth speaketh. He cannot but speak of the things which he now possesses, that he may induce others to come and share the fullness. He is bent on doing good. He has no hours to throw away. He knows that the time is short, and he resolves to redeem it. He will not waste a life that has been redeemed at such a cost. It is not his own, and he must keep in mind the daily responsibilities of a life thus bought for another. As one of the world's lights, in the absence of the true light, he must be always shining, to lessen in some degree the darkness of earth, and to kindle heavenly light in souls who are now excluding it. As one of the sowers of the heavenly seed, he must never be idle, but watching opportunities,--making opportunities for sowing it as he goes out and in; it may be in weakness, it may be in tears.

The life of the justified is the life of wisdom and truth. He has

become "wise in Christ"; nay, "Christ has been made unto him wisdom" as well as righteousness. It is thus that he has become "wise unto salvation," and he feels that he must hold fast the truth that saves. To trifle with that truth, to tamper with error, would be to deny the cross. He by whom he is justified is Himself THE TRUTH, and every man who receives that truth becomes a witness for it. By THE TRUTH he is saved; by THE TRUTH he is made free; by THE TRUTH he is made clean; by THE TRUTH he is sanctified; and therefore it is precious to him, every jot and tittle. Each fragment broken off is so much lost to his spiritual well-being; and each new discovery made in the rich field of truth is so much eternal gain. He has bought the truth, and he will not sell it. It is his life; it is his heritage; it is his kingdom. He counts all truth precious, and all error hateful. He dreads the unbelief that is undermining the foundations of truth, and turning its spacious palaces into the chaos of human speculations. He calls no truth obsolete or out of date; for he knows that the truths on which he rests for eternity are the oldest of old, and yet the surest of sure. To introduce doubt as to the one sacrifice on which he builds, is to shake the cross of Calvary. To lay another foundation than that already laid, is to destroy his one hope. To take the sacrificial element out of the blood, is to make peace with God impossible, because unrighteous. To substitute the church for Christ, or the priest for the herald of pardon, or the rite for the precious blood, or the sacrament for the living Christ upon the throne, or the teachings of the church for the enlightenment of the Holy Ghost,--this is to turn light into darkness, and then to call that darkness light. Thus taught by that Spirit who has led him to the cross, the justified man knows how to discern truth from error. He has the unction from the Holy One, and knows all things (1 John 2:20); he has the anointing which is truth, and is no lie (1 John 2:27); and he can try the spirits, whether they are of God (1 John 4.1).

Want of sensitiveness to the difference between truth and error is one of the evil features of modern Protestantism. Sounding words, well-executed pictures, pretentious logic, carry away multitudes. The distinction between Gospel and no Gospel is very decided and very momentous; yet many will come away from a sermon in which the free gospel has been overlaid, not sensible of the want, and praising the preacher. The conversions of recent years have not the depth of other days. Consciences are half-awakened and half-pacified; the wound is slightly laid open, and slightly healed. Hence the want of spiritual discernment as to truth and error. The conscience is not sensitive, else it would at once refuse and resent any statement, however well argued or painted, which encroached in the slightest degree upon the free gospel of God's love in Christ; which interposed any obstacle between the sinner and the cross; or which merely declaimed about the cross, without telling us especially how it saves and how it purifies. We need sensitive but not morbid consciences to keep us steadfast in the faith, to preserve our spiritual eyesight unimpaired, remembering the apostle's words, "He that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins" (2 Pet 1:9). Censoriousness is one thing, and spiritual discernment is quite another. To avoid the first we do not need to give up the second: though the "liberality" of modern times would recommend us to be charitable to error, and not very tenacious of any Bible truth, seeing that nothing in an age of culture can be received but that which has been pronounced credible by philosophy or science, and which the "verifying faculty" has adjudged to be true!

The life of the justified must be one of praise and prayer. His justification has drawn him near to God. It has opened his lips and enlarged his heart. He cannot but praise; he cannot but pray. He has ten thousand things to ask for; he has ten thousand things for which



to give thanks. He knows what it is to speak in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in his heart to the Lord (Col 3:16).

The life of the justified is one of watchfulness. Forgiveness has altered all his circumstances and hopes. It has brought him into a new world, from which are shut out things he was formerly familiar with, and into which are introduced things which he knew not. He sees and hears what he never saw nor heard before; and he ceases to see and hear what but lately he delighted in. He expects changes, and wishes that they were come. The present has become less to him, the future more; and in that future the one absorbing object is the reappearing of Him, whom not having seen he loves. That the future should be a mere repetition of the present,--with a few scientific and political improvements,--is quite enough for the worldly man. But the man who, by his new connection with the cross, has been transported into a new region, is not content that it should be so. He wants a better future, and a more congenial world; he desires a state of things in which the new object of his love shall be all. And learning from Scripture that such a new condition of things is to be expected, and that of that new state Christ is Himself to be the first and last, he looks eagerly out for the fulfillment of these hopes. Learning, moreover, that the arrival of this King and of His kingdom is to be sudden, he is led to wait and watch; all the more because everything here, in the world's daily history of change, and noise and revelry, is fitted to throw him off his guard. His justification does not lull him asleep. His faith does not make him heedless of the future. It is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. It says, Let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober: watch, for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh. Many a trial of her watchfulness has the church had, many a disappointment has her faith sustained; but she does not despond

nor give way, remembering the promise, "He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." Her faith keeps up her vigilance, and her vigilance invigorates her faith. In the darkest hour faith says, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine"; and hope adds, "Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices."

The church watches because of present evil, and coming good; that she may be kept undefiled from the one, and may attain unto the other. Danger from enemies, and the prospect of speedy victory over them, keep her awake. Fear of losing sight of the cross, and so again walking in darkness; suspicion both of the good and the evil things of earth,--its flatteries and its menaces, its toils, its cares, its amusements, its pleasures; anxiety about keeping her garments unspotted and her conscience clean; the sight of the sleeping millions around, and the knowledge that it is upon a sleeping world that the Lord is to come;--these things act powerfully as stimulants, and bid her be watchful. To be among the foolish virgins, without oil and with a dying lamp, when the midnight cry goes forth; to be near the door, and yet shut out; to hear the announcement, "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready," and yet not be ready; to be summoned to the festival, and yet to be without the bridal and festal dress; to love, and then to fall from love; to draw the sword, and then in faint-heartedness to sheath it; to run well for a while, and then to slacken speed; to war against Satan as the prince of darkness, and yield to him as an angel of light; to set out with condemning the world, and then to mingle with it; to cleave like Demas to the saints, and then to forsake them; to be among the twelve for a season, then to be a traitor at the last; to be lifted up, like Capernaum, to heaven, and then to be thrust down to hell; to be among the sons of light, and then to fall from heaven like Lucifer, son of the morning; to sit down in the upper chamber with the Lord,

and then to betray the Son of man with a kiss; to put on a goodly garment of fair profession, and then to walk naked in shame;--these are the solemn thoughts that crowd in upon the justified man, and keep him watchful.

They who know not what it is to be "accepted in the Beloved," and to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God," may fall asleep. He dare not; he knows what he is risking, and what one hour of slumber may cost him; and he must be wakeful. He does not make election his opiate, and say, I am safe; but this only makes me doubly vigilant, that I may not dishonor Him who has saved me; and even though I may not finally fall away, I know not how much I may lose by one day's slothfulness, or how much I may gain by maintaining that watchful attitude to which, as the expectant of an absent Lord, I am called, "Blessed is he that watcheth"; and even though I could not see the reason for this, I will act upon it, that I may realize the promised blessedness. He who has called me to vigilance can make me a partaker of its joy. He can make my watch-tower, lonely and dark as it may seem, none other than the house of God, and the very gate of heaven.

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(1) Every time we say "for Thy name's" sake, or for Christ's sake, we are making use of another's claim, another's merit, and conceding or accepting the whole doctrine of imputed righteousness. Every man is daily getting, in some way or other, what he personally has no title to. When a son gets an inheritance from his father, he gets what does not belong to him, and what could easily and legally be diverted from him. When one who is not a son gets an estate by will, he gets what he has no claim to, simply by a legal deed. Human jurisprudence recognizes these transferences as competent and proper, not fictitious or absurd. Man daily acts on these principles of getting what he has no right to, simply because a fellow-man wills it, and law

acknowledges that will. Why then should he speak of fictitious transferences in spiritual blessings, proceeding on precisely the same principle? why should he deny the law or process of the divine jurisprudence, by which forgiveness of sins is conferred on him according to the will of another, and secured to him by the claims of another? If earthly law deals thus with him in earthly things, why should not heavenly law deal thus with him in heavenly things?

(2) All divine life, and all the precious fruits of it, pardon, peace, and holiness, spring from the cross.... Holiness as well as pardon is to be had from the blood of the cross.... All fancied sanctification which does not arise wholly from the blood of the cross is nothing better than Pharisaism.... If we would be holy, we must get to the cross, and dwell there; else, notwithstanding all our labor and diligence, and fasting, and praying, and good works, we shall be yet void of real sanctification, destitute of those humble, gracious tempers which accompany a clear view of the cross." --BERRIDGE'S Letters.

## **All of Grace**

**by C. H. Spurgeon**

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## 1 TO YOU

HE WHO SPOKE and wrote this message will be greatly disappointed if it does not lead many to the Lord Jesus. It is sent forth in childlike dependence upon the power of God the Holy Ghost, to use it in the conversion of millions, if so He pleases. No doubt many poor men and women will take up this little volume, and the Lord will visit them with grace. To answer this end, the very plainest language has been chosen, and many homely expressions have been used. But if those of wealth and rank should glance at this book, the Holy Ghost can impress them also; since that which can be understood by the unlettered is none the less attractive to the instructed. Oh that some might read it who will become great winners of souls!

Who knows how many will find their way to peace by what they read here? A more important question to you, dear reader, is this—Will you be one of them?

A certain man placed a fountain by the wayside, and he hung up a cup near to it by a little chain. He was told some time after that a great art-critic had found much fault with its design. "But," said he, "do many thirsty persons drink at it?" Then they told him that thousands of poor people, men, women, and children, slaked their thirst at this fountain; and he smiled and said, that he was little troubled by the critic's observation, only he hoped that on some sultry summer's day the critic himself might fill the cup, and be refreshed, and praise the name of the Lord.

Here is my fountain, and here is my cup: find fault if you please; but do drink of the water of life. I only care for this. I had rather bless the soul of the poorest crossing-sweeper, or rag-gatherer, than please a prince of the blood, and fail to convert him to God.

Reader, do you mean business in reading these pages? If so, we are agreed at the outset; but nothing short of your finding Christ and Heaven is the business aimed at here. Oh that we may seek this together! I do so by dedicating this little book with prayer. Will not you join me by looking up to God, and asking Him to bless you while you read? Providence has put these pages in your way, you have a little spare time in which to read them, and you feel willing to give your attention to them. These are good signs. Who knows but the set time of blessing is come for you? At any rate, "The Holy Ghost saith, Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. "

## 2 WHAT ARE WE AT?

I HEARD A STORY; I think it came from the North Country: A minister called upon a poor woman, intending to give her help; for he knew that she was very poor. With his money in his hand, he knocked at the door; but she did not answer. He concluded she was not at home, and went his way. A little after he met her at the church, and told her that he had remembered her need: "I called at your

house, and knocked several times, and I suppose you were not at home, for I had no answer." "At what hour did you call, sir?" "It was about noon." "Oh, dear," she said, "I heard you, sir, and I am so sorry I did not answer; but I thought it was the man calling for the rent." Many a poor woman knows what this meant. Now, it is my desire to be heard, and therefore I want to say that I am not calling for the rent; indeed, it is not the object of this book to ask anything of you, but to tell you that salvation is all of grace, which means, free, gratis, for nothing.

Oftentimes, when we are anxious to win attention, our hearer thinks, "Ah! now I am going to be told my duty. It is the man calling for that which is due to God, and I am sure I have nothing wherewith to pay. I will not be at home." No, this book does not come to make a demand upon you, but to bring you something. We are not going to talk about law, and duty, and punishment, but about love, and goodness, and forgiveness, and mercy, and eternal life. Do not, therefore, act as if you were not at home: do not turn a deaf ear, or a careless heart. I am asking nothing of you in the name of God or man. It is not my intent to make any requirement at your hands; but I come in God's name, to bring you a free gift, which it shall be to your present and eternal joy to receive. Open the door, and let my pleadings enter. "Come now, and let us reason together." The Lord himself invites you to a conference concerning your immediate and endless happiness, and He would not have done this if He did not mean well toward you. Do not refuse the Lord Jesus who knocks at your door; for He knocks with a hand which was nailed to the tree for such as you are. Since His only and sole object is your good, incline your ear and come to Him. Hearken diligently, and let the good word sink into your soul. It may be that the hour is come in which you shall enter upon that new life which is the beginning of heaven. Faith cometh by hearing, and reading is a sort of hearing: faith may come

to you while you are reading this book. Why not? O blessed Spirit of all grace, make it so!

### 3 GOD JUSTIFIETH THE UNGODLY

THIS MESSAGE is for you. You will find the text in the Epistle to the Romans, in the fourth chapter and the fifth verse:

To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

I call your attention to those words, "Him that justifieth the ungodly." They seem to me to be very wonderful words.

Are you not surprised that there should be such an expression as that in the Bible, "That justifieth the ungodly?" I have heard that men that hate the doctrines of the cross bring it as a charge against God, that He saves wicked men and receives to Himself the vilest of the vile. See how this Scripture accepts the charge, and plainly states it! By the mouth of His servant Paul, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, He takes to Himself the title of "Him that justifieth the ungodly." He makes those just who are unjust, forgives those who deserve to be punished, and favors those who deserve no favor. You thought, did you not, that salvation was for the good? that God's grace was for the pure and holy, who are free from sin? It has fallen into your mind that, if you were excellent, then God would reward you; and you have thought that because you are not worthy, therefore there could be no way of your enjoying His favor. You must be somewhat surprised to read a text like this: "Him that justifieth the ungodly. " I do not wonder that you are surprised; for with all my familiarity with the great grace of God, I never cease to wonder at it. It does sound surprising, does it not, that it should be possible for a holy God to justify an unholy man? We, according to the natural legality of our hearts, are always talking about our own goodness and



our own worthiness, and we stubbornly hold to it that there must be somewhat in us in order to win the notice of God. Now, God, who sees through all deceptions, knows that there is no goodness whatever in us. He says that "there is none righteous, no not one." He knows that "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags," and, therefore the Lord Jesus did not come into the world to look after goodness and righteousness with him, and to bestow them upon persons who have none of them. He comes, not because we are just, but to make us so: he justifieth the ungodly.

When a counsellor comes into court, if he is an honest man, he desires to plead the case of an innocent person and justify him before the court from the things which are falsely laid to his charge. It should be the lawyer's object to justify the innocent person, and he should not attempt to screen the guilty party. It lies not in man's right nor in man's power truly to justify the guilty. This is a miracle reserved for the Lord alone. God, the infinitely just Sovereign, knows that there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not, and therefore, in the infinite sovereignty of His divine nature and in the splendor of His ineffable love, He undertakes the task, not so much of justifying the just as of justifying the ungodly. God has devised ways and means of making the ungodly man to stand justly accepted before Him: He has set up a system by which with perfect justice He can treat the guilty as if he had been all his life free from offence, yea, can treat him as if he were wholly free from sin. He justifieth the ungodly.

Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. It is a very surprising thing—a thing to be marveled at most of all by those who enjoy it. I know that it is to me even to this day the greatest wonder that I ever heard of, that God should ever justify me. I feel myself to be a lump of unworthiness, a mass of corruption, and a heap of sin, apart from His almighty love. I know by a full assurance that I am justified by faith which is in Christ Jesus, and treated as if I had been

perfectly just, and made an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ; and yet by nature I must take my place among the most sinful. I, who am altogether undeserving, am treated as if I had been deserving. I am loved with as much love as if I had always been godly, whereas aforetime I was ungodly. Who can help being astonished at this? Gratitude for such favor stands dressed in robes of wonder.

Now, while this is very surprising, I want you to notice how available it makes the gospel to you and to me. If God justifieth the ungodly, then, dear friend, He can justify you. Is not that the very kind of person that you are? If you are unconverted at this moment, it is a very proper description of you; you have lived without God, you have been the reverse of godly; in one word, you have been and are ungodly. Perhaps you have not even attended a place of worship on Sunday, but have lived in disregard of God's day, and house, and Word—this proves you to have been ungodly. Sadder still, it may be you have even tried to doubt God's existence, and have gone the length of saying that you did so. You have lived on this fair earth, which is full of the tokens of God's presence, and all the while you have shut your eyes to the clear evidences of His power and Godhead. You have lived as if there were no God. Indeed, you would have been very pleased if you could have demonstrated to yourself to a certainty that there was no God whatever. Possibly you have lived a great many years in this way, so that you are now pretty well settled in your ways, and yet God is not in any of them. If you were labeled

## UNGODLY

it would as well describe you as if the sea were to be labeled salt water. Would it not?

Possibly you are a person of another sort; you have regularly attended to all the outward forms of religion, and yet you have had no heart in them at all, but have been really ungodly. Though

meeting with the people of God, you have never met with God for yourself; you have been in the choir, and yet have not praised the Lord with your heart. You have lived without any love to God in your heart, or regard to his commands in your life. Well, you are just the kind of man to whom this gospel is sent—this gospel which says that God justifieth the ungodly. It is very wonderful, but it is happily available for you. It just suits you. Does it not? How I wish that you would accept it! If you are a sensible man, you will see the remarkable grace of God in providing for such as you are, and you will say to yourself, "Justify the ungodly! Why, then, should not I be justified, and justified at once?"

Now, observe further, that it must be so—that the salvation of God is for those who do not deserve it, and have no preparation for it. It is reasonable that the statement should be put in the Bible; for, dear friend, no others need justifying but those who have no justification of their own. If any of my readers are perfectly righteous, they want no justifying. You feel that you are doing your duty well, and almost putting heaven under an obligation to you. What do you want with a Saviour, or with mercy? What do you want with justification? You will be tired of my book by this time, for it will have no interest to you.

If any of you are giving yourselves such proud airs, listen to me for a little while. You will be lost, as sure as you are alive. You righteous men, whose righteousness is all of your own working, are either deceivers or deceived; for the Scripture cannot lie, and it saith plainly, "There is none righteous, no, not one." In any case I have no gospel to preach to the self-righteous, no, not a word of it. Jesus Christ himself came not to call the righteous, and I am not going to do what He did not do. If I called you, you would not come, and, therefore, I will not call you, under that character. No, I bid you rather look at that righteousness of yours till you see what a delusion it is. It is not half so substantial as a cobweb. Have done with it! Flee

from it! Oh believe that the only persons that can need justification are those who are not in themselves just! They need that something should be done for them to make them just before the judgment seat of God. Depend upon it, the Lord only does that which is needful. Infinite wisdom never attempts that which is unnecessary. Jesus never undertakes that which is superfluous. To make him just who is just is no work for God—that were a labor for a fool; but to make him just who is unjust—that is work for infinite love and mercy. To justify the ungodly—this is a miracle worthy of a God. And for certain it is so.

Now, look. If there be anywhere in the world a physician who has discovered sure and precious remedies, to whom is that physician sent? To those who are perfectly healthy? I think not. Put him down in a district where there are no sick persons, and he feels that he is not in his place. There is nothing for him to do. "The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick." Is it not equally clear that the great remedies of grace and redemption are for the sick in soul? They cannot be for the whole, for they cannot be of use to such. If you, dear friend, feel that you are spiritually sick, the Physician has come into the world for you. If you are altogether undone by reason of your sin, you are the very person aimed at in the plan of salvation. I say that the Lord of love had just such as you are in His eye when He arranged the system of grace. Suppose a man of generous spirit were to resolve to forgive all those who were indebted to him; it is clear that this can only apply to those really in his debt. One person owes him a thousand pounds; another owes him fifty pounds; each one has but to have his bill receipted, and the liability is wiped out. But the most generous person cannot forgive the debts of those who do not owe him anything. It is out of the power of Omnipotence to forgive where there is no sin. Pardon, therefore, cannot be for you who have no sin. Pardon must be for the guilty. Forgiveness must be for the sinful. It were absurd to talk of forgiving those who do not

need forgiveness—pardoning those who have never offended.

Do you think that you must be lost because you are a sinner? This is the reason why you can be saved. Because you own yourself to be a sinner I would encourage you to believe that grace is ordained for such as you are. One of our hymn-writers even dared to say:

A sinner is a sacred thing;  
The Holy Ghost hath made him so.

It is truly so, that Jesus seeks and saves that which is lost. He died and made a real atonement for real sinners. When men are not playing with words, or calling themselves "miserable sinners," out of mere compliment, I feel overjoyed to meet with them. I would be glad to talk all night to bona fide sinners. The inn of mercy never closes its doors upon such, neither weekdays nor Sunday. Our Lord Jesus did not die for imaginary sins, but His heart's blood was spilt to wash out deep crimson stains, which nothing else can remove.

He that is a black sinner—he is the kind of man that Jesus Christ came to make white. A gospel preacher on one occasion preached a sermon from, "Now also the axe is laid to the root of the trees," and he delivered such a sermon that one of his hearers said to him, "One would have thought that you had been preaching to criminals. Your sermon ought to have been delivered in the county jail." "Oh, no," said the good man, "if I were preaching in the county jail, I should not preach from that text, there I should preach 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.' " Just so. The law is for the self-righteous, to humble their pride: the gospel is for the lost, to remove their despair. If you are not lost, what do you want with a Saviour? Should the shepherd go after those who never went astray? Why should the woman sweep her house for the bits of money that were never out of her purse? No, the medicine is for the diseased; the quickening is for

the dead; the pardon is for the guilty; liberation is for those who are bound: the opening of eyes is for those who are blind. How can the Saviour, and His death upon the cross, and the gospel of pardon, be accounted for, unless it be upon the supposition that men are guilty and worthy of condemnation? The sinner is the gospel's reason for existence. You, my friend, to whom this word now comes, if you are undeserving, ill-deserving, hell-deserving, you are the sort of man for whom the gospel is ordained, and arranged, and proclaimed. God justifieth the ungodly.

I would like to make this very plain. I hope that I have done so already; but still, plain as it is, it is only the Lord that can make a man see it. It does at first seem most amazing to an awakened man that salvation should really be for him as a lost and guilty one. He thinks that it must be for him as a penitent man, forgetting that his penitence is a part of his salvation. "Oh," says he, "but I must be this and that," —all of which is true, for he shall be this and that as the result of salvation; but salvation comes to him before he has any of the results of salvation. It comes to him, in fact, while he deserves only this bare, beggarly, base, abominable description, "ungodly." That is all he is when God's gospel comes to justify him.

May I, therefore, urge upon any who have no good thing about them—who fear that they have not even a good feeling, or anything whatever that can recommend them to God—that they will firmly believe that our gracious God is able and willing to take them without anything to recommend them, and to forgive them spontaneously, not because they are good, but because He is good. Does He not make His sun to shine on the evil as well as on the good? Does He not give fruitful seasons, and send the rain and the sunshine in their time upon the most ungodly nations? Ay, even Sodom had its sun, and Gomorrah had its dew. Oh friend, the great grace of God surpasses my conception and your conception, and I would have you think worthily of it ! As high as the heavens are above the earth; so

high are God's thoughts above our thoughts. He can abundantly pardon. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners: forgiveness is for the guilty.

Do not attempt to touch yourself up and make yourself something other than you really are; but come as you are to Him who justifies the ungodly. A great artist some short time ago had painted a part of the corporation of the city in which he lived, and he wanted, for historic purposes, to include in his picture certain characters well known in the town. A crossing-sweeper, unkempt, ragged, filthy, was known to everybody, and there was a suitable place for him in the picture. The artist said to this ragged and rugged individual, "I will pay you well if you will come down to my studio and let me take your likeness." He came round in the morning, but he was soon sent about his business; for he had washed his face, and combed his hair, and donned a respectable suit of clothes. He was needed as a beggar, and was not invited in any other capacity. Even so, the gospel will receive you into its halls if you come as a sinner, not otherwise. Wait not for reformation, but come at once for salvation. God justifieth the ungodly, and that takes you up where you now are: it meets you in your worst estate.

Come in your deshabelle [disorder]. I mean, come to your heavenly Father in all your sin and sinfulness. Come to Jesus just as you are, leprous, filthy, naked, neither fit to live nor fit to die. Come, you that are the very sweepings of creation; come, though you hardly dare to hope for anything but death. Come, though despair is brooding over you, pressing upon your bosom like a horrible nightmare. Come and ask the Lord to justify another ungodly one. Why should He not? Come for this great mercy of God is meant for such as you are. I put it in the language of the text, and I cannot put it more strongly: the Lord God Himself takes to Himself this gracious title, "Him that justifieth the ungodly." He makes just, and causes to be treated as just, those who by nature are ungodly. Is not that a wonderful word

for you? Reader, do not delay till you have well considered this matter.

#### 4 "IT IS GOD THAT JUSTIFIETH"

Romans 8:33

A WONDERFUL THING it is, this being justified, or made just. If we had never broken the laws of God we should not have needed it, for we should have been just in ourselves. He who has all his life done the things which he ought to have done, and has never done anything which he ought not to have done, is justified by the law. But you, dear reader, are not of that sort, I am quite sure. You have too much honesty to pretend to be without sin, and therefore you need to be justified.

Now, if you justify yourself, you will simply be a self-deceiver. Therefore do not attempt it. It is never worth while.

If you ask your fellow mortals to justify you, what can they do? You can make some of them speak well of you for small favors, and others will backbite you for less. Their judgment is not worth much.

Our text says, "It is God that justifieth," and this is a deal more to the point. It is an astonishing fact, and one that we ought to consider with care. Come and see.

In the first place, nobody else but God would ever have thought of justifying those who are guilty. They have lived in open rebellion; they have done evil with both hands; they have gone from bad to worse; they have turned back to sin even after they have smarted for it, and have therefore for a while been forced to leave it. They have broken the law, and trampled on the gospel. They have refused proclamations of mercy, and have persisted in ungodliness. How can they be forgiven and justified? Their fellowmen, despairing of them, say, "They are hopeless cases." Even Christians look upon them with



sorrow rather than with hope. But not so their God. He, in the splendor of his electing grace having chosen some of them before the foundation of the world, will not rest till He has justified them, and made them to be accepted in the Beloved. Is it not written, " Whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified"? Thus you see there are some whom the Lord resolves to justify: why should not you and I be of the number?

None but God would ever have thought of justifying me. I am a wonder to myself. I doubt not that grace is equally seen in others. Look at Saul of Tarsus, who foamed at the mouth, against God's servants. Like a hungry wolf, he worried the lambs and the sheep right and left; and yet God struck him down on the road to Damascus, and changed his heart, and so fully justified him that ere long, this man became the greatest preacher of justification by faith that ever lived. He must often have marveled that he was justified by faith in Christ Jesus; for he was once a determined stickler for salvation by the works of the law. None but God would have ever thought of justifying such a man as Saul the persecutor; but the Lord God is glorious in grace.

But, even if anybody had thought of justifying the ungodly, none but God could have done it. It is quite impossible for any person to forgive offences which have not been committed against himself. A person has greatly injured you; you can forgive him, and I hope you will; but no third person can forgive him apart from you. If the wrong is done to you, the pardon must come from you. If we have sinned against God, it is in God's power to forgive; for the sin is against Himself. That is why David says, in the fifty-first Psalm: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight"; for then God, against whom the offence is committed, can put the offence away. That which we owe to God, our great Creator can remit, if so it pleases Him; and if He remits it, it is remitted. None

but the great God, against whom we have committed the sin, can blot out that sin; let us, therefore, see that we go to Him and seek mercy at His hands. Do not let us be led aside by those who would have us confess to them; they have no warrant in the Word of God for their pretensions. But even if they were ordained to pronounce absolution in God's name, it must still be better to go ourselves to the great Lord through Jesus Christ, the Mediator, and seek and find pardon at His hand; since we are sure that this is the right way. Proxy religion involves too great a risk: you had better see to your soul's matters yourself, and leave them in no man's hands.

Only God can justify the ungodly; but He can do it to perfection. He casts our sins behind His back, He blots them out; He says that though they be sought for, they shall not be found. With no other reason for it but His own infinite goodness, He has prepared a glorious way by which He can make scarlet sins as white as snow, and remove our transgressions from us as far as the east is from the west. He says, "I will not remember your sins. " He goes the length of making an end of sin. One of old called out in amazement, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy" (Micah 7:18).

We are not now speaking of justice, nor of God's dealing with men according to their deserts. If you profess to deal with the righteous Lord on law terms, everlasting wrath threatens you, for that is what you deserve. Blessed be His name, He has not dealt with us after our sins; but now He treats with us on terms of free grace and infinite compassion, and He says, "I will receive you graciously, and love you freely." Believe it, for it is certainly true that the great God is able to treat the guilty with abundant mercy; yea, He is able to treat the ungodly as if they had been always godly. Read carefully the parable of the prodigal son, and see how the forgiving father received the returning wanderer with as much love as if he had never gone away,

and had never defiled himself with harlots. So far did he carry this that the elder brother began to grumble at it; but the father never withdrew his love. Oh my brother, however guilty you may be, if you will only come back to your God and Father, He will treat you as if you had never done wrong! He will regard you as just, and deal with you accordingly. What say you to this?

Do you not see—for I want to bring this out clearly, what a splendid thing it is—that as none but God would think of justifying the ungodly, and none but God could do it, yet the Lord can do it? See how the apostle puts the challenge, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." If God has justified a man it is well done, it is rightly done, it is justly done, it is everlastingly done. I read a statement in a magazine which is full of venom against the gospel and those who preach it, that we hold some kind of theory by which we imagine that sin can be removed from men. We hold no theory, we publish a fact. The grandest fact under heaven is this—that Christ by His precious blood does actually put away sin, and that God, for Christ's sake, dealing with men on terms of divine mercy, forgives the guilty and justifies them, not according to anything that He sees in them, or foresees will be in them, but according to the riches of His mercy which lie in His own heart. This we have preached, do preach, and will preach as long as we live. "It is God that justifieth"—that justifieth the ungodly; He is not ashamed of doing it, nor are we of preaching it.

The justification which comes from God himself must be beyond question. If the Judge acquits me, who can condemn me? If the highest court in the universe has pronounced me just, who shall lay anything to my charge? Justification from God is a sufficient answer to an awakened conscience. The Holy Spirit by its means breathes peace over our entire nature, and we are no longer afraid. With this justification we can answer all the roarings and railings of Satan and

ungodly men. With this we shall be able to die: with this we shall boldly rise again, and face the last great assize.

Bold shall I stand in that great day,  
For who aught to my charge shall lay?  
While by my Lord absolved I am  
From sin's tremendous curse and blame.  
Zinzendorf

Friend, the Lord can blot out all your sins. I make no shot in the dark when I say this. "All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Though you are steeped up to your throat in crime, He can with a word remove the defilement, and say, "I will, be thou clean." The Lord is a great forgiver.

"I believe in the Forgiveness of Sins." Do You?

He can even at this hour pronounce the sentence, "Thy sins be forgiven thee; go in peace;" and if He do this, no power in Heaven, or earth, or under the earth, can put you under suspicion, much less under wrath. Do not doubt the power of Almighty love. You could not forgive your fellow man had he offended you as you have offended God; but you must not measure God's corn with your bushel; His thoughts and ways are as much above yours as the heavens are high above the earth.

"Well," say you, "it would be a great miracle if the Lord were to pardon me." Just so. It would be a supreme miracle, and therefore He is likely to do it; for He does "great things and unsearchable" which we looked not for.

I was myself stricken down with a horrible sense of guilt, which made my life a misery to me; but when I heard the command, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God and there is none else"—I looked, and in a moment the Lord justified me.

Jesus Christ, made sin for me, was what I saw, and that sight gave me rest. When those who were bitten by the fiery serpents in the wilderness looked to the serpent of brass they were healed at once; and so was I when I looked to the crucified Saviour. The Holy Spirit, who enabled me to believe, gave me peace through believing. I felt as sure that I was forgiven, as before I felt sure of condemnation. I had been certain of my condemnation because the Word of God declared it, and my conscience bore witness to it; but when the Lord justified me I was made equally certain by the same witnesses. The word of the Lord in the Scripture saith, "He that believeth on him is not condemned," and my conscience bears witness that I believed, and that God in pardoning me is just. Thus I have the witness of the Holy Spirit and my own conscience, and these two agree in one. Oh, how I wish that my reader would receive the testimony of God upon this matter, and then full soon he would also have the witness in himself! I venture to say that a sinner justified by God stands on even a surer footing than a righteous man justified by his works, if such there be. We could never be surer that we had done enough works; conscience would always be uneasy lest, after all, we should come short, and we could only have the trembling verdict of a fallible judgment to rely upon; but when God himself justifies, and the Holy Spirit bears witness thereto by giving us peace with God, why then we feel that the matter is sure and settled, and we enter into rest. No tongue can tell the depth of that calm which comes over the soul which has received the peace of God which passeth all understanding.

## 5 "JUST AND THE JUSTIFIER"

WE HAVE SEEN the ungodly justified, and have considered the great truth, that only God can justify any man; we now come a step further and make the inquiry—How can a just God justify guilty men? Here we are met with a full answer in the words of Paul, in

Romans 3:21-26. We will read six verses from the chapter so as to get the run of the passage:

"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

Here suffer me to give you a bit of personal experience. When I was under the hand of the Holy Spirit, under conviction of sin, I had a clear and sharp sense of the justice of God. Sin, whatever it might be to other people, became to me an intolerable burden. It was not so much that I feared hell, but that I feared sin. I knew myself to be so horribly guilty that I remember feeling that if God did not punish me for sin He ought to do so. I felt that the Judge of all the earth ought to condemn such sin as mine. I sat on the judgment seat, and I condemned myself to perish; for I confessed that had I been God I could have done no other than send such a guilty creature as I was down to the lowest hell. All the while, I had upon my mind a deep concern for the honor of God's name, and the integrity of His moral government. I felt that it would not satisfy my conscience if I could be forgiven unjustly. The sin I had committed must be punished. But then there was the question how God could be just, and yet justify me who had been so guilty. I asked my heart: "How can He be just and yet the justifier? " I was worried and wearied with this question;

neither could I see any answer to it. Certainly, I could never have invented an answer which would have satisfied my conscience.

The doctrine of the atonement is to my mind one of the surest proofs of the divine inspiration of Holy Scripture. Who would or could have thought of the just Ruler dying for the unjust rebel? This is no teaching of human mythology, or dream of poetical imagination. This method of expiation is only known among men because it is a fact; fiction could not have devised it. God Himself ordained it; it is not a matter which could have been imagined.

I had heard the plan of salvation by the sacrifice of Jesus from my youth up; but I did not know any more about it in my innermost soul than if I had been born and bred a Hottentot. The light was there, but I was blind; it was of necessity that the Lord himself should make the matter plain to me. It came to me as a new revelation, as fresh as if I had never read in Scripture that Jesus was declared to be the propitiation for sins that God might be just. I believe it will have to come as a revelation to every newborn child of God whenever he sees it; I mean that glorious doctrine of the substitution of the Lord Jesus. I came to understand that salvation was possible through vicarious sacrifice; and that provision had been made in the first constitution and arrangement of things for such a substitution. I was made to see that He who is the Son of God, co-equal, and co-eternal with the Father, had of old been made the covenant Head of a chosen people that He might in that capacity suffer for them and save them. Inasmuch as our fall was not at the first a personal one, for we fell in our federal representative, the first Adam, it became possible for us to be recovered by a second representative, even by Him who has undertaken to be the covenant head of His people, so as to be their second Adam. I saw that ere I actually sinned I had fallen by my first father's sin; and I rejoiced that therefore it became possible in point of law for me to rise by a second head and representative. The fall by Adam left a loophole of escape; another Adam can undo the ruin

made by the first. When I was anxious about the possibility of a just God pardoning me, I understood and saw by faith that He who is the Son of God became man, and in His own blessed person bore my sin in His own body on the tree. I saw the chastisement of my peace was laid on Him, and that with His stripes I was healed. Dear friend, have you ever seen that? Have you ever understood how God can be just to the full, not remitting penalty nor blunting the edge of the sword, and yet can be infinitely merciful, and can justify the ungodly who turn to Him? It was because the Son of God, supremely glorious in His matchless person, undertook to vindicate the law by bearing the sentence due to me, that therefore God is able to pass by my sin. The law of God was more vindicated by the death of Christ than it would have been had all transgressors been sent to Hell. For the Son of God to suffer for sin was a more glorious establishment of the government of God, than for the whole race to suffer.

Jesus has borne the death penalty on our behalf. Behold the wonder! There He hangs upon the cross! This is the greatest sight you will ever see. Son of God and Son of Man, there He hangs, bearing pains unutterable, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. Oh, the glory of that sight! The innocent punished! The Holy One condemned! The Ever-blessed made a curse! The infinitely glorious put to a shameful death! The more I look at the sufferings of the Son of God, the more sure I am that they must meet my case. Why did He suffer, if not to turn aside the penalty from us? If, then, He turned it aside by His death, it is turned aside, and those who believe in Him need not fear it. It must be so, that since expiation is made, God is able to forgive without shaking the basis of His throne, or in the least degree blotting the statute book. Conscience gets a full answer to her tremendous question. The wrath of God against iniquity, whatever that may be, must be beyond all conception terrible. Well did Moses say, "Who knoweth the power of thine anger?" Yet when we hear the Lord of glory cry, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" and see Him



yielding up the ghost, we feel that the justice of God has received abundant vindication by obedience so perfect and death so terrible, rendered by so divine a person. If God himself bows before His own law, what more can be done? There is more in the atonement by way of merit, than there is in all human sin by way of demerit.

The great gulf of Jesus' loving self-sacrifice can swallow up the mountains of our sins, all of them. For the sake of the infinite good of this one representative man, the Lord may well look with favor upon other men, however unworthy they may be in and of themselves. It was a miracle of miracles that the Lord Jesus Christ should stand in our stead and

Bear that we might never bear  
His Father's righteous ire.

But he has done so. "It is finished." God will spare the sinner because He did not spare His Son. God can pass by your transgressions because He laid those transgressions upon His only begotten Son nearly two thousand years ago. If you believe in Jesus (that is the point), then your sins were carried away by Him who was the scapegoat for His people.

What is it to believe in Him? It is not merely to say, "He is God and the Saviour," but to trust Him wholly and entirely, and take Him for all your salvation from this time forth and forever—your Lord, your Master, your all. If you will have Jesus, He has you already. If you believe on Him, I tell you you cannot go to hell; for that were to make the sacrifice of Christ of none effect. It cannot be that a sacrifice should be accepted, and yet the soul should die for whom that sacrifice has been received. If the believing soul could be condemned, then why a sacrifice? If Jesus died in my stead, why should I die also? Every believer can claim that the sacrifice was actually made for him: by faith he has laid his hands on it, and made it his own, and

therefore he may rest assured that he can never perish. The Lord would not receive this offering on our behalf, and then condemn us to die. The Lord cannot read our pardon written in the blood of His own Son, and then smite us. That were impossible. Oh that you may have grace given you at once to look away to Jesus and to begin at the beginning, even at Jesus, who is the Fountain-head of mercy to guilty man!

"He justifieth the ungodly." "It is God that justifieth, " therefore, and for that reason only it can be done, and He does it through the atoning sacrifice of His divine Son. Therefore it can be justly done—so justly done that none will ever question it—so thoroughly done that in the last tremendous day, when heaven and earth shall pass away, there shall be none that shall deny the validity of the justification. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth."

Now, poor soul! will you come into this lifeboat, just as you are? Here is safety from the wreck! Accept the sure deliverance. "I have nothing with me," say you. You are not asked to bring anything with you. Men who escape for their lives will leave even their clothes behind. Leap for it, just as you are.

I will tell you this thing about myself to encourage you. My sole hope for heaven lies in the full atonement made upon Calvary's cross for the ungodly. On that I firmly rely. I have not the shadow of a hope anywhere else. You are in the same condition as I am; for we neither of us have anything of our own worth as a ground of trust. Let us join hands and stand together at the foot of the cross, and trust our souls once for all to Him who shed His blood for the guilty. We will be saved by one and the same Saviour. If you perish trusting Him, I must perish too. What can I do more to prove my own confidence in the gospel which I set before you?

## 6 CONCERNING DELIVERANCE FROM SINNING

IN THIS PLACE I would say a plain word or two to those who understand the method of justification by faith which is in Christ Jesus, but whose trouble is that they cannot cease from sin. We can never be happy, restful, or spiritually healthy till we become holy. We must be rid of sin; but how is the riddance to be wrought? This is the life-or-death question of many. The old nature is very strong, and they have tried to curb and tame it; but it will not be subdued, and they find themselves, though anxious to be better, if anything growing worse than before. The heart is so hard, the will is so obstinate, the passions are so furious, the thoughts are so volatile, the imagination is so ungovernable, the desires are so wild, that the man feels that he has a den of wild beasts within him, which will eat him up sooner than be ruled by him. We may say of our fallen nature what the Lord said to Job concerning Leviathan: "Wilt thou play with him as with a bird? or wilt thou bind him for thy maidens?" A man might as well hope to hold the north wind in the hollow of his hand as expect to control by his own strength those boisterous powers which dwell within his fallen nature. This is a greater feat than any of the fabled labors of Hercules: God is wanted here.

"I could believe that Jesus would forgive sin," says one, "but then my trouble is that I sin again, and that I feel such awful tendencies to evil within me. As surely as a stone, if it be flung up into the air, soon comes down again to the ground, so do I, though I am sent up to heaven by earnest preaching, return again to my insensible state. Alas ! I am easily fascinated with the basilisk eyes of sin, and am thus held as under a spell, so that I cannot escape from my own folly."

Dear friend, salvation would be a sadly incomplete affair if it did not deal with this part of our ruined estate. We want to be purified as well as pardoned. Justification without sanctification would not be salvation at all. It would call the leper clean, and leave him to die of

his disease; it would forgive the rebellion and allow the rebel to remain an enemy to his king. It would remove the consequences but overlook the cause, and this would leave an endless and hopeless task before us. It would stop the stream for a time, but leave an open fountain of defilement, which would sooner or later break forth with increased power. Remember that the Lord Jesus came to take away sin in three ways; He came to remove the penalty of sin, the power of sin, and, at last, the presence of sin. At once you may reach to the second part—the power of sin may immediately be broken; and so you will be on the road to the third, namely, the removal of the presence of sin. "We know that he was manifested to take away our sins."

The angel said of our Lord, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." Our Lord Jesus came to destroy in us the works of the devil. That which was said at our Lord's birth was also declared in His death; for when the soldier pierced His side forthwith came there out blood and water, to set forth the double cure by which we are delivered from the guilt and the defilement of sin. If, however, you are troubled about the power of sin, and about the tendencies of your nature, as you well may be, here is a promise for you. Have faith in it, for it stands in that covenant of grace which is ordered in all things and sure. God, who cannot lie, has said in Ezekiel 36:26:

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

You see, it is all "I will," and "I will." "I will give," and "I will take away." This is the royal style of the King of kings, who is able to accomplish all His will. No word of His shall ever fall to the ground. The Lord knows right well that you cannot change your own heart,

and cannot cleanse your own nature; but He also knows that He can do both. He can cause the Ethiopian to change his skin, and the leopard his spots. Hear this, and be astonished: He can create you a second time; He can cause you to be born again. This is a miracle of grace, but the Holy Ghost will perform it. It would be a very wonderful thing if one could stand at the foot of the Niagara Falls, and could speak a word which should make the river Niagara begin to run up stream, and leap up that great precipice over which it now rolls in stupendous force. Nothing but the power of God could achieve that marvel; but that would be more than a fit parallel to what would take place if the course of your nature were altogether reversed. All things are possible with God. He can reverse the direction of your desires and the current of your life, and instead of going downward from God, He can make your whole being tend upward toward God. That is, in fact, what the Lord has promised to do for all who are in the covenant; and we know from Scripture that all believers are in the covenant. Let me read the words again:

A new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give an heart of flesh. (Ezekiel 11:19).

What a wonderful promise! And it is yea and amen in Christ Jesus to the glory of God by us. Let us lay hold of it; accept it as true, and appropriate it to ourselves. Then shall it be fulfilled in us, and we shall have, in after days and years, to sing of that wondrous change which the sovereign grace of God has wrought in us.

It is well worthy of consideration that when the Lord takes away the stony heart, that deed is done; and when that is once done, no known power can ever take away that new heart which He gives, and that right spirit which He puts within us. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance "; that is, without repentance on His part; He

does not take away what He once has given. Let Him renew you and you will be renewed. Man's reformations and cleanings up soon come to an end, for the dog returns to his vomit; but when God puts a new heart into us, the new heart is there forever, and never will it harden into stone again. He who made it flesh will keep it so. Herein we may rejoice and be glad forever in that which God creates in the kingdom of His grace.

To put the matter very simply—did you ever hear of Mr. Rowland Hill's illustration of the cat and the sow? I will give it in my own fashion, to illustrate our Saviour's expressive words—"Ye must be born again. " Do you see that cat? What a cleanly creature she is! How cleverly she washes herself with her tongue and her paws! It is quite a pretty sight! Did you ever see a sow do that? No, you never did. It is contrary to its nature. It prefers to wallow in the mire. Go and teach a sow to wash itself, and see how little success you would gain. It would be a great sanitary improvement if swine would be clean. Teach them to wash and clean themselves as the cat has been doing! Useless task. You may by force wash that sow, but it hastens to the mire, and is soon as foul as ever. The only way in which you can get a sow to wash itself is to transform it into a cat; then it will wash and be clean, but not till then! Suppose that transformation to be accomplished, and then what was difficult or impossible is easy enough; the swine will henceforth be fit for your parlor and your hearth-rug. So it is with an ungodly man; you cannot force him to do what a renewed man does most willingly; you may teach him, and set him a good example, but he cannot learn the art of holiness, for he has no mind to it; his nature leads him another way. When the Lord makes a new man of him, then all things wear a different aspect. So great is this change, that I once heard a convert say, "Either all the world is changed, or else I am." The new nature follows after right as naturally as the old nature wanders after wrong. What a blessing to receive such a nature! Only the Holy Ghost can give it.

Did it ever strike you what a wonderful thing it is for the Lord to give a new heart and a right spirit to a man? You have seen a lobster, perhaps, which has fought with another lobster, and lost one of its claws, and a new claw has grown. That is a remarkable thing; but it is a much more astounding fact that a man should have a new heart given to him. This, indeed, is a miracle beyond the powers of nature. There is a tree. If you cut off one of its limbs, another one may grow in its place; but can you change the tree; can you sweeten sour sap; can you make the thorn bear figs? You can graft something better into it and that is the analogy which nature gives us of the work of grace; but absolutely to change the vital sap of the tree would be a miracle indeed. Such a prodigy and mystery of power God works in all who believe in Jesus.

If you yield yourself up to His divine working, the Lord will alter your nature; He will subdue the old nature, and breathe new life into you. Put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and He will take the stony heart out of your flesh, and He will give you a heart of flesh. Where everything was hard, everything shall be tender; where everything was vicious, everything shall be virtuous: where everything tended downward, everything shall rise upward with impetuous force. The lion of anger shall give place to the lamb of meekness; the raven of uncleanness shall fly before the dove of purity; the vile serpent of deceit shall be trodden under the heel of truth.

I have seen with my own eyes such marvellous changes of moral and spiritual character that I despair of none. I could, if it were fitting, point out those who were once unchaste women who are now pure as the driven snow, and blaspheming men who now delight all around them by their intense devotion. Thieves are made honest, drunkards sober, liars truthful, and scoffers zealous. Wherever the grace of God

has appeared to a man it has trained him to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world: and, dear reader, it will do the same for you.

"I cannot make this change," says one. Who said you could? The Scripture which we have quoted speaks not of what man will do, but of what God will do. It is God's promise, and it is for Him to fulfill His own engagements. Trust in Him to fulfill His Word to you, and it will be done.

"But how is it to be done?" What business is that of yours? Must the Lord explain His methods before you will believe him? The Lord's working in this matter is a great mystery: the Holy Ghost performs it. He who made the promise has the responsibility of keeping the promise, and He is equal to the occasion. God, who promises this marvellous change, will assuredly carry it out in all who receive Jesus, for to all such He gives power to become the Sons of God. Oh that you would believe it! Oh that you would do the gracious Lord the justice to believe that He can and will do this for you, great miracle though it will be! Oh that you would believe that God cannot lie! Oh that you would trust Him for a new heart, and a right spirit, for He can give them to you! May the Lord give you faith in His promise, faith in His Son, faith in the Holy Spirit, and faith in Him, and to Him shall be praise and honor and glory forever and ever! Amen.

## 7 BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH

"By grace are ye saved, through faith" (Ephesians 2:8 ).

I THINK IT WELL to turn a little to one side that I may ask my reader to observe adoringly the fountain-head of our salvation, which is the grace of God. "By grace are ye saved." Because God is gracious,



therefore sinful men are forgiven, converted, purified, and saved. It is not because of anything in them, or that ever can be in them, that they are saved; but because of the boundless love, goodness, pity, compassion, mercy, and grace of God. Tarry a moment, then, at the well-head. Behold the pure river of water of life, as it proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb!

What an abyss is the grace of God! Who can measure its breadth? Who can fathom its depth? Like all the rest of the divine attributes, it is infinite. God is full of love, for "God is love." God is full of goodness; the very name "God" is short for "good." Unbounded goodness and love enter into the very essence of the Godhead. It is because "his mercy endureth for ever" that men are not destroyed; because "his compassions fail not" that sinners are brought to Him and forgiven.

Remember this; or you may fall into error by fixing your minds so much upon the faith which is the channel of salvation as to forget the grace which is the fountain and source even of faith itself. Faith is the work of God's grace in us. No man can say that Jesus is the Christ but by the Holy Ghost. "No man cometh unto me," saith Jesus, "except the Father which hath sent me draw him." So that faith, which is coming to Christ, is the result of divine drawing. Grace is the first and last moving cause of salvation; and faith, essential as it is, is only an important part of the machinery which grace employs. We are saved "through faith," but salvation is "by grace." Sound forth those words as with the archangel's trumpet: "By grace are ye saved." What glad tidings for the undeserving!

Faith occupies the position of a channel or conduit pipe. Grace is the fountain and the stream; faith is the aqueduct along which the flood of mercy flows down to refresh the thirsty sons of men. It is a great pity when the aqueduct is broken. It is a sad sight to see around Rome the many noble aqueducts which no longer convey water into the city, because the arches are broken and the marvelous structures

are in ruins. The aqueduct must be kept entire to convey the current; and, even so, faith must be true and sound, leading right up to God and coming right down to ourselves, that it may become a serviceable channel of mercy to our souls.

Still, I again remind you that faith is only the channel or aqueduct, and not the fountainhead, and we must not look so much to it as to exalt it above the divine source of all blessing which lies in the grace of God. Never make a Christ out of your faith, nor think of as if it were the independent source of your salvation. Our life is found in "looking unto Jesus," not in looking to our own faith. By faith all things become possible to us; yet the power is not in the faith, but in the God upon whom faith relies. Grace is the powerful engine, and faith is the chain by which the carriage of the soul is attached to the great motive power. The righteousness of faith is not the moral excellence of faith, but the righteousness of Jesus Christ which faith grasps and appropriates. The peace within the soul is not derived from the contemplation of our own faith; but it comes to us from Him who is our peace, the hem of whose garment faith touches, and virtue comes out of Him into the soul.

See then, dear friend, that the weakness of your faith will not destroy you. A trembling hand may receive a golden gift. The Lord's salvation can come to us though we have only faith as a grain of mustard seed. The power lies in the grace of God, and not in our faith. Great messages can be sent along slender wires, and the peace-giving witness of the Holy Spirit can reach the heart by means of a thread-like faith which seems almost unable to sustain its own weight. Think more of Him to whom you look than of the look itself. You must look away even from your own looking, and see nothing but Jesus, and the grace of God revealed in Him.

8 FAITH, WHAT IS IT?

WHAT IS THIS FAITH concerning which it is said, "By grace are ye saved, through faith?" There are many descriptions of faith; but almost all the definitions I have met with have made me understand it less than I did before I saw them. The Negro said, when he read the chapter, that he would confound it; and it is very likely that he did so, though he meant to expound it. We may explain faith till nobody understands it. I hope I shall not be guilty of that fault. Faith is the simplest of all things, and perhaps because of its simplicity it is the more difficult to explain.

What is faith? It is made up of three things—knowledge, belief, and trust. Knowledge comes first. "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" I want to be informed of a fact before I can possibly believe it. "Faith cometh by hearing"; we must first hear, in order that we may know what is to be believed. "They that know thy name shall put their trust in thee." A measure of knowledge is essential to faith; hence the importance of getting knowledge. "Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live." Such was the word of the ancient prophet, and it is the word of the gospel still. Search the Scriptures and learn what the Holy Spirit teacheth concerning Christ and His salvation. Seek to know God: "For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." May the Holy Spirit give you the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord! Know the gospel: know what the good news is, how it talks of free forgiveness, and of change of heart, of adoption into the family of God, and of countless other blessings. Know especially Christ Jesus the Son of God, the Saviour of men, united to us by His human nature, and yet one with God; and thus able to act as Mediator between God and man, able to lay His hand upon both, and to be the connecting link between the sinner and the Judge of all the earth. Endeavour to know more and more of Christ Jesus. Endeavour especially to know the doctrine of the sacrifice of Christ; for the point upon which

saving faith mainly fixes itself is this— "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Know that Jesus was "made a curse for us, as it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Drink deep of the doctrine of the substitutionary work of Christ; for therein lies the sweetest possible comfort to the guilty sons of men, since the Lord "made him to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Faith begins with knowledge.

The mind goes on to believe that these things are true. The soul believes that God is, and that He hears the cries of sincere hearts; that the gospel is from God; that justification by faith is the grand truth which God hath revealed in these last days by His Spirit more clearly than before. Then the heart believes that Jesus is verily and in truth our God and Saviour, the Redeemer of men, the Prophet, Priest, and King of His people. All this is accepted as sure truth, not to be called in question. I pray that you may at once come to this. Get firmly to believe that "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin"; that His sacrifice is complete and fully accepted of God on man's behalf, so that he that believeth on Jesus is not condemned. Believe these truths as you believe any other statements; for the difference between common faith and saving faith lies mainly in the subjects upon which it is exercised. Believe the witness of God just as you believe the testimony of your own father or friend. "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater."

So far you have made an advance toward faith; only one more ingredient is needed to complete it, which is trust. Commit yourself to the merciful God; rest your hope on the gracious gospel; trust your soul on the dying and living Saviour; wash away your sins in the atoning blood; accept His perfect righteousness, and all is well. Trust is the lifeblood of faith; there is no saving faith without it. The Puritans were accustomed to explain faith by the word

"recumbency." It meant leaning upon a thing. Lean with all your weight upon Christ. It would be a better illustration still if I said, fall at full length, and lie on the Rock of Ages. Cast yourself upon Jesus; rest in Him; commit yourself to Him. That done, you have exercised saving faith. Faith is not a blind thing; for faith begins with knowledge. It is not a speculative thing; for faith believes facts of which it is sure. It is not an unpractical, dreamy thing; for faith trusts, and stakes its destiny upon the truth of revelation. That is one way of describing what faith is.

Let me try again. Faith is believing that Christ is what He is said to be, and that He will do what He has promised to do, and then to expect this of Him. The Scriptures speak of Jesus Christ as being God, God is human flesh; as being perfect in His character; as being made of a sin-offering on our behalf; as bearing our sins in His own body on the tree. The Scripture speaks of Him as having finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. The sacred records further tell us that He "rose again from the dead," that He "ever liveth to make intercession for us," that He has gone up into the glory, and has taken possession of Heaven on the behalf of His people, and that He will shortly come again "to judge the world in righteousness, and his people with equity." We are most firmly to believe that it is even so; for this is the testimony of God the Father when He said, "This is my beloved Son; hear ye him." This also is testified by God the Holy Spirit; for the Spirit has borne witness to Christ, both in the inspired Word and by divers miracles, and by His working in the hearts of men. We are to believe this testimony to be true.

Faith also believes that Christ will do what He has promised; that since He has promised to cast out none that come to Him, it is certain that He will not cast us out if we come to Him. Faith believes that since Jesus said, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life, it must be true; and

if we get this living Water from Christ it will abide in us, and will well up within us in streams of holy life. Whatever Christ has promised to do He will do, and we must believe this, so as to look for pardon, justification, preservation, and eternal glory from His hands, according as He has promised them to believers in Him.

Then comes the next necessary step. Jesus is what He is said to be, Jesus will do what He says He will do; therefore we must each one trust Him, saying, "He will be to me what He says He is, and He will do to me what He has promised to do; I leave myself in the hands of Him who is appointed to save, that He may save me. I rest upon His promise that He will do even as He has said." This is a saving faith, and he that hath it hath everlasting life. Whatever his dangers and difficulties, whatever his darkness and depression, whatever his infirmities and sins, he that believeth thus on Christ Jesus is not condemned, and shall never come into condemnation.

May that explanation be of some service! I trust it may be used by the Spirit of God to direct my reader into immediate peace. "Be not afraid; only believe." Trust, and be at rest.

My fear is lest the reader should rest content with understanding what is to be done, and yet never do it. Better the poorest real faith actually at work, than the best ideal of it left in the region of speculation. The great matter is to believe on the Lord Jesus at once. Never mind distinctions and definitions. A hungry man eats though he does not understand the composition of his food, the anatomy of his mouth, or the process of digestion: he lives because he eats. Another far more clever person understands thoroughly the science of nutrition; but if he does not eat he will die, with all his knowledge. There are, no doubt, many at this hour in Hell who understood the doctrine of faith, but did not believe. On the other hand, not one who has trusted in the Lord Jesus has ever been cast out, though he may never have been able intelligently to define his faith. Oh dear reader,

receive the Lord Jesus into your soul, and you shall live forever! "He that believeth in Him hath everlasting life."

## 9 HOW MAY FAITH BE ILLUSTRATED?

TO MAKE THE MATTER Of faith clearer still, I will give you a few illustrations. Though the Holy Spirit alone can make my reader see, it is my duty and my joy to furnish all the light I can, and to pray the divine Lord to open blind eyes. Oh that my reader would pray the same prayer for himself!

The faith which saves has its analogies in the human frame.

It is the eye which looks. By the eye we bring into the mind that which is far away; we can bring the sun and the far-off stars into the mind by a glance of the eye. So by trust we bring the Lord Jesus near to us; and though He be far away in Heaven, He enters into our heart. Only look to Jesus; for the hymn is strictly true—

There is life in a look at the Crucified One,  
There is life at this moment for thee.

Faith is the hand which grasps. When our hand takes hold of anything for itself, it does precisely what faith does when it appropriates Christ and the blessings of His redemption. Faith says, "Jesus is mine." Faith hears of the pardoning blood, and cries, "I accept it to pardon me." Faith calls the legacies of the dying Jesus her own; and they are her own, for faith is Christ's heir; He has given Himself and all that He has to faith. Take, O friend, that which grace has provided for thee. You will not be a thief, for you have a divine permit: "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." He who may have a treasure simply by his grasping it will be foolish indeed if he remains poor.

Faith is the mouth which feeds upon Christ. Before food can nourish us, it must be received into us. This is a simple matter—this eating

and drinking. We willingly receive into the mouth that which is our food, and then we consent that it should pass down into our inward parts, wherein it is taken up and absorbed into our bodily frame. Paul says, in his Epistle to the Romans, in the tenth chapter, "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth." Now then, all that is to be done is to swallow it, to suffer it to go down into the soul. Oh that men had an appetite! For he who is hungry and sees meat before him does not need to be taught how to eat. "Give me," said one, "a knife and a fork and a chance." He was fully prepared to do the rest. Truly, a heart which hungers and thirsts after Christ has but to know that He is freely given, and at once it will receive Him. If my reader is in such a case, let him not hesitate to receive Jesus; for he may be sure that he will never be blamed for doing so: for unto "as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." He never repulses one, but He authorizes all who come to remain sons for ever.

The pursuits of life illustrate faith in many ways. The farmer buries good seed in the earth, and expects it not only to live but to be multiplied. He has faith in the covenant arrangement, that "seed-time and harvest shall not cease," and he is rewarded for his faith.

The merchant places his money in the care of a banker, and trusts altogether to the honesty and soundness of the bank. He entrusts his capital to another's hands, and feels far more at ease than if he had the solid gold locked up in an iron safe.

The sailor trusts himself to the sea. When he swims he takes his foot from the bottom and rests upon the buoyant ocean. He could not swim if he did not wholly cast himself upon the water.

The goldsmith puts precious metal into the fire which seems eager to consume it, but he receives it back again from the furnace purified by the heat.

You cannot turn anywhere in life without seeing faith in operation between man and man, or between man and natural law. Now, just



as we trust in daily life, even so are we to trust in God as He is revealed in Christ Jesus.

Faith exists in different persons in various degrees, according to the amount of their knowledge or growth in grace. Sometimes faith is little more than a simple clinging to Christ; a sense of dependence and a willingness so to depend. When you are down at the seaside you will see limpets sticking to the rock. You walk with a soft tread up to the rock; you strike the mollusk a rapid blow with your walking-stick and off he comes. Try the next limpet in that way. You have given him warning; he heard the blow with which you struck his neighbor, and he clings with all his might. You will never get him off; not you! Strike, and strike again, but you may as soon break the rock. Our little friend, the limpet, does not know much, but he clings. He is not acquainted with the geological formation of the rock, but he clings. He can cling, and he has found something to cling to: this is all his stock of knowledge, and he uses it for his security and salvation. It is the limpet's life to cling to the rock, and it is the sinner's life to cling to Jesus. Thousands of God's people have no more faith than this; they know enough to cling to Jesus with all their heart and soul, and this suffices for present peace and eternal safety. Jesus Christ is to them a Saviour strong and mighty, a Rock immovable and immutable; they cling to him for dear life, and this clinging saves them. Reader, cannot you cling? Do so at once.

Faith is seen when one man relies upon another from a knowledge of the superiority of the other. This is a higher faith; the faith which knows the reason for its dependence, and acts upon it. I do not think the limpet knows much about the rock: but as faith grows it becomes more and more intelligent. A blind man trusts himself with his guide because he knows that his friend can see, and, trusting, he walks where his guide conducts him. If the poor man is born blind he does not know what sight is; but he knows that there is such a thing as sight, and that it is possessed by his friend and therefore he freely

puts his hand into the hand of the seeing one, and follows his leadership. "We walk by faith, not by sight." "Blessed are they which have not seen, and yet have believed." This is as good an image of faith as well can be; we know that Jesus has about Him merit, and power, and blessing, which we do not possess, and therefore we gladly trust ourselves to Him to be to us what we cannot be to ourselves. We trust Him as the blind man trusts his guide. He never betrays our confidence ; but He "is made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

Every boy that goes to school has to exert faith while learning. His schoolmaster teaches him geography, and instructs him as to the form of the earth, and the existence of certain great cities and empires. The boy does not himself know that these things are true, except that he believes his teacher, and the books put into his hands. That is what you will have to do with Christ, if you are to be saved; you must simply know because He tells you, believe because He assures you it is even so, and trust yourself with Him because He promises you that salvation will be the result. Almost all that you and I know has come to us by faith. A scientific discovery has been made, and we are sure of it. On what grounds do we believe it? On the authority of certain well-known men of learning, whose reputations are established. We have never made or seen their experiments, but we believe their witness. You must do the like with regard to Jesus: because He teaches you certain truths you are to be His disciple, and believe His words; because He has performed certain acts you are to be His client, and trust yourself with Him. He is infinitely superior to you, and presents himself to your confidence as your Master and Lord. If you will receive Him and His words you shall be saved.

Another and a higher form of faith is that faith which grows out of love. Why does a boy trust his father? The reason why the child trusts his father is because he loves him. Blessed and happy are they who have a sweet faith in Jesus, intertwined with deep affection for Him,

for this is a restful confidence. These lovers of Jesus are charmed with His character, and delighted with His mission, they are carried away by the lovingkindness that He has manifested, and therefore they cannot help trusting Him, because they so much admire, revere, and love Him.

The way of loving trust in the Saviour may thus be illustrated. A lady is the wife of the most eminent physician of the day. She is seized with a dangerous illness, and is smitten down by its power; yet she is wonderfully calm and quiet, for her husband has made this disease his special study, and has healed thousands who were similarly afflicted. She is not in the least troubled, for she feels perfectly safe in the hands of one so dear to her, and in whom skill and love are blended in their highest forms. Her faith is reasonable and natural; her husband, from every point of view, deserves it of her. This is the kind of faith which the happiest of believers exercise toward Christ. There is no physician like Him, none can save as He can; we love Him, and He loves us, and therefore we put ourselves into His hands, accept whatever He prescribes, and do whatever He bids. We feel that nothing can be wrongly ordered while He is the director of our affairs; for He loves us too well to let us perish, or suffer a single needless pang.

Faith is the root of obedience, and this may be clearly seen in the affairs of life. When a captain trusts a pilot to steer his vessel into port he manages the vessel according to his direction. When a traveler trusts a guide to conduct him over a difficult pass, he follows the track which his guide points out. When a patient believes in a physician, he carefully follows his prescriptions and directions. Faith which refuses to obey the commands of the Saviour is a mere pretence, and will never save the soul. We trust Jesus to save us; He gives us directions as to the way of salvation; we follow those directions and are saved. Let not my reader forget this. Trust Jesus, and prove your trust by doing whatever He bids you.

A notable form of faith arises out of assured knowledge; this comes of growth in grace, and is the faith which believes Christ because it knows Him, and trusts Him because it has proved Him to be infallibly faithful. An old Christian was in the habit of writing T and P in the margin of her Bible whenever she had tried and proved a promise. How easy it is to trust a tried and proved Saviour! You cannot do this as yet, but you will do so. Everything must have a beginning. You will rise to strong faith in due time. This matured faith asks not for signs and tokens, but bravely believes. Look at the faith of the master mariner—I have often wondered at it. He looses his cable, he steams away from the land. For days, weeks, or even months, he never sees sail or shore; yet on he goes day and night without fear, till one morning he finds himself exactly opposite to the desired haven toward which he has been steering. How has he found his way over the trackless deep ? He has trusted in his compass, his nautical almanac, his glass, and the heavenly bodies; and obeying their guidance, without sighting land, he has steered so accurately that he has not to change a point to enter into port. It is a wonderful thing—that sailing or steaming without sight. Spiritually it is a blessed thing to leave altogether the shores of sight and feeling, and to say, "Good-by" to inward feelings, cheering providences, signs, tokens, and so forth. It is glorious to be far out on the ocean of divine love, believing in God, and steering for Heaven straight away by the direction of the Word of God. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed"; to them shall be administered an abundant entrance at the last, and a safe voyage on the way. Will not my reader put his trust in God in Christ Jesus. There I rest with joyous confidence. Brother, come with me, and believe our Father and our Saviour. Come at once.

## 10 WHY ARE WE SAVED BY FAITH?

WHY IS FAITH SELECTED as the channel of salvation? No doubt this inquiry is often made. "By grace are ye saved through faith," is assuredly the doctrine of Holy Scripture, and the ordinance of God; but why is it so? Why is faith selected rather than hope, or love, or patience?

It becomes us to be modest in answering such a question, for God's ways are not always to be understood; nor are we allowed presumptuously to question them. Humbly we would reply that, as far as we can tell, faith has been selected as the channel of grace, because there is a natural adaptation in faith to be used as the receiver. Suppose that I am about to give a poor man an alms: I put it into his hand—why? Well, it would hardly be fitting to put it into his ear, or to lay it upon his foot; the hand seems made on purpose to receive. So, in our mental frame, faith is created on purpose to be a receiver: it is the hand of the man, and there is a fitness in receiving grace by its means.

Do let me put this very plainly. Faith which receives Christ is as simple an act as when your child receives an apple from you, because you hold it out and promise to give him the apple if he comes for it. The belief and the receiving relate only to an apple; but they make up precisely the same act as the faith which deals with eternal salvation. What the child's hand is to the apple, that your faith is to the perfect salvation of Christ. The child's hand does not make the apple, nor improve the apple, nor deserve the apple; it only takes it; and faith is chosen by God to be the receiver of salvation, because it does not pretend to create salvation, nor to help in it, but it is content humbly to receive it. "Faith is the tongue that begs pardon, the hand which receives it, and the eye which sees it; but it is not the price which buys it." Faith never makes herself her own plea, she rests all her argument upon the blood of Christ. She becomes a good servant to bring the riches of the Lord Jesus to the soul, because she acknowledges whence she drew them, and owns that grace alone

entrusted her with them.

Faith, again, is doubtless selected because it gives all the glory to God. It is of faith that it might be by grace, and it is of grace that there might be no boasting; for God cannot endure pride. "The proud he knoweth afar off," and He has no wish to come nearer to them. He will not give salvation in a way which will suggest or foster pride. Paul saith, "Not of works, lest any man should boast." Now, faith excludes all boasting. The hand which receives charity does not say, "I am to be thanked for accepting the gift"; that would be absurd. When the hand conveys bread to the mouth it does not say to the body, "Thank me; for I feed you." It is a very simple thing that the hand does though a very necessary thing; and it never arrogates glory to itself for what it does. So God has selected faith to receive the unspeakable gift of His grace, because it cannot take to itself any credit, but must adore the gracious God who is the giver of all good. Faith sets the crown upon the right head, and therefore the Lord Jesus was wont to put the crown upon the head of faith, saying, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

Next, God selects faith as the channel of salvation because it is a sure method, linking man with God. When man confides in God, there is a point of union between them, and that union guarantees blessing. Faith saves us because it makes us cling to God, and so brings us into connection with Him. I have often used the following illustration, but I must repeat it, because I cannot think of a better. I am told that years ago a boat was upset above the falls of Niagara, and two men were being carried down the current, when persons on the shore managed to float a rope out to them, which rope was seized by them both. One of them held fast to it and was safely drawn to the bank; but the other, seeing a great log come floating by, unwisely let go the rope and clung to the log, for it was the bigger thing of the two, and apparently better to cling to. Alas! the log with the man on it went right over the vast abyss, because there was no union between the log

and the shore. The size of the log was no benefit to him who grasped it; it needed a connection with the shore to produce safety. So when a man trusts to his works, or to sacraments, or to anything of that sort, he will not be saved, because there is no junction between him and Christ; but faith, though it may seem to be like a slender cord, is in the hands of the great God on the shore side; infinite power pulls in the connecting line, and thus draws the man from destruction. Oh the blessedness of faith, because it unites us to God!

Faith is chosen again, because it touches the springs of action. Even in common things faith of a certain sort lies at the root of all. I wonder whether I shall be wrong if I say that we never do anything except through faith of some sort. If I walk across my study it is because I believe my legs will carry me. A man eats because he believes in the necessity of food; he goes to business because he believes in the value of money; he accepts a check because he believes that the bank will honor it. Columbus discovered America because he believed that there was another continent beyond the ocean; and the Pilgrim Fathers colonized it because they believed that God would be with them on those rocky shores. Most grand deeds have been born of faith; for good or for evil, faith works wonders by the man in whom it dwells. Faith in its natural form is an all-prevailing force, which enters into all manner of human actions. Possibly he who derides faith in God is the man who in an evil form has the most of faith; indeed, he usually falls into a credulity which would be ridiculous, if it were not disgraceful. God gives salvation to faith, because by creating faith in us He thus touches the real mainspring of our emotions and actions. He has, so to speak, taken possession of the battery and now He can send the sacred current to every part of our nature. When we believe in Christ, and the heart has come into the possession of God, then we are saved from sin, and are moved toward repentance, holiness, zeal, prayer, consecration, and every other gracious thing. "What oil is to the wheels, what

weights are to a clock, what wings are to a bird, what sails are to a ship, that faith is to all holy duties and services." Have faith, and all other graces will follow and continue to hold their course.

Faith, again, has the power of working by love; it influences the affections toward God, and draws the heart after the best things. He that believes in God will beyond all question love God. Faith is an act of the understanding; but it also proceeds from the heart. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness"; and hence God gives salvation to faith because it resides next door to the affections, and is near akin to love; and love is the parent and the nurse of every holy feeling and act. Love to God is obedience, love to God is holiness. To love God and to love man is to be conformed to the image of Christ; and this is salvation.

Moreover, faith creates peace and joy; he that hath it rests, and is tranquil, is glad and joyous, and this is a preparation for heaven. God gives all heavenly gifts to faith, for this reason among others, that faith worketh in us the life and spirit which are to be eternally manifested in the upper and better world. Faith furnishes us with armor for this life, and education for the life to come. It enables a man both to live and to die without fear; it prepares both for action and for suffering; and hence the Lord selects it as a most convenient medium for conveying grace to us, and thereby securing us for glory. Certainly faith does for us what nothing else can do; it gives us joy and peace, and causes us to enter into rest. Why do men attempt to gain salvation by other means? An old preacher says, "A silly servant who is bidden to open a door, sets his shoulder to it and pushes with all his might ; but the door stirs not, and he cannot enter, use what strength he may. Another comes with a key, and easily unlocks the door, and enters right readily. Those who would be saved by works are pushing at heaven's gate without result; but faith is the key which opens the gate at once." Reader, will you not use that key? The Lord commands you to believe in His dear Son, therefore you may do so;



and doing so you shall live. Is not this the promise of the gospel, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"? (Mark 16:16). What can be your objection to a way of salvation which commends itself to the mercy and the wisdom of our gracious God?

## 11 ALAS! I CAN DO NOTHING!

AFTER THE ANXIOUS HEART has accepted the doctrine of atonement, and learned the great truth that salvation is by faith in the Lord Jesus, it is often sore troubled with a sense of inability toward that which is good. Many are groaning, "I can do nothing." They are not making this into an excuse, but they feel it as a daily burden. They would if they could. They can each one honestly say, "To will is present with me, but how to perform that which I would I find not."

This feeling seems to make all the gospel null and void; for what is the use of food to a hungry man if he cannot get at it? Of what avail is the river of the water of life if one cannot drink? We recall the story of the doctor and the poor woman's child. The sage practitioner told the mother that her little one would soon be better under proper treatment, but it was absolutely needful that her boy should regularly drink the best wine, and that he should spend a season at one of the German spas. This, to a widow who could hardly get bread to eat! Now, it sometimes seems to the troubled heart that the simple gospel of "Believe and live," is not, after all, so very simple; for it asks the poor sinner to do what he cannot do. To the really awakened, but half instructed, there appears to be a missing link ; yonder is the salvation of Jesus, but how is it to be reached? The soul is without strength, and knows not what to do. It lies within sight of the city of refuge, and cannot enter its gate.

Is this want of strength provided for in the plan of salvation? It is. The work of the Lord is perfect. It begins where we are, and asks

nothing of us in order to its completion. When the good Samaritan saw the traveler lying wounded and half dead, he did not bid him rise and come to him, and mount the ass and ride off to the inn. No, "he came where he was," and ministered to him, and lifted him upon the beast and bore him to the inn. Thus doth the Lord Jesus deal with us in our low and wretched estate.

We have seen that God justifieth, that He justifieth the ungodly and that He justifies them through faith in the precious blood of Jesus; we have now to see the condition these ungodly ones are in when Jesus works out their salvation. Many awakened persons are not only troubled about their sin, but about their moral weakness. They have no strength with which to escape from the mire into which they have fallen, nor to keep out of it in after days. They not only lament over what they have done, but over what they cannot do. They feel themselves to be powerless, helpless, and spiritually lifeless. It may sound odd to say that they feel dead, and yet it is even so. They are, in their own esteem, to all good incapable. They cannot travel the road to Heaven, for their bones are broken. "None of the men of strength have found their hands;" in fact, they are "without strength." Happily, it is written, as the commendation of God's love to us:

When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly (Romans 5:6).

Here we see conscious helplessness succored—succored by the interposition of the Lord Jesus. Our helplessness is extreme. It is not written, "When we were comparatively weak Christ died for us"; or, "When we had only a little strength"; but the description is absolute and unrestricted; "When we were yet without strength." We had no strength whatever which could aid in our salvation; our Lord's words were emphatically true, "Without me ye can do nothing." I may go further than the text, and remind you of the great love wherewith the Lord loved us, "even when we were dead in trespasses and sins." To

be dead is even more than to be without strength.

The one thing that the poor strengthless sinner has to fix his mind upon, and firmly retain, as his one ground of hope, is the divine assurance that "in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Believe this, and all inability will disappear. As it is fabled of Midas that he turned everything into gold by his touch, so it is true of faith that it turns everything it touches into good. Our very needs and weaknesses become blessings when faith deals with them.

Let us dwell upon certain forms of this want of strength. To begin with, one man will say, "Sir, I do not seem to have strength to collect my thoughts, and keep them fixed upon those solemn topics which concern my salvation; a short prayer is almost too much for me. It is so partly, perhaps, through natural weakness, partly because I have injured myself through dissipation, and partly also because I worry myself with wordly cares, so that I am not capable of those high thoughts which are necessary ere a soul can be saved." This is a very common form of sinful weakness. Note this! You are without strength on this point; and there are many like you. They could not carry out a train of consecutive thought to save their lives. Many poor men and women are illiterate and untrained, and these would find deep thought to be very heavy work. Others are so light and trifling by nature, that they could no more follow out a long process of argument and reasoning, than they could fly. They could never attain to the knowledge of any profound mystery if they expended their whole life in the effort. You need not, therefore, despair: that which is necessary to salvation is not continuous thought, but a simple reliance upon Jesus. Hold you on to this one fact—"In due time Christ died for the ungodly." This truth will not require from you any deep research or profound reasoning, or convincing argument. There it stands: "In due time Christ died for the ungodly." Fix your mind on that, and rest there.

Let this one great, gracious, glorious fact lie in your spirit till it

perfumes all your thoughts, and makes you rejoice even though you are without strength, seeing the Lord Jesus has become your strength and your song, yea, He has become your salvation. According to the Scriptures it is a revealed fact, that in due time Christ died for the ungodly when they were yet without strength. You have heard these words hundreds of times, maybe, and yet you have never before perceived their meaning. There is a cheering savor about them, is there not? Jesus did not die for our righteousness, but He died for our sins. He did not come to save us because we were worth the saving, but because we were utterly worthless, ruined, and undone. He came not to earth out of any reason that was in us, but solely and only out of reasons which He fetched from the depths of His own divine love. In due time He died for those whom He describes, not as godly, but as ungodly, applying to them as hopeless an adjective as He could well have selected. If you have but little mind, yet fasten it to this truth, which is fitted to the smallest capacity, and is able to cheer the heaviest heart. Let this text lie under your tongue like a sweet morsel, till it dissolves into your heart and flavors all your thoughts; and then it will little matter though those thoughts should be as scattered as autumn leaves. Persons who have never shone in science, nor displayed the least originality of mind, have nevertheless been fully able to accept the doctrine of the cross, and have been saved thereby. Why should not you?

I hear another man cry, "Oh, sir my want of strength lies mainly in this, that I cannot repent sufficiently!" A curious idea men have of what repentance is! Many fancy that so many tears are to be shed, and so many groans are to be heaved, and so much despair is to be endured. Whence comes this unreasonable notion? Unbelief and despair are sins, and therefore I do not see how they can be constituent elements of acceptable repentance; yet there are many who regard them as necessary parts of true Christian experience. They are in great error. Still, I know what they mean, for in the days

of my darkness I used to feel in the same way. I desired to repent, but I thought that I could not do it, and yet all the while I was repenting. Odd as it may sound, I felt that I could not feel. I used to get into a corner and weep, because I could not weep; and I fell into bitter sorrow because I could not sorrow for sin. What a jumble it all is when in our unbelieving state we begin to judge our own condition! It is like a blind man looking at his own eyes. My heart was melted within me for fear, because I thought that my heart was as hard as an adamant stone. My heart was broken to think that it would not break. Now I can see that I was exhibiting the very thing which I thought I did not possess; but then I knew not where I was.

Oh that I could help others into the light which I now enjoy! Fain would I say a word which might shorten the time of their bewilderment. I would say a few plain words, and pray "the Comforter" to apply them to the heart.

Remember that the man who truly repents is never satisfied with his own repentance. We can no more repent perfectly than we can live perfectly. However pure our tears, there will always be some dirt in them: there will be something to be repented of even in our best repentance. But listen! To repent is to change your mind about sin, and Christ, and all the great things of God. There is sorrow implied in this; but the main point is the turning of the heart from sin to Christ. If there be this turning, you have the essence of true repentance, even though no alarm and no despair should ever have cast their shadow upon your mind.

If you cannot repent as you would, it will greatly aid you to do so if you will firmly believe that "in due time Christ died for the ungodly. " Think of this again and again. How can you continue to be hard-hearted when you know that out of supreme love "Christ died for the ungodly"? Let me persuade you to reason with yourself thus: Ungodly as I am, though this heart of steel will not relent, though I smite in vain upon my breast, yet He died for such as I am, since He

died for the ungodly. Oh that I may believe this and feel the power of it upon my flinty heart!

Blot out every other reflection from your soul, and sit down by the hour together, and meditate deeply on this one resplendent display of unmerited, unexpected, unexampled love, "Christ died for the ungodly." Read over carefully the narrative of the Lord's death, as you find it in the four evangelists. If anything can melt your stubborn heart, it will be a sight of the sufferings of Jesus, and the consideration that he suffered all this for His enemies.

O Jesus! sweet the tears I shed,  
While at Thy feet I kneel,

Gaze on Thy wounded, fainting head,  
And all Thy sorrows feel.

My heart dissolves to see Thee bleed,  
This heart so hard before;

I hear Thee for the guilty plead,  
And grief o'erflows the more.

'Twas for the sinful Thou didst die,  
And I a sinner stand:

Convinc'd by Thine expiring eye,  
Slain by Thy pierced hand.  
Ray Palmer

Surely the cross is that wonder-working rod which can bring water out of a rock. If you understand the full meaning of the divine sacrifice of Jesus, you must repent of ever having been opposed to One who is so full of love. It is written, "They shall look upon him

whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." Repentance will not make you see Christ; but to see Christ will give you repentance. You may not make a Christ out of your repentance, but you must look for repentance to Christ. The Holy Ghost, by turning us to Christ, turns us from sin. Look away, then, from the effect to the cause, from your own repenting to the Lord Jesus, who is exalted on high to give repentance.

I have heard another say, "I am tormented with horrible thoughts. Wherever I go, blasphemies steal in upon me. Frequently at my work a dreadful suggestion forces itself upon me, and even on my bed I am startled from my sleep by whispers of the evil one. I cannot get away from this horrible temptation." Friend, I know what you mean, for I have myself been hunted by this wolf. A man might as well hope to fight a swarm of flies with a sword as to master his own thoughts when they are set on by the devil. A poor tempted soul, assailed by satanic suggestions, is like a traveler I have read of, about whose head and ears and whole body there came a swarm of angry bees. He could not keep them off nor escape from them. They stung him everywhere and threatened to be the death of him. I do not wonder you feel that you are without strength to stop these hideous and abominable thoughts which Satan pours into your soul; but yet I would remind you of the Scripture before us—"When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Jesus knew where we were and where we should be; He saw that we could not overcome the prince of the power of the air; He knew that we should be greatly worried by him; but even then, when He saw us in that condition, Christ died for the ungodly. Cast the anchor of your faith upon this. The devil himself cannot tell you that you are not ungodly; believe, then, that Jesus died even for such as you are. Remember Martin Luther's way of cutting the devil's head off with

his own sword. "Oh," said the devil to Martin Luther, "you are a sinner. " "Yes," said he, "Christ died to save sinners." Thus he smote him with his own sword. Hide you in this refuge, and keep there: "In due time Christ died for the ungodly." If you stand to that truth, your blasphemous thoughts which you have not the strength to drive away will go away of themselves; for Satan will see that he is answering no purpose by plaguing you with them.

These thoughts, if you hate them, are none of yours, but are injections of the Devil, for which he is responsible, and not you. If you strive against them, they are no more yours than are the cursings and falsehoods of rioters in the street. It is by means of these thoughts that the Devil would drive you to despair, or at least keep you from trusting Jesus. The poor diseased woman could not come to Jesus for the press, and you are in much the same condition, because of the rush and throng of these dreadful thoughts. Still, she put forth her finger, and touched the fringe of the Lord's garment, and she was healed. Do you the same.

Jesus died for those who are guilty of "all manner of sin and blasphemy," and therefore I am sure He will not refuse those who are unwillingly the captives of evil thoughts. Cast yourself upon Him, thoughts and all, and see if He be not mighty to save. He can still those horrible whisperings of the fiend, or He can enable you to see them in their true light, so that you may not be worried by them. In His own way He can and will save you, and at length give you perfect peace. Only trust Him for this and everything else.

Sadly perplexing is that form of inability which lies in a supposed want of power to believe. We are not strangers to the cry:

Oh that I could believe,  
Then all would easy be;  
I would, but cannot; Lord, relieve,  
My help must come from thee.



Many remain in the dark for years because they have no power, as they say, to do that which is the giving up of all power and reposing in the power of another, even the Lord Jesus. Indeed, it is a very curious thing, this whole matter of believing; for people do not get much help by trying to believe. Believing does not come by trying. If a person were to make a statement of something that happened this day, I should not tell him that I would try to believe him. If I believed in the truthfulness of the man who told the incident to me and said that he saw it, I should accept the statement at once. If I did not think him a true man, I should, of course, disbelieve him ; but there would be no trying in the matter. Now, when God declares that there is salvation in Christ Jesus, I must either believe Him at once, or make Him a liar. Surely you will not hesitate as to which is the right path in this case, The witness of God must be true, and we are bound at once to believe in Jesus.

But possibly you have been trying to believe too much. Now do not aim at great things. Be satisfied to have a faith that can hold in its hand this one truth, "While we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." He laid down His life for men while as yet they were not believing in Him, nor were able to believe in Him. He died for men, not as believers, but as sinners. He came to make these sinners into believers and saints; but when He died for them He viewed them as utterly without strength. If you hold to the truth that Christ died for the ungodly, and believe it, your faith will save you, and you may go in peace. If you will trust your soul with Jesus, who died for the ungodly, even though you cannot believe all things, nor move mountains, nor do any other wonderful works, yet you are saved. It is not great faith, but true faith, that saves; and the salvation lies not in the faith, but in the Christ in whom faith trusts. Faith as a grain of mustard seed will bring salvation. It is not the measure of faith, but the sincerity of faith, which is the point to be considered. Surely a man can believe what he knows to be true; and as you know

Jesus to be true, you, my friend, can believe in Him.

The cross which is the object of faith, is also, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the cause of it. Sit down and watch the dying Saviour till faith springs up spontaneously in your heart. There is no place like Calvary for creating confidence. The air of that sacred hill brings health to trembling faith. Many a watcher there has said:

While I view Thee, wounded, grieving,  
Breathless on the cursed tree,

Lord, I feel my heart believing  
That Thou suffer'dst thus for me.

"Alas!" cries another, "my want of strength lies in this direction, that I cannot quit my sin, and I know that I cannot go to Heaven and carry my sin with me." I am glad that you know that, for it is quite true. You must be divorced from your sin, or you cannot be married to Christ. Recollect the question which flashed into the mind of young Bunyan when at his sports on the green on Sunday: "Wilt thou have thy sins and go to hell, or wilt thou quit thy sins and go to heaven?" That brought him to a dead stand. That is a question which every man will have to answer: for there is no going on in sin and going to heaven. That cannot be. You must quit sin or quit hope. Do you reply, "Yes, I am willing enough. To will is present with me, but how to perform that which I would I find not. Sin masters me, and I have no strength." Come, then, if you have no strength, this text is still true, "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Can you still believe that? However other things may seem to contradict it, will you believe it? God has said it, and it is a fact; therefore, hold on to it like grim death, for your only hope lies there. Believe this and trust Jesus, and you shall soon find power with which to slay your sin; but apart from Him, the strong

man armed will hold you for ever his bond slave. Personally, I could never have overcome my own sinfulness. I tried and failed. My evil propensities were too many for me, till, in the belief that Christ died for me, I cast my guilty soul on Him, and then I received a conquering principle by which I overcame my sinful self. The doctrine of the cross can be used to slay sin, even as the old warriors used their huge two-handed swords, and mowed down their foes at every stroke. There is nothing like faith in the sinner's Friend: it overcomes all evil. If Christ has died for me, ungodly as I am, without strength as I am, then I cannot live in sin any longer, but must arouse myself to love and serve Him who hath redeemed me. I cannot trifle with the evil which slew my best Friend. I must be holy for His sake. How can I live in sin when He has died to save me from it?

See what a splendid help this is to you that are without strength, to know and believe that in due time Christ died for such ungodly ones as you are. Have you caught the idea yet? It is, somehow, so difficult for our darkened, prejudiced, and unbelieving minds to see the essence of the gospel. At times I have thought, when I have done preaching, that I have laid down the gospel so clearly, that the nose on one's face could not be more plain; and yet I perceive that even intelligent hearers have failed to understand what was meant by "Look unto me and be ye saved." Converts usually say that they did not know the gospel till such and such a day; and yet they had heard it for years. The gospel is unknown, not from want of explanation, but from absence of personal revelation. This the Holy Ghost is ready to give, and will give to those who ask Him. Yet when given, the sum total of the truth revealed all lies within these words: "Christ died for the ungodly."

I hear another bewailing himself thus: "Oh, sir, my weakness lies in this, that I do not seem to keep long in one mind! I hear the word on a Sunday, and I am impressed; but in the week I meet with an evil

companion, and my good feelings are all gone. My fellow workmen do not believe in anything, and they say such terrible things, and I do not know how to answer them, and so I find myself knocked over." I know this Plastic Pliable very well, and I tremble for him; but at the same time, if he is really sincere, his weakness can be met by divine grace. The Holy Spirit can cast out the evil spirit of the fear of man. He can make the coward brave. Remember, my poor vacillating friend, you must not remain in this state. It will never do to be mean and beggarly to yourself. Stand upright, and look at yourself, and see if you were ever meant to be like a toad under a harrow, afraid for your life either to move or to stand still. Do have a mind of your own. This is not a spiritual matter only, but one which concerns ordinary manliness. I would do many things to please my friends; but to go to hell to please them is more than I would venture. It may be very well to do this and that for good fellowship; but it will never do to lose the friendship of God in order to keep on good terms with men. "I know that," says the man, "but still, though I know it, I cannot pluck up courage. I cannot show my colors. I cannot stand fast." Well, to you also I have the same text to bring: "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." If Peter were here, he would say, "The Lord Jesus died for me even when I was such a poor weak creature that the maid who kept the fire drove me to lie, and to swear that I knew not the Lord." Yes, Jesus died for those who forsook him and fled. Take a firm grip on this truth—"Christ died for the ungodly while they were yet without strength." This is your way out of your cowardice. Get this wrought into your soul, "Christ died for me," and you will soon be ready to die for Him. Believe it, that He suffered in your place and stead, and offered for you a full, true, and satisfactory expiation. If you believe that fact, you will be forced to feel, "I cannot be ashamed of Him who died for me." A full conviction that this is true will nerve you with a dauntless courage. Look at the saints in the martyr age. In the early days of Christianity, when this

great thought of Christ's exceeding love was sparkling in all its freshness in the church, men were not only ready to die, but they grew ambitious to suffer, and even presented themselves by hundreds at the judgment seats of the rulers, confessing the Christ. I do not say that they were wise to court a cruel death; but it proves my point, that a sense of the love of Jesus lifts the mind above all fear of what man can do to us. Why should it not produce the same effect in you? Oh that it might now inspire you with a brave resolve to come out upon the Lord's side, and be His follower to the end! May the Holy Spirit help us to come thus far by faith in the Lord Jesus, and it will be well!

## 12 THE INCREASE OF FAITH

HOW CAN WE OBTAIN an increase of faith? This is a very earnest question to many. They say they want to believe, but cannot. A great deal of nonsense is talked upon this subject. Let us be strictly practical in our dealing with it. Common sense is as much needed in religion as anywhere else. "What am I to do in order to believe?" One who was asked the best way to do a certain simple act, replied that the best way to do it was to do it at once. We waste time in discussing methods when the action is simple. The shortest way to believe is to believe. If the Holy Spirit has made you candid, you will believe as soon as truth is set before you. You will believe it because it is true. The gospel command is clear; "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." It is idle to evade this by questions and quibbles. The order is plain; let it be obeyed.

But still, if you have difficulty, take it before God in prayer. Tell the great Father exactly what it is that puzzles you, and beg Him by His Holy Spirit to solve the question. If I cannot believe a statement in a book, I am glad to inquire of the author what he means by it; and if he is a true man his explanation will satisfy me; much more will the

divine explanation of the hard points of Scripture satisfy the heart of the true seeker. The Lord is willing to make himself known; go to Him and see if it is not so. Repair at once to your closet, and cry, "O Holy Spirit, lead me into the truth! What I know not, teach Thou me."

Furthermore, if faith seems difficult, it is possible that God the Holy Spirit will enable you to believe if you hear very frequently and earnestly that which you are commanded to believe. We believe many things because we have heard them so often. Do you not find it so in common life, that if you hear a thing fifty times a day, at last you come to believe it? Some men have come to believe very unlikely statements by this process, and therefore I do not wonder that the good Spirit often blesses the method of often hearing the truth, and uses it to work faith concerning that which is to be believed. It is written, "Faith cometh by hearing "; therefore hear often. If I earnestly and attentively hear the gospel, one of these days I shall find myself believing that which I hear, through the blessed operation of the Spirit of God upon my mind. Only mind you hear the gospel, and do not distract your mind with either hearing or reading that which is designed to stagger you.

If that, however, should seem poor advice, I would add next, consider the testimony of others. The Samaritans believed because of what the woman told them concerning Jesus. Many of our beliefs arise out of the testimony of others. I believe that there is such a country as Japan; I never saw it, and yet I believe that there is such a place because others have been there. I believe that I shall die; I have never died, but a great many have done so whom I once knew, and therefore I have a conviction that I shall die also. The testimony of many convinces me of that fact. Listen, then, to those who tell you how they were saved, how they were pardoned, how they were changed in character. If you will look into the matter you will find that somebody just like yourself has been saved. If you have been a

thief, you will find that a thief rejoiced to wash away his sin in the fountain of Christ's blood. If unhappily you have been unchaste, you will find that men and women who have fallen in that way have been cleansed and changed. If you are in despair, you have only to get among God's people, and inquire a little, and you will discover that some of the saints have been equally in despair at times and they will be pleased to tell you how the Lord delivered them. As you listen to one after another of those who have tried the word of God, and proved it, the divine Spirit will lead you to believe. Have you not heard of the African who was told by the missionary that water sometimes became so hard that a man could walk on it? He declared that he believed a great many things the missionary had told him; but he would never believe that. When he came to England it came to pass that one frosty day he saw the river frozen, but he would not venture on it. He knew that it was a deep river, and he felt certain that he would be drowned if he ventured upon it. He could not be induced to walk the frozen water till his friend and many others went upon it; then he was persuaded, and trusted himself where others had safely ventured. So, while you see others believe in the Lamb of God, and notice their joy and peace, you will yourself be gently led to believe. The experience of others is one of God's ways of helping us to faith. You have either to believe in Jesus or die; there is no hope for you but in Him.

A better plan is this—note the authority upon which you are commanded to believe, and this will greatly help you to faith. The authority is not mine, or you might well reject it. But you are commanded to believe upon the authority of God himself. He bids you believe in Jesus Christ, and you must not refuse to obey your Maker. The foreman of a certain works had often heard the gospel, but he was troubled with the fear that he might not come to Christ. His good master one day sent a card around to the works—"Come to my house immediately after work." The foreman appeared at his

master's door, and the master came out, and said somewhat roughly, "What do you want, John, troubling me at this time? Work is done, what right have you here?" "Sir," said he, "I had a card from you saying that I was to come after work." "Do you mean to say that merely because you had a card from me you are to come up to my house and call me out after business hours?" "Well, Sir," replied the foreman, "I do not understand you, but it seems to me that, as you sent for me, I had a right to come." "Come in, John," said his master, "I have another message that I want to read to you," and he sat down and read these words: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Do you think after such a message from Christ that you can be wrong in coming to him?" The poor man saw it all at once, and believed in the Lord Jesus unto eternal life, because he perceived that he had good warrant and authority for believing. So have you, poor soul! You have good authority for coming to Christ, for the Lord himself bids you trust Him.

If that does not breed faith in you, think over what it is that you have to believe—that the Lord Jesus Christ suffered in the place and stead of sinners, and is able to save all who trust Him. Why, this is the most blessed fact that ever men were told to believe; the most suitable, the most comforting, the most divine truth that was ever set before mortal minds. I advise you to think much upon it, and search out the grace and love which it contains. Study the four Evangelists, study Paul's epistles, and then see if the message is not such a credible one that you are forced to believe it.

If that does not do, then think upon the person of Jesus Christ—think of who He is, and what He did, and where He is, and what He is. How can you doubt Him? It is cruelty to distrust the ever truthful Jesus. He has done nothing to deserve distrust; on the contrary, it should be easy to rely upon Him. Why crucify Him anew by unbelief? Is not this crowning Him with thorns again, and spitting upon Him again? What! is He not to be trusted? What worse insult did the



soldiers pour upon Him than this? They made Him a martyr; but you make Him a liar—this is worse by far. Do not ask how can I believe? But answer another question—How can you disbelieve?

If none of these things avail, then there is something wrong about you altogether, and my last word is, submit yourself to God! Prejudice or pride is at the bottom of this unbelief. May the Spirit of God take away your enmity and make you yield. You are a rebel, a proud rebel, and that is why you do not believe your God. Give up your rebellion; throw down your weapons; yield at discretion, surrender to your King. I believe that never did a soul throw up its hands in self-despair, and cry, "Lord, I yield, " but what faith became easy to it before long. It is because you still have a quarrel with God, and resolve to have your own will and your own way, that therefore you cannot believe. "How can ye believe," said Christ, "that have honor one of another?" Proud self creates unbelief. Submit, O man. Yield to your God, and then shall you sweetly believe in your Saviour. May the Holy Ghost now work secretly but effectually with you, and bring you at this very moment to believe in the Lord Jesus! Amen.

### 13 REGENERATION AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN." This word of our Lord Jesus has appeared to flame in the way of many, like the drawn sword of the cherub at the gate of Paradise. They have despaired, because this change is beyond their utmost effort. The new birth is from above, and therefore it is not in the creature's power. Now, it is far from my mind to deny, or ever to conceal, a truth in order to create a false comfort. I freely admit that the new birth is supernatural, and that it cannot be wrought by the sinner's own self. It would be a poor help to my reader if I were wicked enough to try to cheer him by persuading him to reject or forget what is unquestionably true.

But is it not remarkable that the very chapter in which our Lord

makes this sweeping declaration also contains the most explicit statement as to salvation by faith? Read the third chapter of John's Gospel and do not dwell alone upon its earlier sentences. It is true that the third verse says:

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

But, then, the fourteenth and fifteenth verses speak:

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

The eighteenth verse repeats the same doctrine in the broadest terms:

He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

It is clear to every reader that these two statements must agree, since they came from the same lips, and are recorded on the same inspired page. Why should we make a difficulty where there can be none? If one statement assures us of the necessity to salvation of a something, which only God can give, and if another assures us that the Lord will save us upon our believing in Jesus, then we may safely conclude that the Lord will give to those who believe all that is declared to be necessary to salvation. The Lord does, in fact, produce the new birth in all who believe in Jesus; and their believing is the surest evidence that they are born again.

We trust in Jesus for what we cannot do ourselves: if it were in our own power, what need of looking to Him? It is ours to believe, it is the Lord's to create us anew. He will not believe for us, neither are we to do regenerating work for Him. It is enough for us to obey the gracious command; it is for the Lord to work the new birth in us. He who could go so far as to die on the cross for us, can and will give us all things that are needful for our eternal safety.

"But a saving change of heart is the work of the Holy Spirit. " This also is most true, and let it be far from us to question it, or to forget it. But the work of the Holy Spirit is secret and mysterious, and it can only be perceived by its results. There are mysteries about our natural birth into which it would be an unhallowed curiosity to pry: still more is this the case with the sacred operations of the Spirit of God. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." This much, however, we do know—the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit cannot be a reason for refusing to believe in Jesus to whom that same Spirit beareth witness.

If a man were bidden to sow a field, he could not excuse his neglect by saying that it would be useless to sow unless God caused the seed to grow. He would not be justified in neglecting tillage because the secret energy of God alone can create a harvest. No one is hindered in the ordinary pursuits of life by the fact that unless the Lord build the house they labor in vain that build it. It is certain that no man who believes in Jesus will ever find that the Holy Spirit refuses to work in him: in fact, his believing is the proof that the Spirit is already at work in his heart.

God works in providence, but men do not therefore sit still. They could not move without the divine power giving them life and strength, and yet they proceed upon their way without question; the power being bestowed from day to day by Him in whose hand their breath is, and whose are all their ways. So is it in grace. We repent and believe, though we could do neither if the Lord did not enable us. We forsake sin and trust in Jesus, and then we perceive that the Lord has wrought in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure. It is idle to pretend that there is any real difficulty in the matter.

Some truths which it is hard to explain in words are simple enough in actual experience. There is no discrepancy between the truth that

the sinner believes, and that his faith is wrought in him by the Holy Spirit. Only folly can lead men to puzzle themselves about plain matters while their souls are in danger. No man would refuse to enter a lifeboat because he did not know the specific gravity of bodies; neither would a starving man decline to eat till he understood the whole process of nutrition. If you, my reader, will not believe till you can understand all mysteries, you will never be saved at all; and if you allow self-invented difficulties to keep you from accepting pardon through your Lord and Saviour, you will perish in a condemnation which will be richly deserved. Do not commit spiritual suicide through a passion for discussing metaphysical subtleties.

#### 14 "MY REDEEMER LIVETH"

CONTINUALLY have I spoken to the reader concerning Christ crucified, who is the great hope of the guilty; but it is our wisdom to remember that our Lord has risen from the dead and lives eternally. You are not asked to trust in a dead Jesus, but in One who, though He died for our sins, has risen again for our justification. You may go to Jesus at once as to a living and present friend. He is not a mere memory, but a continually existent Person who will hear your prayers and answer them. He lives on purpose to carry on the work for which He once laid down His life. He is interceding for sinners at the right hand of the Father, and for this reason He is able to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by Him. Come and try this living Saviour, if you have never done so before.

This living Jesus is also raised to an eminence of glory and power. He does not now sorrow as "a humble man before his foes," nor labor as "the carpenter's son"; but He is exalted far above principalities and power and every name that is named. The Father has given Him all power in Heaven and in earth, and he exercises this high endowment in carrying out His work of grace. Hear what Peter and the other

apostles testified concerning Him before the high priest and the council:

The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins (Acts 5:30, 31).

The glory which surrounds the ascended Lord should breathe hope into every believer's breast. Jesus is no mean person—He is "a Saviour and a great one." He is the crowned and enthroned Redeemer of men. The sovereign prerogative of life and death is vested in Him; the Father has put all men under the mediatorial government of the Son, so that He can quicken whom He will. He openeth, and no man shutteth. At His word the soul which is bound by the cords of sin and condemnation can be unloosed in a moment. He stretches out the silver scepter, and whosoever touches it lives.

It is well for us that as sin lives, and the flesh lives, and the devil lives, so Jesus lives; and it is also well that whatever might these may have to ruin us, Jesus has still greater power to save us.

All His exaltation and ability are on our account. "He is exalted to be," and exalted "to give." He is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, that He may give all that is needed to accomplish the salvation of all who come under His rule. Jesus has nothing which He will not use for a sinner's salvation, and He is nothing which He will not display in the aboundings of His grace. He links His principedom with His Saviour-ship, as if He would not have the one without the other; and He sets forth His exaltation as designed to bring blessings to men, as if this were the flower and crown of His glory. Could anything be more calculated to raise the hopes of seeking sinners who are looking Christward?

Jesus endured great humiliation, and therefore there was room for

Him to be exalted. By that humiliation He accomplished and endured all the Father's will, and therefore He was rewarded by being raised to glory. He uses that exaltation on behalf of His people. Let my reader raise his eyes to these hills of glory, whence his help must come. Let him contemplate the high glories of the Prince and Saviour. Is it not most hopeful for men that a Man is now on the throne of the universe? Is it not glorious that the Lord of all is the Saviour of sinners? We have a Friend at court; yea, a Friend on the throne. He will use all His influence for those who entrust their affairs in His hands. Well does one of our poets sing:

He ever lives to intercede  
Before His Father's face;

Give Him, my soul, Thy cause to plead,  
No doubt the Father's grace.

Come, friend, and commit your cause and your case to those once pierced hands, which are now glorified with the signet rings of royal power and honor. No suit ever failed which was left with this great Advocate.

## 15 REPENTANCE MUST GO WITH FORGIVENESS

IT IS CLEAR from the text which we have lately quoted that repentance is bound up with the forgiveness of sins. In Acts 5:31 we read that Jesus is "exalted to give repentance and forgiveness of sins." These two blessings come from that sacred hand which once was nailed to the tree, but is now raised to glory. Repentance and forgiveness are riveted together by the eternal purpose of God. What God hath joined together let no man put asunder.

Repentance must go with remission, and you will see that it is so if you think a little upon the matter. It cannot be that pardon of sin

should be given to an impenitent sinner; this were to confirm him in his evil ways, and to teach him to think little of evil. If the Lord were to say, "You love sin, and live in it, and you are going on from bad to worse, but, all the same, I forgive you," this were to proclaim a horrible license for iniquity. The foundations of social order would be removed, and moral anarchy would follow. I cannot tell what innumerable mischiefs would certainly occur if you could divide repentance and forgiveness, and pass by the sin while the sinner remained as fond of it as ever. In the very nature of things, if we believe in the holiness of God, it must be so, that if we continue in our sin, and will not repent of it, we cannot be forgiven, but must reap the consequence of our obstinacy. According to the infinite goodness of God, we are promised that if we will forsake our sins, confessing them, and will, by faith, accept the grace which is provided in Christ Jesus, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. But, so long as God lives, there can be no promise of mercy to those who continue in their evil ways, and refuse to acknowledge their wrongdoing. Surely no rebel can expect the King to pardon his treason while he remains in open revolt. No one can be so foolish as to imagine that the Judge of all the earth will put away our sins if we refuse to put them away ourselves.

Moreover, it must be so for the completeness of divine mercy. That mercy which could forgive the sin and yet let the sinner live in it would be scant and superficial mercy. It would be unequal and deformed mercy, lame upon one of its feet, and withered as to one of its hands. Which, think you, is the greater privilege, cleansing from the guilt of sin, or deliverance from the power of sin? I will not attempt to weigh in the scales two mercies so surpassing. Neither of them could have come to us apart from the precious blood of Jesus. But it seems to me that to be delivered from the dominion of sin, to be made holy, to be made like to God, must be reckoned the greater

of the two, if a comparison has to be drawn. To be forgiven is an immeasurable favor. We make this one of the first notes of our psalm of praise: "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities." But if we could be forgiven, and then could be permitted to love sin, to riot in iniquity, and to wallow in lust, what would be the use of such a forgiveness? Might it not turn out to be a poisoned sweet, which would most effectually destroy us? To be washed, and yet to lie in the mire; to be pronounced clean, and yet to have the leprosy white on one's brow, would be the veriest mockery of mercy. What is it to bring the man out of his sepulcher if you leave him dead? Why lead him into the light if he is still blind? We thank God, that He who forgives our iniquities also heals our diseases. He who washes us from the stains of the past also uplifts us from the foul ways of the present, and keeps us from failing in the future. We must joyfully accept both repentance and remission; they cannot be separated. The covenant heritage is one and indivisible, and must not be parceled out. To divide the work of grace would be to cut the living child in halves, and those who would permit this have no interest in it.

I will ask you who are seeking the Lord, whether you would be satisfied with one of these mercies alone? Would it content you, my reader, if God would forgive you your sin and then allow you to be as worldly and wicked as before? Oh, no! The quickened spirit is more afraid of sin itself than of the penal results of it. The cry of your heart is not, "Who shall deliver me from punishment?" but, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Who shall enable me to live above temptation, and to become holy, even as God is holy?" Since the unity of repentance with remission agrees with gracious desire, and since it is necessary for the completeness of salvation, and for holiness' sake, rest you sure that it abides.

Repentance and forgiveness are joined together in the experience of all believers. There never was a person yet who did unfeignedly



repent of sin with believing repentance who was not forgiven; and on the other hand, there never was a person forgiven who had not repented of his sin. I do not hesitate to say that beneath the copes of Heaven there never was, there is not, and there never will be, any case of sin being washed away, unless at the same time the heart was led to repentance and faith in Christ. Hatred of sin and a sense of pardon come together into the soul, and abide together while we live. These two things act and react upon each other: the man who is forgiven, therefore repents; and the man who repents is also most assuredly forgiven. Remember first, that forgiveness leads to repentance. As we sing in Hart's words:

Law and terrors do but harden,  
All the while they work alone;  
But a sense of blood-bought pardon  
Soon dissolves a heart of stone.

When we are sure that we are forgiven, then we abhor iniquity; and I suppose that when faith grows into full assurance, so that we are certain beyond a doubt that the blood of Jesus has washed us whiter than snow, it is then that repentance reaches to its greatest height. Repentance grows as faith grows. Do not make any mistake about it; repentance is not a thing of days and weeks, a temporary penance to be over as fast as possible! No; it is the grace of a lifetime, like faith itself. God's little children repent, and so do the young men and the fathers. Repentance is the inseparable companion of faith. All the while that we walk by faith and not by sight, the tear of repentance glitters in the eye of faith. That is not true repentance which does not come of faith in Jesus, and that is not true faith in Jesus which is not tinged with repentance. Faith and repentance, like Siamese twins, are vitally joined together. In proportion as we believe in the forgiving love of Christ, in that proportion we repent; and in

proportion as we repent of sin and hate evil, we rejoice in the fullness of the absolution which Jesus is exalted to bestow. You will never value pardon unless you feel repentance ; and you will never taste the deepest draught of repentance until you know that you are pardoned. It may seem a strange thing, but so it is—the bitterness of repentance and the sweetness of pardon blend in the flavor of every gracious life, and make up an incomparable happiness.

These two covenant gifts are the mutual assurance of each other. If I know that I repent, I know that I am forgiven. How am I to know that I am forgiven except I know also that I am turned from my former sinful course? To be a believer is to be a penitent. Faith and repentance are but two spokes in the same wheel, two handles of the same plough. Repentance has been well described as a heart broken for sin, and from sin; and it may equally well be spoken of as turning and returning. It is a change of mind of the most thorough and radical sort, and it is attended with sorrow for the past, and a resolve of amendment in the future.

Repentance is to leave  
The sins we loved before;

And show that we in earnest grieve,  
By doing so no more.

Now, when that is the case, we may be certain that we are forgiven; for the Lord never made a heart to be broken for sin and broken from sin, without pardoning it. If, on the other hand, we are enjoying pardon, through the blood of Jesus, and are justified by faith, and have peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, we know that our repentance and faith are of the right sort.

Do not regard your repentance as the cause of your remission, but as the companion of it. Do not expect to be able to repent until you see

the grace of our Lord Jesus, and His readiness to blot out your sin. Keep these blessed things in their places, and view them in their relation to each other. They are the Jachin and Boaz of a saving experience; I mean that they are comparable to Solomon's two great pillars which stood in the forefront of the house of the Lord, and formed a majestic entrance to the holy place. No man comes to God aright except he passes between the pillars of repentance and remission. Upon your heart the rainbow of covenant grace has been displayed in all its beauty when the tear-drops of repentance have been shone upon by the light of full forgiveness. Repentance of sin and faith in divine pardon are the warp and woof of the fabric of real conversion. By these tokens shall you know an Israelite indeed.

To come back to the Scripture upon which we are meditating: both forgiveness and repentance flow from the same source, and are given by the same Saviour. The Lord Jesus in His glory bestows both upon the same persons. You are neither to find the remission nor the repentance elsewhere. Jesus has both ready, and He is prepared to bestow them now, and to bestow them most freely on all who will accept them at His hands. Let it never be forgotten that Jesus gives all that is needful for our salvation. It is highly important that all seekers after mercy should remember this. Faith is as much the gift of God as is the Saviour upon whom that faith relies. Repentance of sin is as truly the work of grace as the making of an atonement by which sin is blotted out. Salvation, from first to last, is of grace alone. You will not misunderstand me. It is not the Holy Spirit who repents. He has never done anything for which He should repent. If He could repent, it would not meet the case; we must ourselves repent of our own sin, or we are not saved from its power. It is not the Lord Jesus Christ who repents. What should He repent of? We ourselves repent with the full consent of every faculty of our mind. The will, the affections, the emotions, all work together most heartily in the blessed act of repentance for sin; and yet at the back of all that is our

personal act, there is a secret holy influence which melts the heart, gives contrition, and produces a complete change. The Spirit of God enlightens us to see what sin is, and thus makes it loathsome in our eyes. The Spirit of God also turns us toward holiness, makes us heartily to appreciate, love, and desire it, and thus gives us the impetus by which we are led onward from stage to stage of sanctification. The Spirit of God works in us to will and to do according to God's good pleasure. To that good Spirit let us submit ourselves at once, that He may lead us to Jesus, who will freely give us the double benediction of repentance and remission, according to the riches of His grace.

"By grace are ye saved."

## 16 HOW REPENTANCE IS GIVEN

TO RETURN to the grand text: "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." Our Lord Jesus Christ has gone up that grace may come down. His glory is employed to give greater currency to His grace. The Lord has not taken a step upward except with the design of bearing believing sinners upward with Him. He is exalted to give repentance; and this we shall see if we remember a few great truths.

The work which our Lord Jesus has done has made repentance possible, available, and acceptable. The law makes no mention of repentance, but says plainly, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." If the Lord Jesus had not died and risen again and gone unto the Father, what would your repenting or mine be worth? We might feel remorse with its horrors, but never repentance with its hopes. Repentance, as a natural feeling, is a common duty deserving no great praise: indeed, it is so generally mingled with a selfish fear of punishment, that the kindest estimate makes but little of it. Had

not Jesus interposed and wrought out a wealth of merit, our tears of repentance would have been so much water spilled upon the ground. Jesus is exalted on high, that through the virtue of His intercession repentance may have a place before God. In this respect He gives us repentance, because He puts repentance into a position of acceptance, which otherwise it could never have occupied.

When Jesus was exalted on high, the Spirit of God was poured out to work in us all needful graces. The Holy Ghost creates repentance in us by supernaturally renewing our nature, and taking away the heart of stone out of our flesh. Oh, sit not down straining those eyes of yours to fetch out impossible tears! Repentance comes not from unwilling nature, but from free and sovereign grace. Get not to your chamber to smite your breast in order to fetch from a heart of stone feelings which are not there. But go to Calvary and see how Jesus died. Look upward to the hills whence comes your help. The Holy Ghost has come on purpose that He may overshadow men's spirits and breed repentance within them, even as once He brooded over chaos and brought forth order. Breathe your prayer to Him, "Blessed Spirit, dwell with me. Make me tender and lowly of heart, that I may hate sin and unfeignedly repent of it." He will hear your cry and answer you.

Remember, too, that when our Lord Jesus was exalted, He not only gave us repentance by sending forth the Holy Spirit, but by consecrating all the works of nature and of providence to the great ends of our salvation, so that any one of them may call us to repentance, whether it crow like Peter's cock, or shake the prison like the jailer's earthquake. From the right hand of God our Lord Jesus rules all things here below, and makes them work together for the salvation of His redeemed. He uses both bitters and sweets, trials and joys, that He may produce in sinners a better mind toward their God. Be thankful for the providence which has made you poor, or sick, or sad ; for by all this Jesus works the life of your spirit and

turns you to Himself. The Lord's mercy often rides to the door of our hearts on the black horse of affliction. Jesus uses the whole range of our experience to wean us from earth and woo us to Heaven. Christ is exalted to the throne of Heaven and earth in order that, by all the processes of His providence, He may subdue hard hearts unto the gracious softening of repentance.

Besides, He is at work at this hour by all His whispers in the conscience, by His inspired Book, by those of us who speak out of that Book, and by praying friends and earnest hearts. He can send a word to you which shall strike your rocky heart as with the rod of Moses, and cause streams of repentance to flow forth. He can bring to your mind some heart-breaking text out of Holy Scripture which shall conquer you right speedily. He can mysteriously soften you, and cause a holy frame of mind to steal over you when you least look for it. Be sure of this, that He who is gone into His glory, raised into all the splendor and majesty of God, has abundant ways of working repentance in those to whom He grants forgiveness. He is even now waiting to give repentance to you. Ask Him for it at once.

Observe with much comfort that the Lord Jesus Christ gives this repentance to the most unlikely people in the world. He is exalted to give repentance to Israel. To Israel! In the days when the apostles thus spoke, Israel was the nation which had most grossly sinned against light and love, by daring to say, "His blood be on us and on our children." Yet Jesus is exalted to give them repentance! What a marvel of grace! If you have been brought up in the brightest of Christian light, and yet have rejected it, there is still hope. If you have sinned against conscience, and against the Holy Spirit, and against the love of Jesus, there is yet space for repentance. Though you may be as hard as unbelieving Israel of old, softening may yet come to you, since Jesus is exalted, and clothed with boundless power. For those who went the furthest in iniquity, and sinned with special aggravation, the Lord Jesus is exalted to give to them repentance and

forgiveness of sins. Happy am I to have so full a gospel to proclaim!  
Happy are you to be allowed to read it!

The hearts of the children of Israel had grown hard as an adamant stone. Luther used to think it impossible to convert a Jew. We are far from agreeing with him, and yet we must admit that the seed of Israel have been exceedingly obstinate in their rejection of the Saviour during these many centuries. Truly did the Lord say, "Israel would none of me." "He came to his own and his own received him not." Yet on behalf of Israel our Lord Jesus is exalted for the giving of repentance and remission. Probably my reader is a Gentile; but yet he may have a very stubborn heart, which has stood out against the Lord Jesus for many years; and yet in him our Lord can work repentance. It may be that you will yet feel compelled to write as William Hone did when he yielded to divine love. He was the author of those most entertaining volumes called the "Everyday Book," but he was once a stout-hearted infidel. When subdued by sovereign grace, he wrote:

The proudest heart that ever beat  
Hath been subdued in me;

The wildest will that ever rose

To scorn Thy cause and aid Thy foes  
Is quell'd my Lord, by Thee.

Thy will, and not my will be done,  
My heart be ever Thine;

Confessing Thee the mighty Word,

My Saviour Christ, my God, my Lord,  
Thy cross shall be my sign.

The Lord can give repentance to the most unlikely, turning lions into lambs, and ravens into doves. Let us look to Him that this great change may be wrought in us. Assuredly the contemplation of the death of Christ is one of the surest and speediest methods of gaining repentance. Do not sit down and try to pump up repentance from the dry well of corrupt nature. It is contrary to the laws of mind to suppose that you can force your soul into that gracious state. Take your heart in prayer to Him who understands it, and say, "Lord, cleanse it. Lord, renew it. Lord, work repentance in it." The more you try to produce penitent emotions in yourself, the more you will be disappointed; but if you believingly think of Jesus dying for you, repentance will burst forth. Meditate on the Lord's shedding His heart's blood out of love to you. Set before your mind's eye the agony and bloody sweat, the cross and passion; and, as you do this, He who was the bearer of all this grief will look at you, and with that look He will do for you what He did for Peter, so that you also will go out and weep bitterly. He who died for you can, by His gracious Spirit, make you die to sin; and He who has gone into glory on your behalf can draw your soul after Him, away from evil, and toward holiness.

I shall be content if I leave this one thought with you; look not beneath the ice to find fire, neither hope in your own natural heart to find repentance. Look to the Living One for life. Look to Jesus for all you need between Hell Gate and Heaven Gate. Never seek elsewhere for any part of that which Jesus loves to bestow; but remember, Christ is all.

## 17 THE FEAR OF FINAL FALLING

A DARK FEAR haunts the minds of many who are coming to Christ; they are afraid that they shall not persevere to the end. I have heard the seeker say: "If I were to cast my soul upon Jesus, yet peradventure I should after all draw back into perdition. I have had



good feelings before now, and they have died away. My goodness has been as the morning cloud, and as the early dew. It has come on a sudden, lasted for a season, promised much, and then vanished away."

I believe that this fear is often the father of the fact; and that some who have been afraid to trust Christ for all time, and for all eternity, have failed because they had a temporary faith, which never went far enough to save them. They set out trusting to Jesus in a measure, but looking to themselves for continuance and perseverance in the heavenward way; and so they set out faultily, and, as a natural consequence, turned back before long. If we trust to ourselves for our holding on we shall not hold on. Even though we rest in Jesus for a part of our salvation, we shall fail if we trust to self for anything. No chain is stronger than its weakest link : if Jesus be our hope for everything, except one thing, we shall utterly fail, because in that one point we shall come to nought. I have no doubt whatever that a mistake about the perseverance of the saints has prevented the perseverance of many who did run well. What did hinder them that they should not continue to run? They trusted to themselves for that running, and so they stopped short. Beware of mixing even a little of self with the mortar with which you build, or you will make it untempered mortar, and the stones will not hold together. If you look to Christ for your beginnings, beware of looking to yourself for your endings. He is Alpha. See to it that you make Him Omega also. If you begin in the Spirit you must not hope to be made perfect by the flesh. Begin as you mean to go on, and go on as you began, and let the Lord be all in all to you. Oh, that God, the Holy Spirit, may give us a very clear idea of where the strength must come from by which we shall be preserved until the day of our Lord's appearing!

Here is what Paul once said upon this subject when he was writing to the Corinthians:

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Cor. 1:8, 9).

This language silently admits a great need, by telling us how it is provided for. Wherever the Lord makes a provision, we are quite sure that there was a need for it, since no superfluities encumber the covenant of grace. Golden shields hung in Solomon's courts which were never used, but there are none such in the armory of God. What God has provided we shall surely need. Between this hour and the consummation of all things every promise of God and every provision of the covenant of grace will be brought into requisition. The urgent need of the believing soul is confirmation, continuance, final perseverance, preservation to the end. This is the great necessity of the most advanced believers, for Paul was writing to saints at Corinth, who were men of a high order, of whom he could say, "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ." Such men are the very persons who most assuredly feel that they have daily need of new grace if they are to hold on, and hold out, and come off conquerors at the last. If you were not saints you would have no grace, and you would feel no need of more grace; but because you are men of God, therefore you feel the daily demands of the spiritual life. The marble statue requires no food; but the living man hungers and thirsts, and he rejoices that his bread and his water are made sure to him, for else he would certainly faint by the way. The believer's personal wants make it inevitable that he should daily draw from the great source of all supplies; for what could he do if he could not resort to his God?

This is true of the most gifted of the saints—of those men at Corinth who were enriched with all utterance and with all knowledge. They needed to be confirmed to the end, or else their gifts and attainments

would prove their ruin. If we had the tongues of men and of angels, if we did not receive fresh grace, where should we be? If we had all experience till we were fathers in the church—if we had been taught of God so as to understand all mysteries—yet we could not live a single day without the divine life flowing into us from our Covenant Head. How could we hope to hold on for a single hour, to say nothing of a lifetime, unless the Lord should hold us on ? He who began the good work in us must perform it unto the day of Christ, or it will prove a painful failure.

This great necessity arises very much from our own selves. In some there is a painful fear that they shall not persevere in grace because they know their own fickleness. Certain persons are constitutionally unstable. Some men are by nature conservative, not to say obstinate; but others are as naturally variable and volatile. Like butterflies they flit from flower to flower, till they visit all the beauties of the garden, and settle upon none of them. They are never long enough in one place to do any good; not even in their business nor in their intellectual pursuits. Such persons may well be afraid that ten, twenty, thirty, forty, perhaps fifty years of continuous religious watchfulness will be a great deal too much for them. We see men joining first one church and then another, till they box the compass. They are everything by turns and nothing long. Such have double need to pray that they may be divinely confirmed, and may be made not only steadfast but unmoveable, or otherwise they will not be found "always abounding in the work of the Lord."

All of us, even if we have no constitutional temptation to fickleness, must feel our own weakness if we are really quickened of God. Dear reader, do you not find enough in any one single day to make you stumble? You that desire to walk in perfect holiness, as I trust you do; you that have set before you a high standard of what a Christian should be—do you not find that before the breakfast things are cleared away from the table, you have displayed enough folly to make

you ashamed of yourselves? If we were to shut ourselves up in the lone cell of a hermit, temptation would follow us; for as long as we cannot escape from ourselves we cannot escape from incitements to sin. There is that within our hearts which should make us watchful and humble before God. If he does not confirm us, we are so weak that we shall stumble and fall; not overturned by an enemy, but by our own carelessness. Lord, be thou our strength. We are weakness itself.

Besides that, there is the weariness which comes of a long life. When we begin our Christian profession we mount up with wings as eagles, further on we run without weariness; but in our best and truest days we walk without fainting. Our pace seems slower, but it is more serviceable and better sustained. I pray God that the energy of our youth may continue with us so far as it is the energy of the Spirit and not the mere fermentation of proud flesh. He that has long been on the road to Heaven finds that there was good reason why it was promised that his shoes should be iron and brass, for the road is rough. He has discovered that there are Hills of Difficulty and Valleys of Humiliation; that there is a Vale of Deathshade, and, worse still, a Vanity Fair—and all these are to be traversed. If there be Delectable Mountains (and, thank God, there are,) there are also Castles of Despair, the inside of which pilgrims have too often seen. Considering all things, those who hold out to the end in the way of holiness will be "men wondered at."

"O world of wonders, I can say no less." The days of a Christian's life are like so many Koh-i-noors of mercy threaded upon the golden string of divine faithfulness. In Heaven we shall tell to angels, and principalities, and powers, the unsearchable riches of Christ which were spent upon us, and enjoyed by us while we were here below. We have been kept alive on the brink of death. Our spiritual life has been a flame burning on in the midst of the sea, a stone that has remained suspended in the air. It will amaze the universe to see us enter the

pearly gate, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. We ought to be full of grateful wonder if kept for an hour; and I trust we are.

If this were all, there would be enough cause for anxiety; but there is far more. We have to think of what a place we live in. The world is a howling wilderness to many of God's people. Some of us are greatly indulged in the providence of God, but others have a stern fight of it. We begin our day with prayer, and we hear the voice of holy song full often in our houses; but many good people have scarcely risen from their knees in the morning before they are saluted with blasphemy. They go out to work, and all day long they are vexed with filthy conversation like righteous Lot in Sodom. Can you even walk the open streets without your ears being afflicted with foul language? The world is no friend to grace. The best we can do with this world is to get through it as quickly as we can, for we dwell in an enemy's country. A robber lurks in every bush. Everywhere we need to travel with a "drawn sword" in our hand, or at least with that weapon which is called all-prayer ever at our side; for we have to contend for every inch of our way. Make no mistake about this, or you will be rudely shaken out of your fond delusion. O God, help us, and confirm us to the end, or where shall we be?

True religion is supernatural at its beginning, supernatural in its continuance, and supernatural in its close. It is the work of God from first to last. There is great need that the hand of the Lord should be stretched out still: that need my reader is feeling now, and I am glad that he should feel it; for now he will look for his own preservation to the Lord who alone is able to keep us from failing, and glorify us with His Son.

## 18 CONFIRMATION

I WANT YOU TO NOTICE the security which Paul confidently expected for all the saints. He says—"Who shall confirm you unto the

end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." This is the kind of confirmation which is above all things to be desired. You see it supposes that the persons are right, and it proposes to confirm them in the right. It would be an awful thing to confirm a man in ways of sin and error. Think of a confirmed drunkard, or a confirmed thief, or a confirmed liar. It would be a deplorable thing for a man to be confirmed in unbelief and ungodliness. Divine confirmation can only be enjoyed by those to whom the grace of God has been already manifested. It is the work of the Holy Ghost. He who gives faith strengthens and establishes it: He who kindles love in us preserves it and increases its flame. What He makes us to know by His first teaching, the good Spirit causes us to know with greater clearness and certainty by still further instruction. Holy acts are confirmed till they become habits, and holy feelings are confirmed till they become abiding conditions. Experience and practice confirm our beliefs and our resolutions. Both our joys and our sorrows, our successes and our failures, are sanctified to the selfsame end: even as the tree is helped to root itself both by the soft showers and the rough winds. The mind is instructed, and in its growing knowledge it gathers reasons for persevering in the good way: the heart is comforted, and so it is made to cling more closely to the consoling truth. The grip grows tighter, and the tread grows firmer, and the man himself becomes more solid and substantial.

This is not a merely natural growth, but is as distinct a work of the Spirit as conversion. The Lord will surely give it to those who are relying upon Him for eternal life. By His inward working He will deliver us from being "unstable as water," and cause us to be rooted and grounded. It is a part of the method by which He saves us—this building us up into Christ Jesus and causing us to abide in Him. Dear reader, you may daily look for this; and you shall not be disappointed. He whom you trust will make you to be as a tree planted by the rivers of waters, so preserved that even your leaf shall

not wither.

What a strength to a church is a confirmed Christian! He is a comfort to the sorrowful, and a help to the weak. Would you not like to be such? Confirmed believers are pillars in the house of our God. These are not carried away by every wind of doctrine, nor overthrown by sudden temptation. They are a great stay to others, and act as anchors in the time of church trouble. You who are beginning the holy life hardly dare to hope that you will become like them. But you need not fear; the good Lord will work in you as well as in them. One of these days you who are now a "babe" in Christ shall be a "father" in the church. Hope for this great thing; but hope for it as a gift of grace, and not as the wages of work, or as the product of your own energy.

The inspired apostle Paul speaks of these people as to be confirmed unto the end. He expected the grace of God to preserve them personally to the end of their lives, or till the Lord Jesus should come. Indeed, he expected that the whole church of God in every place and in all time would be kept to the end of the dispensation, till the Lord Jesus as the Bridegroom should come to celebrate the wedding-feast with his perfected Bride. All who are in Christ will be confirmed in Him till that illustrious day. Has He not said, "Because I live ye shall live also"? He also said, "I give unto my sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." He that hath begun a good work in you will confirm it unto the day of Christ. The work of grace in the soul is not a superficial reformation; the life implanted as the new birth comes of a living and incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever; and the promises of God made to believers are not of a transient character, but involve for their fulfilment the believer's holding on his way till he comes to endless glory. We are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation. "The righteous shall hold on his way." Not as the result of our own merit or strength, but as a gift of

free and undeserved favor those who believe are "preserved in Christ Jesus." Of the sheep of His fold Jesus will lose none; no member of His Body shall die; no gem of His treasure shall be missing in the day when He makes up His jewels. Dear reader, the salvation which is received by faith is not a thing of months and years; for our Lord Jesus hath "obtained eternal salvation for us," and that which is eternal cannot come to an end.

Paul also declares his expectation that the Corinthian saints would be "Confirmed to the end blameless." This blamelessness is a precious part of our keeping. To be kept holy is better than merely to be kept safe. It is a dreadful thing when you see religious people blundering out of one dishonor into another; they have not believed in the power of our Lord to make them blameless. The lives of some professing Christians are a series of stumbles; they are never quite down, and yet they are seldom on their feet. This is not a fit thing for a believer; he is invited to walk with God, and by faith he can attain to steady perseverance in holiness; and he ought to do so. The Lord is able, not only to save us from hell, but to keep us from falling. We need not yield to temptation. Is it not written, "Sin shall not have dominion over you?" The Lord is able to keep the feet of His saints; and He will do it if we will trust Him to do so. We need not defile our garments, we may by His grace keep them unspotted from the world; we are bound to do this, "for without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

The apostle prophesied for these believers, that which he would have us seek after—that we may be preserved, blameless unto the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." The revised version has "unreproveable," instead of "blameless." Possibly a better rendering would be "unimpeachable." God grant that in that last great day we may stand free from all charge, that none in the whole universe may dare to challenge our claim to be the redeemed of the Lord. We have sins and infirmities to mourn over, but these are not the kind of faults which would prove us to be out of Christ; we shall be clear of



hypocrisy, deceit, hatred, and delight in sin; for these things would be fatal charges. Despite our failings, the Holy Spirit can work in us a character spotless before men ; so that, like Daniel, we shall furnish no occasion for accusing tongues, except in the matter of our religion. Multitudes of godly men and women have exhibited lives so transparent, so consistent throughout, that none could gainsay them. The Lord will be able to say of many a believer, as he did of Job, when Satan stood before Him, "Hast thou considered my servant, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil?" This is what my reader must look for at the Lord's hands. This is the triumph of the saints—to continue to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, maintaining our integrity as before the living God. May we never turn aside into crooked ways, and give cause to the adversary to blaspheme. Of the true believer it is written, "He keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." May it be so written concerning us!

Friend just beginning in the divine life, the Lord can give you an irreproachable character. Even though in your past life you may have gone far into sin, the Lord can altogether deliver you from the power of former habits, and make you an example of virtue. He can not only make you moral, but He can make you abhor every false way and follow after all that is saintly. Do not doubt it. The chief of sinners need not be a whit behind the purest of the saints. Believe for this, and according to your faith shall it be unto you.

Oh, what a joy it will be to be found blameless in the day of judgment! We sing not amiss, when we join in that charming hymn:

Bold shall I stand in that great day,  
For who aught to my charge shall lay;  
While through Thy blood absolved I am,  
From sin's tremendous curse and shame?

What bliss it will be to enjoy that dauntless courage, when heaven and earth shall flee away from the face of the Judge of all! This bliss shall be the portion of everyone who looks alone to the grace of God in Christ Jesus, and in that sacred might wages continual war with all sin.

## 19 WHY SAINTS PERSEVERE

THE HOPE which filled the heart of Paul concerning the Corinthian brethren we have already seen to be full of comfort to those who trembled as to their future. But why was it that he believed that the brethren would be confirmed unto the end?

I want you to notice that he gives his reasons. Here they are:

God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:9).

The apostle does not say, "You are faithful." Alas! the faithfulness of man is a very unreliable affair; it is mere vanity. He does not say, "You have faithful ministers to lead and guide you, and therefore I trust you will be safe." Oh, no! if we are kept by men we shall be but ill kept. He puts it, "God is faithful." If we are found faithful, it will be because God is faithful. On the faithfulness of our covenant God the whole burden of our salvation must rest. On this glorious attribute of God the matter hinges. We are variable as the wind, frail as a spider's web, weak as water. No dependence can be placed upon our natural qualities, or our spiritual attainments; but God abideth faithful. He is faithful in His love; He knows no variableness, neither shadow of turning. He is faithful to His purpose; He doth not begin a work and then leave it undone. He is faithful to His relationships; as a Father He will not renounce His children, as a friend He will not deny His people, as a Creator He will not forsake the work of His own hands. He is faithful to His promises, and will never allow one of them to fail to a single believer. He is faithful to His covenant, which He has

made with us in Christ Jesus, and ratified with the blood of His sacrifice. He is faithful to His Son, and will not allow His precious blood to be spilled in vain. He is faithful to His people to whom He has promised eternal life, and from whom He will not turn away.

This faithfulness of God is the foundation and cornerstone of our hope of final perseverance. The saints shall persevere in holiness, because God perseveres in grace. He perseveres to bless, and therefore believers persevere in being blessed. He continues to keep His people, and therefore they continue to keep His commandments. This is good solid ground to rest upon, and it is delightfully consistent with the title of this little book, "all of grace." Thus it is free favor and infinite mercy which ring in the dawn of salvation, and the same sweet bells sound melodiously through the whole day of grace.

You see that the only reasons for hoping that we shall be confirmed to the end, and be found blameless at the last, are found in our God; but in Him these reasons are exceedingly abundant.

They lie first, in what God has done. He has gone so far in blessing us that it is not possible for Him to run back. Paul reminds us that He has "called us into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ." Has he called us? Then the call cannot be reversed; for, "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." From the effectual call of His grace the Lord never turns. "Whom he called them he also justified, and whom he justified them he also glorified:" this is the invariable rule of the divine procedure. There is a common call, of which it is said, "Many are called, but few are chosen," but this of which we are now thinking is another kind of call, which betokens special love, and necessitates the possession of that to which we are called. In such a case it is with the called one even as with Abraham's seed, of whom the Lord said, "I have called thee from the ends of the earth, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away."

In what the Lord has done, we see strong reasons for our preservation and future glory, because the Lord has called us into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ. It means into partnership with Jesus Christ, and I would have you carefully consider what this means. If you are indeed called by divine grace, you have come into fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, so as to be joint-owner with Him in all things. Henceforth you are one with Him in the sight of the Most High. The Lord Jesus bare your sins in His own body on the tree, being made a curse for you; and at the same time He has become your righteousness, so that you are justified in Him. You are Christ's and Christ is yours. As Adam stood for his descendants, so does Jesus stand for all who are in Him. As husband and wife are one, so is Jesus one with all those who are united to Him by faith; one by a conjugal union which can never be broken. More than this, believers are members of the Body of Christ, and so are one with Him by a loving, living, lasting union. God has called us into this union, this fellowship, this partnership, and by this very fact He has given us the token and pledge of our being confirmed to the end. If we were considered apart from Christ we should be poor perishable units, soon dissolved and borne away to destruction; but as one with Jesus we are made partakers of His nature, and are endowed with His immortal life. Our destiny is linked with that of our Lord, and until He can be destroyed it is not possible that we should perish.

Dwell much upon this partnership with the Son of God, unto which you have been called: for all your hope lies there. You can never be poor while Jesus is rich, since you are in one firm with Him. Want can never assail you, since you are joint-proprietor with Him who is Possessor of Heaven and earth. You can never fail; for though one of the partners in the firm is as poor as a church mouse, and in himself an utter bankrupt, who could not pay even a small amount of his heavy debts, yet the other partner is inconceivably, inexhaustibly rich. In such partnership you are raised above the depression of the

times, the changes of the future, and the shock of the end of all things. The Lord has called you into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ, and by that act and deed He has put you into the place of infallible safeguard.

If you are indeed a believer you are one with Jesus, and therefore you are secure. Do you not see that it must be so? You must be confirmed to the end until the day of His appearing, if you have indeed been made one with Jesus by the irrevocable act of God. Christ and the believing sinner are in the same boat: unless Jesus sinks, the believer will never drown. Jesus has taken His redeemed into such connection with himself, that He must first be smitten, overcome, and dishonored, ere the least of His purchased ones can be injured. His name is at the head of the firm, and until it can be dishonored we are secure against all dread of failure.

So, then, with the utmost confidence let us go forward into the unknown future, linked eternally with Jesus. If the men of the world should cry, "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?" we will joyfully confess that we do lean on Jesus, and that we mean to lean on Him more and more. Our faithful God is an everflowing well of delight, and our fellowship with the Son of God is a full river of joy. Knowing these glorious things we cannot be discouraged: nay, rather we cry with the apostle, "Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?"

20 CLOSE

IF MY READER has not followed me step by step as he has read my pages, I am truly sorry. Book-reading is of small value unless the truths which pass before the mind are grasped, appropriated, and carried out to their practical issues. It is as if one saw plenty of food in a shop and yet remained hungry, for want of personally eating some. It is all in vain, dear reader, that you and I have met, unless

you have actually laid hold upon Christ Jesus, my Lord. On my part there was a distinct desire to benefit you, and I have done my best to that end. It pains me that I have not been able to do you good, for I have longed to win that privilege. I was thinking of you when I wrote this page, and I laid down my pen and solemnly bowed my knee in prayer for everyone who should read it. It is my firm conviction that great numbers of readers will get a blessing, even though you refuse to be of the number. But why should you refuse? If you do not desire the choice blessing which I would have brought to you, at least do me the justice to admit that the blame of your final doom will not lie at my door. When we two meet before the great white throne you will not be able to charge me with having idly used the attention which you were pleased to give me while you were reading my little book. God knoweth I wrote each line for your eternal good. I now in spirit take you by the hand. I give you a firm grip. Do you feel my brotherly grasp? The tears are in my eyes as I look at you and say, Why will you die? Will you not give your soul a thought? Will you perish through sheer carelessness? Oh, do not so; but weigh these solemn matters, and make sure work for eternity! Do not refuse Jesus, His love, His blood, His salvation. Why should you do so? Can you do it? I beseech you,

Do not turn away from your Redeemer!

If, on the other hand, my prayers are heard, and you, my reader, have been led to trust the Lord Jesus and receive from Him salvation by grace, then keep you ever to this doctrine, and this way of living. Let Jesus be your all in all, and let free grace be the one line in which you live and move. There is no life like that of one who lives in the favor of God. To receive all as a free gift preserves the mind from self-righteous pride, and from self-accusing despair. It makes the heart grow warm with grateful love, and thus it creates a feeling in

the soul which is infinitely more acceptable to God than anything that can possibly come of slavish fear. Those who hope to be saved by trying to do their best know nothing of that glowing fervor, that hallowed warmth, that devout joy in God, which come with salvation freely given according to the grace of God. The slavish spirit of self-salvation is no match for the joyous spirit of adoption. There is more real virtue in the least emotion of faith than in all the tuggings of legal bond-slaves, or all the weary machinery of devotees who would climb to Heaven by rounds of ceremonies. Faith is spiritual, and God who is a spirit delights in it for that reason. Years of prayer-saying, and church-going, or chapel-going, and ceremonies, and performances, may only be an abomination in the sight of Jehovah; but a glance from the eye of true faith is spiritual and it is therefore dear to Him. "The Father seeketh such to worship him." Look you first to the inner man, and to the spiritual, and the rest will then follow in due course.

If you are saved yourself, be on the watch for the souls of others. Your own heart will not prosper unless it is filled with intense concern to bless your fellow men. The life of your soul lies in faith; its health lies in love. He who does not pine to lead others to Jesus has never been under the spell of love himself. Get to the work of the Lord—the work of love. Begin at home. Visit next your neighbors. Enlighten the village or the street in which you live. Scatter the word of the Lord wherever your hand can reach.

Reader, meet me in heaven! Do not go down to hell. There is no coming back again from that abode of misery. Why do you wish to enter the way of death when Heaven's gate is open before you? Do not refuse the free pardon, the full salvation which Jesus grants to all who trust Him. Do not hesitate and delay. You have had enough of resolving, come to action. Believe in Jesus now, with full and immediate decision. Take with you words and come unto your Lord this day, even this day. Remember, O soul, it may be now or never

with you. Let it be now; it would be horrible that it should be never.  
Again I charge you, meet me in heaven.

## **What is Your Only Comfort in Life and Death**

### **The first 21 Questions and Answers of the Heidelberg Catechism**

#### **1 Q. What is your only comfort in life and in death?**

A. That I am not my Own,

but belong body and soul, in life and in death-

to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.

He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood,

and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil.

He also watches over me in such a way

that not a hair can fall from my head

without the will of my Father in heaven:

in fact, all things must work together for my salvation.

Because I belong to him,



Christ, by his Holy Spirit,  
assures me of eternal life  
and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready  
from now on to live for him.

**2 Q. What must you know to live and die in the joy of this comfort?**

A. Three things:  
first, how great my sin and misery are;  
second, how I am set free from all my sins and misery;  
third, how I am to thank God for such deliverance.

Part I: Human Misery

**3 Q. How do you come to know your misery?**

A. The law of God tells me.

**4 Q. What does God's law require of us?**

A. Christ teaches us this in summary in Matthew 22:

Love the Lord your God  
with all your heart  
and with all your soul  
and with all your mind

and with all your strength.

This is the first and greatest commandment.

And the second is like it:

Love your neighbor as yourself.

All the Law and the Prophets hang

on these two commandments.

**5 Q. Can you live up to all this perfectly?**

A. No.

I have a natural tendency to hate God and my neighbor.

**6 Q. Did God create people so wicked and perverse?**

A. No.

God created them good and in his own image,

that is, in true righteousness and holiness,

so that they might

truly know God their creator,

love him with all their heart,

and live with him in eternal happiness

for his praise and glory.

**7 Q. Then where does this corrupt human nature come from?**

A. From the fall and disobedience of our first parents,  
Adam and Eve, in Paradise.

This fall has so poisoned our nature  
that we are born sinners  
corrupt from conception on.

**8 Q. But are we so corrupt that we are totally unable to do any good and inclined toward all evil?**

A. Yes, unless we are born again,  
by the Spirit of God.

**9 Q. But doesn't God do us an injustice by requiring in his law what we are unable to do?**

A. No, God created humans with the ability to keep the law.  
They, however, tempted by the devil,  
in reckless disobedience  
robbed themselves and all their descendants of these gifts.

**10 Q. Will God permit such disobedience and rebellion to go unpunished?**

A. Certainly not.

He is terribly angry  
about the sin we are born with  
as well as the sins we personally commit.

As a just judge  
he punishes them now and in eternity.

He has declared:

"Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do  
everything written in the Book of the Law. "

**11 Q. But isn't God also merciful?**

A. God is certainly merciful, but he is also just. His justice demands  
that sin, committed against his supreme majesty,  
be punished with the supreme penalty—  
eternal punishment of body and soul.

Part II Deliverance

**12 Q. According to God's righteous judgment we deserve punishment both in this world and forever after: how then can we escape this punishment and return to God's favor?**

A. God requires that his justice be satisfied.

Therefore the claims of his justice

must be paid in full,  
either by ourselves or another.

**13 Q. Can we pay this debt ourselves?**

A. Certainly not.

Actually, we increase our guilt every day.

**14 Q. Can another creature-any at all pay this debt for us?**

A. No.

To begin with,

God will not punish another creature  
for what a human is guilty of.

Besides,

no mere creature can bear the weight  
of God's eternal anger against sin  
and release others from it.

**15 Q. What kind of mediator and deliverer should we look for then?**

A. One who is truly human and truly righteous,  
yet more powerful than all creatures,  
that is, one who is also true God.

**16 Q. Why must he be truly human and truly righteous?**

A. God's justice demands  
that human nature, which has sinned,  
must pay for its sin;  
but a sinner could never pay for others.

**17 Q. Why must he also be true God?**

A. So that,  
by the power of his divinity,  
he might bear the weight of God's anger in his humanity  
and earn for us  
and restore to us  
righteousness and life.

**18 Q. And who is this mediator—true God and at the same time truly human and truly righteous?**

A. Our Lord Jesus Christ,  
who was given us  
to set us completely free  
and to make us right with God.

**19 Q. How do you come to know this?**

A. The holy gospel tells me.

God himself began to reveal the gospel already in Paradise;

later, he proclaimed it

by the holy patriarchs and prophets,

and portrayed it

by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law;

finally, he fulfilled it

through his own dear Son.

**20 Q. Are all saved through Christ just as all were lost through Adam?**

A. No.

Only those are saved

who by true faith

are grafted into Christ

and accept all his blessings.

**21 Q. What is true faith?**

A. True faith is

not only a knowledge and conviction

that everything God reveals in his Word is true

it is also a deep-rooted assurance,  
created in me by the Holy Spirit through the gospel,  
that, out of sheer grace earned for us by Christ,  
not only others, but I too,  
have had my sins forgiven,  
have been made forever right with God,  
and have been granted salvation.

**22 Q. What then must a Christian believe?**

A. Everything God promises us in the gospel.

That gospel is summarized for us  
in the articles of our Christian faith  
a creed beyond doubt,  
and confessed throughout the world.

**23 Q. What are these articles?**

A. I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.  
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit  
and born of the virgin Mary.



He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to hell.

The third day he rose again from the dead.

He ascended to heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.

From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

# **Father, Son, and Holy Spirit**

## **Each Have A Part In Saving Sinners**

### **James Buchanan**

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are revealed as concurring together in the whole purpose and plan of man's redemption; but as sustaining, each of them, a distinct office, and undertaking a different part of the work, in carrying that purpose and plan into effect.

Their common purpose of saving sinners, and their harmonious co-operation in its accomplishment, might be inferred from the unity of the divine nature, which necessarily implies unity in the counsels of the divine will; but the personal distinctions of the Godhead could never have been so clearly revealed in any other way than by the distinct offices and operations, which are ascribed to them in connection with the work of salvation. It is to mark at once their harmony of purpose, and also their several agencies, in this work, that every believer is required to be baptized,-not simply into the name of God,-but 'into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Matt. 28:19);' and that each of the three is distinctly invoked in the Apostolic form of benediction: 'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all (2 Cor. 13:14).' The preparatory baptism of John, which is described as 'the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins,' and which was administered to the people who attended his ministry, (Acts 19:2-6) that they might be taught to 'believe on Him who should come after him,' and 'baptize them with

the Holy Ghost,'-was imperfect, as compared with Christian baptism, because it did not distinctly specify the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and accordingly it was superseded on the establishment of the Christian Church.

Each of the three Persons in the Godhead sustains a distinct office, and undertakes a work which Is ascribed peculiarly to Him, in connection with the divine method of saving sinners.

THE FATHER is revealed as representing the majesty,—exercising the sovereignty,—and maintaining the prerogatives, of the Godhead. It is said of Him that 'He loved us,'—that 'He blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ,'—that 'He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world,'—that 'He predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved,'—that 'He gave His only-begotten Son,'—that 'He sent His Son to be the Saviour of the world,'—that 'He made Him to be sin for us,'—that 'He set Him forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood,'—that 'He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up to the death for us all,'—that 'He commendeth His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,'—that 'it pleased the Lord to bruise Him,'—that 'He raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God,'—that He 'crowned Him with honour and glory, and did set Him over the works of His hands,'—and that 'God hath exalted Him with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance, and remission of sins.' (John 3:16; Eph. 1:3,4,5; 1 John 4:14; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 3:25, 8:32; Isa. 53:10; 1 Pet. 1:21; Heb. 2:7; Acts 5:31).

THE SON is revealed as acting in official subordination to the Father,--as 'sent',--as 'given,'--as 'coming to do His will,'--as 'making Himself of no reputation,'--as 'taking upon Him the form of a servant, and appearing in the likeness of man,'--as 'humbling Himself, and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,'--as being 'made under law,'--as being 'made sin for us,'--as being 'made a curse for us,'--as 'wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities,'--as bearing 'our sins in His own body on the tree,'--as 'giving Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour,'--as 'crucified in weakness, but raised in power,'--as ascending up into heaven, and sitting down 'for ever on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool,'--as 'highly exalted, and having a name given to Him which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' (Phil. 2:7; Gal. 3:13; Isa. 53; Eph. 5:2; Heb. 10:12; Phil. 2:9-10).

THE HOLY SPIRIT is revealed as 'proceeding from the Father,'--as 'sent by the Son from the Father,'--as 'testifying' of Christ,'--as 'glorifying Christ,'--as 'bearing witness' of Him,--as 'convincing the world of sin, because they believe not on Him,'-as 'shining into the hearts of men, and giving them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,'--as renewing them in the spirit of their minds,'--as 'quickenning them' into spiritual life,--as 'the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Christ,--as 'the Spirit that dwelleth in us'--that 'worketh in us'--that 'guideth us into all truth'--that 'helpeth our infirmities'--that 'witnesseth with our spirits that we are the children of God,'--as 'the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance.' (2 John 15:26, 16:14; 1 John 5:6; John 15:8-9; Eph. 1:17,14).

These testimonies are sufficient to show,—first, that there is a real distinction between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, since many things are revealed concerning each of them which cannot be affirmed of the other two ;—and secondly, that they sustain different offices under the same scheme of grace, and execute different parts of the same work of redemption. If these fundamental truths are clearly revealed, it follows that we can only involve ourselves in inextricable confusion by over-looking the fact that such distinctions exist, and by ascribing that to the Father which Scripture ascribes to the Son,—or that to the Son which Scripture ascribes to the Spirit,—or, conversely, that to the Spirit which the Scripture ascribes to the Son. Yet this is the very error with which those are justly chargeable who substitute the work of the Spirit in us, for the work of Christ for us, as the ground of our Justification.

The Doctrine Of Justification. James Buchanan. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted 1977 from the 1867 printing by T. and T. Clark, Edinburgh. Pages 388-392.

# **Alarm to the Unconverted**

**by Joseph Alleine, 1671**

## **Introduction**

### **An earnest invitation to sinners to turn to God**

Dearly Beloved,

I gladly acknowledge myself a debtor to you, and am concerned, as I would be found a good steward of the household of God, to give to everyone his portion. But the physician is most concerned for those patients whose case is most doubtful and hazardous; and the father's pity is especially turned towards his dying child. So unconverted souls call for earnest compassion and prompt diligence to pluck them as brands from the burning (Jude 23). Therefore it is to them I shall first apply myself in these pages.

But from where shall I fetch my argument? With what shall I win them? O that I could tell! I would write to them in tears, I would weep out every argument, I would empty my veins for ink, I would petition them on my knees. O how thankful should I be if they would be prevailed with to repent and turn.

How long have I labored for you! How often would I have gathered you! This is what I have prayed for and studied for these many years, that I might bring you to God. O that I might now do it! Will you yet be entreated?

'But, O Lord, how insufficient I am for this work. Alas, with what shall I pierce the scales of Leviathan, or make the heart feel that is hard as the nether millstone? Shall I go and speak to the grave, and expect the dead will obey me and come forth? Shall I make an oration to the rocks, or declaim to the mountains, and think to move them with arguments? Shall I make the blind to see? From the beginning of the world was it not heard that a man opened the eyes of the blind (John 9:32). But, O Lord, You can pierce the heart of the sinner. I can only draw the bow at a venture—but may You direct the arrow between the joints of the harness. Slay the sin, and save the soul of the sinner who casts his eyes on these pages.

There is no entering into heaven but by the strait passage of the second birth; without holiness you shall never see God (Heb 12:14). Therefore give yourselves unto the Lord now. Set yourselves to seek Him now. Set up the Lord Jesus in your hearts, and set Him up in your houses. Kiss the Son (Psalm 2:12) and embrace the offers of mercy; touch His scepter and live; for why will you die? I do not beg for myself—but would have you happy: this is the prize I run for. My soul's desire and prayer for you is, that you may be saved (Rom 10:1).

I beseech you to permit a friendly plainness and freedom with you in your deepest concern. I am not playing the orator to make a learned speech to you, nor dressing the dish with eloquence in order to please you. These lines are upon a weighty errand indeed—to convince, and convert, and save you. I am not baiting my hook with rhetoric, nor fishing for your applause—but for your souls. My work is not to please you—but to save you; nor is my business with your fancies—but with your hearts. If I have not your hearts, I have nothing. If I were to please your ears, I would sing another song. I could then tell you a smoother tale; I would make pillows for you and speak peace, for how can Ahab love this Micaiah, who always

prophecies evil concerning him? (1 Kings 22:8). But how much better are the wounds of a friend, than the fair speeches of the harlot, who flatters with her lips, until the darts strike through the liver? (Prov 7:21-23 and Prov 6:26). If I were to quiet a crying infant, I might sing him into a happier mood, or rock him asleep; but when the child is fallen into the fire, the parent takes another course; he will not try to still him with a song or trifle. I know, if we succeed not with you, you are lost; if we cannot get your consent to arise and come away, you will perish forever. **No conversion—no salvation!** I must get your goodwill, or leave you miserable.

But here the difficulty of my work again occurs to me. 'O Lord, choose my stones out of the brook (1 Sam 17:40,45). I come in the name of the Lord Almighty. I come forth, like the stripling David against Goliath, to wrestle, not with flesh and blood—but with principalities and powers, and rulers of the darkness of this world (Eph 6:12). This day let the Lord smite the Philistines, spoil the strong man of his armor, and give me the captives out of his hand. Lord, choose my words, choose my weapons for me; and when I put my hand into the bag, and take out a stone and sling it, may You carry it to the mark, and make it sink, not into the forehead—but into the heart of the unconverted sinner, and smite him to the ground like Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:4).'

Some of you do not know what I mean by conversion, and in vain shall I attempt to persuade you to that which you do not understand. Therefore for your sakes I will show **what** conversion is.

Others cherish secret hopes of mercy, though they continue as they are. For them I must show the **necessity** of conversion.

Others are likely to harden themselves with a vain conceit that they are converted already. To them I must show the **marks** of the



unconverted.

Others, because they feel no harm, fear none, and so sleep as upon the top of a mast. To them I shall show the **misery** of the unconverted.

Others sit still, because they do not see the way of escape. To them I shall show the **means** of conversion.

And finally, for the quickening of all, I shall close with the **motives** to conversion.

### **MISTAKES about Conversion**

The devil has made many counterfeits of conversion, and cheats one with this, and another with that. He has such craft and artifice in his mystery of deceits that, if it were possible, he would deceive the very elect. Now, that I may cure the ruinous mistake of some who think they are converted when they are not, as well as remove the troubles and fears of others who think they are not converted when they are, I shall show you **the nature of conversion**, both what it is not, and what it is. We will begin with the negative. **What conversion is NOT.**

**Conversion is not the taking upon us the PROFESSION of Christianity.** Christianity is more than a name. If we will hear Paul, it does not lie in *word*—but in *power* (1 Cor 4:20). If to cease to be Jews and pagans, and to put on the Christian profession, had been true conversion—as this is all that some would have to be understood by it—who better Christians than they of Sardis and Laodicea? These

were all Christians by profession, and had a name to live only; but because they had a name, they are condemned by Christ, and threatened to be rejected (Rev 3:14-16). Are there not many that name the name of the Lord Jesus, that do not depart from iniquity (2 Tim 2:19), and profess they know God—but in works deny Him? (Titus 1:16). And will God receive these for true converts? What! converts from sin, when they still live in sin? It is a visible contradiction. Surely, if the lamp of profession would have served the turn, the foolish virgins had never been shut out (Matt 25:12). We find not only professing Christians—but preachers of Christ, and wonder-workers, rejected, because they are evil-workers (Matt 7:22-23).

**Conversion is not putting on the badge of Christ in BAPTISM.** Ananias and Sapphira, and Simon Magus were baptized as well as the rest. How many make a mistake here, deceiving and being deceived; dreaming that effectual grace is necessarily tied to the external administration of baptism, so that every baptized person is regenerated, not only sacramentally, but really and properly. Hence men fancy that because they were regenerated when baptized, they need no farther work. But if this were so, then all that have been baptized must necessarily be saved, because the promise of pardon and salvation is made to conversion and regeneration (Acts 3:19; Matt 19:28). And indeed, were conversion and baptism the same, then men would do well to carry but a certificate of their baptism when they died, and upon sight of this there were no doubt of their admission into heaven.

In short, if there is nothing more to conversion, or regeneration, than to be baptized, this will fly directly in the face of that Scripture, Matt 7:13-14, as well as multitudes of others. If this is true, we shall no more say, 'Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way' for if all that are

baptized are saved, the door is exceeding wide, and we shall henceforth say, 'Wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads unto life.' If this is true, thousands may go in abreast; and we will no more teach that the righteous are scarcely saved, or that there is need of such a stir in taking the kingdom of heaven by violence, and striving to enter in (1 Pet 4:18; Matt 11:12; Luke 13:24). Surely, if the way be so easy as many suppose, that little more is necessary than to be baptized and to cry out, 'Lord, have mercy', we need not put ourselves to such seeking, and knocking, and wrestling, as the Word requires in order to salvation. Again, if this is true, we shall no more say, 'Few there be that find it'; we will rather say, 'Few there be that miss it.' We shall no more say, that of the many that are called, only 'few are chosen' (Matt 22:14), and that even of the professing Israel but a remnant shall be saved (Rom 9:27). If this doctrine is true, we shall no more say with the disciples, 'Who then shall be saved?' [Matt 19:25] but rather, 'Who then shall not be saved?' Then, if a man be baptized, though he is a fornicator, or a railer or covetous, or a drunkard—yet he shall inherit the kingdom of God! (1 Cor 5:11 and 1 Cor 6:9-10).

But some will reply, 'Such as these, though they received regenerating grace in baptism, are since fallen away, and must be renewed again, or else they cannot be saved.'

I answer, 1. There is an infallible connection between regeneration and salvation, as we have already shown. 2. Then man must be again born again, which carries a great deal of absurdity in its face. We might as well expect men to be twice born in nature as twice born in grace! But, 3, and above all, this grants the thing I contend for, that whatever men do or pretend to receive in baptism, if they are found afterwards to be grossly ignorant, or profane, or formal, without the power of godliness, they 'must be born again' (John 3:7) or else be

shut out of the kingdom of God. So then they must have more to plead for themselves than their baptismal regeneration.

Well, in this you see all are agreed, that, be it more or less that is received in baptism, if men are evidently unsanctified, they must be renewed by a thorough and powerful change, or else they cannot escape the damnation of hell. 'Be not deceived; God is not mocked.' [Gal 6:7] Whether it be your baptism, or whatever else you pretend, I tell you from the living God, that if any of you be a prayerless person, or a scoffer, or a lover of evil company (Prov 13:20), in a word, if you are not a holy, strict, and self-denying Christian, you cannot be saved (Heb 12:14; Matt 15:14).

**Conversion does not lie in MORAL RIGHTEOUSNESS.** This does not exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, and therefore cannot bring us to the kingdom of God (Matt 5:20). Paul, while unconverted, touching the righteousness which is in the law was blameless (Phil 3:6). The Pharisee could say, 'I am no extortioner, adulterer, unjust', etc. (Luke 18:11). You must have something more than all this to show, or else, however you may justify yourself, God will condemn you. I do not condemn morality—but I warn you not to rest in it. Piety includes morality—but morality does not insure piety.

**Conversion does not consist in an external conformity to the rules of piety.** It is manifest that men may have a form of godliness, without the power (2 Tim 3:5). Men may pray long (Matt 23:14), and fast often (Luke 18:12), and hear gladly (Mark 6:20), and be very forward in the service of God, though costly and expensive (Isa 1:11), and yet be strangers to conversion. They must have more to plead for themselves than that they go to church, give alms, and make use of prayer, to prove themselves sound converts. *There is no*

*outward service but a hypocrite may do it, even to the giving of all his goods to feed the poor, and his body to be burned (1 Cor 13:3).*

**Conversion is not the mere chaining up of corruption by EDUCATION, human laws or the force of affliction.** It is too common and easy to mistake education for grace; but if this were enough, who a better man than Jehoash? While Jehoiada, his uncle, lived, he was very forward in God's service, and calls upon him to repair the house of the Lord (2 Kings 12:2,7). But here was nothing more than good education all this while; for when his good tutor was taken away he appears to have been but a wolf chained up, and falls into idolatry.

In short, **conversion does not consist in ILLUMINATION or CONVICTION or in a SUPERFICIAL CHANGE or PARTIAL REFORMATION.** An apostate may be an enlightened man (Heb 6:4), and a Felix tremble under conviction (Acts 24:25), and a Herod do many things (Mark 6:20). It is one thing to have sin alarmed only by convictions, and another to have it crucified by converting grace. Many, because they have been troubled in conscience for their sins, think well of their case, miserably mistaking conviction for conversion. With these, Cain might have passed for a convert, who ran up and down the world like a man distracted, under the rage of a guilty conscience, until he stifled it with building and business.

Others think that because they have given up their riotous ways, and are broken off from evil company or some particular lust, and are reduced to sobriety and civility, they are now real converts. They forget that there is a vast difference between being sanctified and civilized. They forget that many seek to enter into the kingdom of heaven, and are not far from it, and arrive to the almost of Christianity, and yet fall short at last. While conscience holds the

whip over them, many will pray, hear, read, and forbear their delightful sins; but no sooner is the lion asleep than they are at their sins again. Who more religious than the Jews when God's hand was upon them? Yet no sooner was the affliction over, than they forgot God. You may have forsaken a troublesome sin, and have escaped the gross pollutions of the world, and yet in all this not have changed your carnal nature.

You may take a crude mass of lead and mold it into the more lovely proportion of a plant, and then into the shape of an animal, and then into the form and features of a man; but all the time it is still lead. So a man may pass through various transmutations, from ignorance to knowledge, from profanity to civility, then to a form of religion, and all this time he is still carnal and unregenerate, his nature remains unchanged.

Hear then, O sinners, hear as you would live. Why should you willfully deceive yourselves, or build your hopes upon the sand? I know that he will find hard work, who goes to pluck away your hopes. It cannot but be unpleasant to you, and truly it is not pleasing to me. I set about it as a surgeon when about to cut off a mortified limb from his beloved friend, which of necessity he must do, though with an aching heart. But understand me, beloved, I am only taking down the ruinous house, which otherwise will speedily fall of itself and bury you in the ruins—that I may build it fair, strong, and firm forever. The hope of the wicked shall perish (Prov 11:7). And had you not better, O sinner, let the Word convince you now in time, and let go your false and self-deluding hopes, than have death open your eyes too late, and find yourself in hell before you are aware?

I would be a false and faithless shepherd if I would not tell you, that you who have built your hopes upon no better grounds than these

before mentioned, are yet in your sins! Let conscience speak. What have you to plead for yourselves? Is it that you wear Christ's livery; that you bear His name; that you are a member of the visible church; that you have knowledge in the points of religion, are civilized, perform religious duties, are just in your dealings, have been troubled in conscience for your sins? I tell you from the Lord, these pleas will never be accepted at God's bar. All this, though good in itself, will not prove you converted, and so will not suffice to your salvation. O look to it, and resolve to turn speedily and entirely. Study your own hearts; do not rest until God has made thorough work with you; for you must be converted men, or else you are lost men.

But if these persons come short of conversion, what shall I say of the profane person? It may be he will scarcely cast his eyes on, or lend his ear to this discourse; but if there be any such reading, or within hearing, he must know from the Lord that made him, that he is far from the kingdom of God. May a man keep company with the wise virgins, and yet be shut out; and shall not a companion of fools much more be destroyed? May a man be true in his dealings, and yet not be justified before God? What then will become of you, O wretched man, whose conscience tells you that you are false in your trade and false to your word? If men may be enlightened and brought to the external performance of holy duties, and yet go down to perdition for resting in them and sitting down short of conversion; what will become of you, O miserable men, who live without God in the world? What will become of you, O wretched sinners, with whom God is scarcely in all your thoughts; who are so ignorant that you cannot pray, or so careless that you will not? O repent and be converted, break off your sins by righteousness. Away to Christ for pardoning and renewing grace. Give up yourselves to Him, to walk with Him in holiness, or you shall never see God. O that you would heed the

warnings of God! In His name I once more admonish you. Turn you at my reproof. Forsake the foolish, and live. Be sober, righteous, and godly. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, you double-minded. Cease to do evil, learn to do well (Prov 1:23 and Prov 9:6; Titus 2:12; James 4:8; Isa 1:16-17). But if you will go on, you must die.

### **The NATURE of Conversion**

I dare not leave you with your eyes half open, like him who saw 'men as trees walking' [Mark 8:24]. The Word is profitable for doctrine as well as reproof. And therefore, having thus far conducted you by the shelves and rocks of so many dangerous mistakes, I would guide you at length into the haven of truth.

Conversion then, in short, lies in the thorough change both of the heart and life. I shall briefly describe it in its nature and causes.

**1. The AUTHOR of conversion is the Spirit of God**, and therefore it is called 'the sanctification of the Spirit' (2 Thess 2:13) and 'the renewing of the Holy Spirit' (Titus 3:5). This does not exclude the other persons in the Trinity, for the apostle teaches us to bless the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who 'has begotten us again unto a living hope' (1 Pet 1:3). And Christ is said to 'give repentance unto Israel' (Acts 5:31); and is called the 'everlasting Father' (Isa 9:6) and we His seed, and 'the children whom God has given Him' (Heb 2:13). Yet this work is principally ascribed to the Holy Spirit, and so we are said to be 'born of the Spirit' (John 3:5-6).



So then, conversion is a work above man's power. We are 'born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man—but of God' (John 1:13). Never think you can convert yourself. If ever you would be savingly converted, you must despair of doing it in your own strength. It is a resurrection from the dead (Eph 2:1), a new creation (Gal 6:15; Eph 2:10), a work of absolute omnipotence (Eph 1:19). Are not these out of the reach of human power? If you have no more than you had by your first birth—a good nature, a meek and chaste temper etc.—you are a stranger to true conversion. Conversion is a supernatural work.

## **2. The efficient CAUSE of conversion is both internal and external.**

**[1] The INTERNAL cause is free grace alone.** 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done—but of his mercy he saved us', and 'by the renewing of the Holy Spirit' (Titus 3:5). 'Of his own will he begat us' (James 1:18). We are chosen and called unto sanctification, not for it (Eph 1:4).

God finds nothing in man to turn His heart—but enough to turn His stomach; He finds enough to provoke His loathing—but nothing to excite His love. Look back upon yourself, O Christian! Reflect upon your swinish nature, your filthy swill, your once beloved mire (2 Pet 2). Behold your slime and corruption. Do not your own clothes abhor you? (Job 9:31). How then should holiness and purity love you? Be astonished, O heavens, at this; be moved, O earth. Who but must needs cry, Grace! Grace! (Zech 4:7). Hear and blush, you children of the Most High God. O unthankful men, that free grace is no more in your mouths, in your thoughts; no more adored, admired and commended by such as you! One would think you should be doing nothing but praising and admiring God wherever you are. How can

you forget such grace, or pass it over with a slight and formal mention? What but free grace could move God to love you, unless enmity could do it, unless deformity could do it? How affectionately Peter lifts up his hands, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, who in his abundant mercy has begotten us again.' [1 Pet 1:3] How feelingly does Paul magnify the free mercy of God in it, 'God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, has quickened us together with Christ. By grace are you saved' (Eph 2:4-5)!

**[2] The EXTERNAL cause is the merit and intercession of the blessed Jesus.** He has obtained gifts for the rebellious (Psalm 68:18), and through Him it is that God works in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight (Heb 13:21). Through Him are all spiritual blessings bestowed upon us in heavenly places (Eph 1:3). He intercedes for the elect that believe not (John 17:20). Every convert is the fruit of His travail. Never was an infant born into the world with that difficulty which Christ endured for us. All the pains that He suffered on the cross were our birth-pains. He is made sanctification to us (1 Cor 1:30). He sanctified Himself, that is, set apart Himself as a sacrifice, that we might be sanctified (John 17:19). We are sanctified through the offering of His body once for all (Heb 10:10).

It is nothing, then, but the merit and intercession of Christ, that prevails with God to bestow on us converting grace. If you are a new creature, you know to whom you owe it; to Christ's pangs and prayers. The foal does not more naturally run after the dam, nor the suckling to the bosom, than a believer to Jesus Christ. And where else should you go? If any in the world can show for your heart what Christ can, let them do it. Does Satan claim you? Does the world court you? Does sin sue for your heart? Why, were these crucified for you? O Christian, love and serve your Lord while you have a being.

### **3. The INSTRUMENT of conversion is personal and real.**

**[1] The PERSONAL instrument is the ministry.** 'In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel' (1 Cor 4:15). Christ's ministers are those who are sent to open men's eyes, and to turn them to God (Acts 26:18). O unthankful world! Little do you know what you are doing when you are persecuting the messengers of the Lord. These are they whose business it is, under Christ, to save you. Whom have you reproached and blasphemed? (Isa 37:23). These are the servants of the most high God that show unto you the way of salvation (Acts 16:17), and do you requite them thus, O foolish and unwise? (Deut 32:6). O sons of ingratitude, against whom do you sport yourselves? These are the instruments that God uses to convert and save sinners: and do you revile your physicians, and throw your pilots overboard? 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.' [Luke 23:34]

**[2] The REAL instrument is the Word. We are begotten by the word of truth.** It is this that enlightens the eye, that converts the soul (Psalm 19:7-8), that makes us wise to salvation (2 Tim 3:15). This is the incorruptible seed by which we are born again (1 Pet 1:23). If we are washed, it is by the Word (Eph 5:26). If we are sanctified, it is through the truth (John 17:17). This generates faith, and regenerates us (Rom 10:17; James 1:18).

O you saints, how you should love the Word, for by this you have been converted! You that have felt its renewing power, make much of it while you live; be ever thankful for it. Tie it about your neck, write it upon your hand, lay it in your bosom. When you go let it lead you, when you sleep let it keep you, when you wake let it talk with you (Prov 6:21-22). Say with the Psalmist, 'I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have quickened me' (Psalm 119:93). You

who are unconverted, read the Word with diligence; flock to where it is powerfully preached. Pray for the coming of the Spirit in the Word. Come from your knees to the sermon, and come from the sermon to your knees. The sermon does not prosper—because it is not watered by prayers and tears, nor covered by meditation.

**4. The final END of conversion is man's salvation, and God's glory.** We are chosen through sanctification to salvation (2 Thess 2:13), called that we might be glorified (Rom 8:30), but especially that God might be glorified (Isa 60:21), that we should show forth His praises (1 Pet 2:9), and be fruitful in good works (Col 1:10).

O Christian, do not forget the end of your calling. Let your light shine, let your lamp burn, let your fruits be good and many and in season (Psalm 1:3). Let all your designs fall in with God's, that He may be magnified in you (Phil 1:20).

**5. The SUBJECT of conversion is the elect sinner—and that in all his parts and powers, members and mind.** Whom God predestinates, them only He calls (Rom 8:30). None are drawn to Christ by their calling, nor come to Him by believing—but His sheep, those whom the Father has given Him (John 6:37,44). Effectual calling runs parallel with eternal election (2 Pet 1:10).

You begin at the wrong end if you first dispute about your election. Prove your conversion, and then never doubt your election. If you cannot yet prove it, set upon a present and thorough turning. Whatever God's purposes be, which are secret, I am sure His promises are plain. How desperately do rebels argue! 'If I am elected I shall be saved, do what I will. If not, I shall be damned, do what I can.' Perverse sinner, will you begin where you should end? Is not the word before you? What says it? 'Repent and be converted, that

your sins may be blotted out.' 'If you mortify the deeds of the body you shall live.' 'Believe and be saved' (Acts 3:19; Rom 8:13; Acts 16:31). What can be plainer? Do not stand still disputing about your election—but set to repenting and believing. Cry to God for converting grace. Revealed things belong to you; in these busy yourself. It is just, as one well said, that they who will not feed on the plain food of the Word should be choked with the bones. Whatever God's purposes may be, I am sure His promises are true. Whatever the decrees of heaven may be, I am sure that if I repent and believe, I shall be saved; and that if I do not repent, I shall be damned. Is not this plain ground for you; and will you yet run upon the rocks?

More particularly, this change of conversion extends to the whole man. A carnal person may have some shreds of good morality—but he is never good throughout the whole cloth. Conversion is not a repairing of the old building; but it takes all down, and erects a new structure. It is not the sewing on a patch of holiness; but with the true convert, holiness is woven into all his powers, principles and practice. The sincere Christian is quite a new fabric, from the foundation to the top-stone. He is a new man, a new creature; all things are become new (2 Cor 5:17). Conversion is a deep work, a heart work. It makes a new man in a new world. It extends to the whole man, to the mind, to the members, to the motions of the whole life.

### **[1] The MIND.**

Conversion turns the balance of the judgment, so that God and His glory outweigh all carnal and worldly interests. It opens the eye of the mind, and makes the scales of its native ignorance fall off, and turns men from darkness to light. The man who before saw no danger in his condition, now concludes himself lost and forever

undone (Acts 2:37) except renewed by the power of grace. He who formerly thought there was little hurt in sin, now comes to see it to be the chief of evils. He sees the unreasonableness, the unrighteousness, the deformity and the filthiness of sin; so that he is affrighted with it, loathes it, dreads it, flees from it, and even abhors himself for it (Rom 7:15; Job 42:6; Ezek 36:31). He who could see little sin in himself, and could find no matter for confession, now sees the rottenness of his heart, the desperate and deep pollution of his whole nature. He cries, 'Unclean! Unclean! Lord, purge me with hyssop, wash me thoroughly, create in me a clean heart.' He sees himself altogether filthy, corrupt both root and branch (Psalm 14:3; Matt 7:17-18). He writes 'unclean' upon all his parts, and powers, and performances (Isa 64:6; Rom 7:18). He discovers the filthy corners that he was never aware of, and sees the blasphemy, and theft, and murder, and adultery, that is in his heart, of which before he was ignorant. Hitherto he saw no form nor loveliness in Christ, no beauty that he should desire Him; but now he finds the Hidden Treasure, and will sell all to buy this field. Christ is the Pearl he seeks.

Now, according to this new light, the man is of another mind, another judgment, than he was before. Now God is all with him, he has none in heaven nor in earth like Him; he truly prefers Him before all the world. His favor is his life, the light of His countenance is more than corn and wine and oil (the good that he formerly enquired after, and set his heart upon. Psalm 4:6-7). A hypocrite may come to yield a general assent that God is the chief good; indeed, the wiser heathens, some few of them, have at least stumbled upon this. But no hypocrite comes so far as to look upon God as the most desirable and suitable good to him, and thereupon to acquiesce in Him. This is the convert's voice: 'The Lord is my portion, says my soul. Whom have I in heaven but you? and there is none upon earth

that I desire beside you. God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever' (Lam 3:24; Psalm 73:25-26).

Conversion turns the bias of the **WILL** both as to means and end. The intentions of the will are altered. Now the man has new ends and designs. He now intends God above all, and desires and designs nothing in all the world, so much as that Christ may be magnified in him. He counts himself more happy in this than in all that the earth could yield, that he may be serviceable to Christ, and bring Him glory. This is the mark he aims at, that the name of Jesus may be great in the world.

Reader, do you read this without asking yourself whether it be thus with you? Pause a while, and examine yourself.

The **CHOICE** is also changed. He pitches upon **God** as his blessedness, and upon Christ and holiness as means to bring him to God. He chooses **Jesus** for his Lord. He is not merely forced to Christ by the storm, nor does he take Christ for bare necessity—but he comes freely. His choice is not made in a fright, as with the terrified conscience, or the dying sinner—who will seemingly do anything for Christ—but only takes Christ rather than hell. He deliberately resolves that Christ is his best choice, and would rather have Him than all the good of this world, might he enjoy it while he would (Phil 1:23). Again, he takes **holiness** for his path; he does not out of mere necessity submit to it—but he likes it and loves it. 'I have chosen the way of your precepts' (Psalm 119:173). He takes God's **testimonies** not as his bondage—but his heritage; yes, heritage forever. He counts them not his burden—but his bliss; not his cords—but his cordials (1 John 5:3; Psalm 119:14,16,47). He does not only bear—but takes up Christ's yoke. He takes not holiness as the stomach does the loathed medicine, which a man will take rather

than die—but as the hungry man does his beloved food. No time passes so sweetly with him, when he is himself, as that which he spends in the exercises of holiness. These are both his nutriment and element, the desire of his eyes and the joy of his heart.

Put it to your conscience whether you are the man. O happy man, if this be your case! But see that you are thorough and impartial in the search.

Conversion turns the bent of the **AFFECTIONS**. These all run in a new channel. The Jordan is now driven back, and the water runs upwards against its natural course. Christ is his hope. This is his prize. Here his eye is: here his heart. He is content to cast all overboard, as the merchant in the storm about to perish—so he may but keep this jewel.

The first of his desires is not after gold—but grace. He hungers for it, he seeks it as silver, he digs for it as for hidden treasure. He had rather be gracious than great. He had rather be the holiest man on earth than the most learned, the most famous, the most prosperous. While carnal, he said, 'O if I were but in great esteem, rolling in wealth, and swimming in pleasure; if my debts were paid, and I and mine provided for, then I would be a happy man.' But now the tune is changed. 'Oh!' says the convert, 'if I had but my corruptions subdued, if I had such a measure of grace, and fellowship with God, though I were poor and despised—I would not care, I would account myself a blessed man.' Reader, is this the language of your soul?

His **JOYS** are changed. He rejoices in the way of God's testimonies as much as in all riches. He delights in the law of the Lord, in which he once had little savor. He has no such joy as in the thoughts of Christ, the enjoyment of His company, the prosperity of His people.



His **CARES** are quite altered. He was once set for the world, and any scrap of spare time was enough for his soul. Now his cry is, 'What must I do to be saved?' (Acts 16:30). His great concern is how to secure his soul. O how he would bless you, if you could but put him out of doubt concerning this!

His **FEARS** are not so much of suffering—as of sinning. Once he was afraid of nothing so much as the loss of his estate or reputation; nothing sounded so terrible to him as pain, or poverty, or disgrace. Now these are little to him, in comparison with God's dishonor or displeasure. How warily does he walk, lest he should tread upon a snare! He looks in front, and behind: he has his eye upon his heart, and is often casting it over his shoulder, lest he should be overtaken with sin. It kills his heart to think of losing God's favor; this he dreads as his only undoing. No thought pains him so much as to think of parting with Christ.

His **LOVE** runs in a new course. 'My Love was crucified', says Ignatius, that is, my Christ. 'This is my beloved', says the spouse (Song 5:16). How often does Augustine pour his love upon Christ! He can find no words sweet enough. 'Let me see You, O Light of my eyes. Come, O Joy of my spirit; Let me behold You, O Gladness of my heart. Let me love You, O Life of my soul. Appear unto me, O my great delight, my sweet comfort, O my God, my life, and the whole glory of my soul. Let me find You, O Desire of my heart; let me hold You, O Love of my soul. Let me embrace You, O Heavenly Bridegroom. Let me possess You.'

His **SORROWS** have now a new vent (2 Cor 7:9-10). The view of his sins, the sight of Christ crucified—which could scarcely stir him before, now how much do they affect his heart!

His **hatred** boils, his anger burns against sin. He has no patience with himself; he calls himself fool, and beast; and thinks any name too good for himself, when his indignation is stirred up against sin (Psalm 73:22; Prov 30:2). He could once wallow in it with much pleasure; now he loathes the thought of returning to it as much as of licking up the filthiest vomit!

Commune then with your own heart, and attend to the general current of your affections, whether they be towards God in Christ above all other concerns. Indeed, sudden and strong motions of the affections are often found in hypocrites, especially where the natural temperament is warm. And contrariwise, the sanctified themselves are often without conscious stirring of the affections, where the temperament is more slow, dry, and dull. The great inquiry is, whether the judgment and will are steadily determined for God above all other good, real or apparent. If so, and if the affections do sincerely follow their choice and conduct, though it be not so strongly and feelingly as is to be desired, there is no doubt but the change is saving.

## **[2] The MEMBERS.**

These members which before were the instruments of sin—are now become the holy utensils of Christ's living temple. He who before dishonored his body, now possesses his vessel in sanctification and honor, in temperance, chastity, and sobriety, and dedicates it to the Lord.

The **EYE**, which was once a wandering eye, a wanton eye, a haughty, a covetous eye—is now employed, as Mary's, in weeping over its sins, in beholding God in His works, in reading His Word, or in looking for objects of mercy and opportunities for His service.

The **EAR**, which was once open to Satan's call, and which did relish nothing so much as filthy, or at least frothy talk, and the laughter of fools—is now bored to the door of Christ's house, and open to His disciples. It says, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant hears.' [1 Sam 3:10] It waits for His words as the rain, and relishes them more than the appointed food (Job 23:12), more than the honey and the honeycomb (Psalm 19:10).

The **HEAD**, which was full of worldly designs—is now filled with other matters, and set on the study of God's will, and the man employs his head, not so much about his gain—as about his duty. The thoughts and cares that fill his head are, principally, how he may please God and flee sin.

His **HEART**, which was a sty of filthy lusts—is now become an altar of incense, where the fire of divine love is ever kept burning, and from which the daily sacrifice of prayer and praise, and the sweet incense of holy desires, ejaculations and prayers, are continually ascending.

The **MOUTH** is become a well of life; his **tongue** as choice silver, and his **lips** feed many. Now the salt of grace has seasoned his speech, has eaten out the corruption (Col 4:6), and cleansed the man from his filthy conversation, flattery, boasting, railing, lying, swearing, backbiting--which once came like flashes proceeding from the hell which was in the heart (James 3:6). The **throat**, that once was an open sepulcher, now sends forth the sweet breath of prayer and holy discourse, and the man speaks in another tongue, in the language of Canaan, and is never so well as when talking of God and Christ, and the matters of another world. His **mouth** brings forth wisdom; his **tongue** is become the silver trumpet of his Maker's praise, his glory and the best member that he has.

Now here you will find the hypocrite sadly deficient. He speaks, it may be, like an angel—but he has a covetous eye, or the gain of unrighteousness is in his hand. His hand is white—but his heart is full of rottenness (Matt 23:27), full of unmortified cares, a very oven of lust, a shop of pride, the seat of malice. It may be, with Nebuchadnezzar's image, he has a *golden head*—a great deal of knowledge; but he has *feet of clay*—his affections are worldly, he minds earthly things, and his way and walk are sensual and carnal. The work is not thorough with him.

### **[3] The LIFE and PRACTICE.**

The new man takes a new course (Eph 2:2-3). His conversation is in heaven (Phil 3:20). No sooner does Christ call by effectual grace but he straightway becomes a follower of Him. When God has given the new heart, and written His law in his mind—he henceforth walks in His statutes and keeps His judgments.

Though sin may dwell in him—truly a wearisome and unwelcome guest—yet it has no more dominion over him. He has his fruit unto holiness, and though he makes many a blot—yet the law and life of Jesus is what he looks at as his pattern, and he has an unfeigned respect to all God's commandments. He makes conscience even of little sins and little duties. His very infirmities which he cannot help, though he would, are his soul's burden, and are like dust in a man's eye, which though but little—is not a little troublesome. (O man, do you read this, and never stop to examine yourself?)

The sincere convert is not one man at church—and another at home. He is not a saint on his knees—and a cheat in his shop. He will not tithe mint and cummin, and neglect mercy and judgment, and the weightier matters of the law. He does not pretend piety—and neglect morality. But he turns from all his sins and keeps all God's statutes,

though not perfectly, except in desire and endeavor—yet sincerely, not allowing himself in the breach of any. Now he delights in the Word, and sets himself to prayer, and opens his hand and draws out his soul to the hungry. He breaks off his sins by righteousness, and his iniquities by showing mercy to the poor (Dan 4:27). He has a good conscience willing in all things to live honestly (Heb 13:18), and to keep without offence towards God and men.

Here again you find the unsoundness of many, who take themselves for good Christians. They are partial in the law (Mal 2:9), and take up the *cheap* and *easy* duties of religion—but they do not go through with the whole work. They are as a cake half-baked and half-raw. It may be, you find them exact in their words, punctual in their dealings—but then they do not exercise themselves unto godliness; and as for examining themselves and governing their hearts, to this they are strangers. You may see them duly at church; but follow them to their families, and there you shall see little but the world minded. Or if they have family duties, follow them to their closets, and there you shall find their souls are little looked after. It may be that they seem religious—but they do not bridle their tongues, and so all their religion is vain (James 1:26). It may be they come to closet and family prayer; but follow them to their shops, and there you find them in the habit of lying, or some fashionable way of deceit. Thus the hypocrite is not thorough in his obedience.

## **6. The OBJECTS from which we turn in conversion are, sin, Satan, the world, and our own righteousness.**

**[1] We turn from SIN.** When a man is converted, he is forever at enmity with sin; yes, with all sin—but most of all with his own sins, and especially with his bosom sin. Sin is now the object of his indignation. His sin swells his sorrows. It is sin which pierces him

and wounds him; he feels it like a thorn in his side, like a splinter in his eye. He groans and struggles under it, and not formally—but feelingly cries out, 'O wretched man!' [Rom 7:24] He is not impatient of any burden—so much as of his sin. If God should give him his choice, he would choose any affliction so he might be rid of sin; he feels it like the cutting gravel in his shoes, pricking and paining him as he goes.

Before conversion he had light thoughts of sin. He cherished it in his bosom, as Uriah his lamb; he nourished it up, and it grew up together with him; it did eat, as it were, of his own plate, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was to him as a sweet daughter. But when God opens his eyes by conversion, he throws it away with abhorrence, as a man would a loathsome toad, which in the dark he had hugged fast in his bosom, and thought it had been some pretty and harmless bird. When a man is savingly changed, he is deeply convinced not only of the **danger** but the **defilement** of sin; and O, how earnest is he with God to be purified! He loathes himself for his sins. He runs to Christ, and casts himself into the fountain set open for him and for uncleanness. If he falls into sin, what a stir is there to get all clean again! He has no rest until he flees to the Word, and washes and rubs and rinses in the infinite fountain, laboring to cleanse himself from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit.

The sound convert is heartily engaged against sin. He struggles with it, he wars against it; he is too often foiled—but he will never yield the cause, nor lay down the weapons, while he has breath in his body. He will make no peace; he will give no quarter. He can forgive his other enemies, he can pity them and pray for them; but here he is implacable, here he is set upon their extermination. He hunts as it were for the precious life; his eye shall not pity, his hand shall not spare, though it be a right hand or a right eye. Be it a gainful sin,

most delightful to his nature or the support of his esteem with worldly friends—yet he will rather throw his gain down into the gutter, see his credit fail, or the flower of his pleasure wither in his hand—than he will allow himself in any known way of sin. He will grant no indulgence, he will give no toleration. He draws upon sin wherever he meets it, and frowns upon it with this unwelcome salute, 'Have I found you, O my enemy!'

Reader, has conscience been at work while you have been looking over these lines? Have you pondered these things in your heart? Have you searched the book within, to see if these things are so? If not, read it again, and make your conscience speak, whether or not it is thus with you.

Have you crucified your flesh with its affections and lusts; and not only confessed—but forsaken your sins, all sin in your fervent desires, and the ordinary practice of every deliberate and wilful sin in your life? If not, you are yet unconverted. Does not conscience fly in your face as you read, and tell you that you live in a way of lying for your advantage? that you use deceit in your calling? that there is some way of secret sin that you live in? Why then, do not deceive yourself. 'You are in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity.' [Acts 8:23]

Does your unbridled tongue, your indulgence of appetite, your wicked company, your neglect of prayer, of reading and hearing the Word, now witness against you, and say, 'We are your works, and we will follow you'? Or, if I have not hit you right, does not the monitor within tell you, there is such and such a way that you know to be evil, that yet for some carnal respect you tolerate in yourself? If this be the case, you are to this day unregenerate, and must be changed or condemned.

**[2] We turn from SATAN.** Conversion binds the strong man, spoils his armor, casts out his goods, and turns men from the power of Satan unto God. Before, the devil could no sooner hold up his finger to the sinner to call him to his wicked company, sinful games, and filthy delights—but immediately he followed, 'like an ox going to the slaughter, like a deer stepping into a noose till an arrow pierces his liver, like a bird darting into a snare, little knowing it will cost him his life' (Prov 7:22-23). No sooner could Satan bid him lie—but immediately he had it on his tongue. No sooner could Satan offer a filthy object—but he was overcome with lust. If the devil says, 'Away with these family duties', be sure they shall be rarely performed in his house. If the devil says, 'Away with this strictness, this preciseness' he will keep far enough from it. If he tells him, 'There is no need of these secret-duties', he will go from day to day and scarcely perform them. But after he is converted he serves another Master, and takes quite another course; he goes and comes at Christ's bidding. Satan may sometimes catch his foot in a trap—but he will no longer be a willing captive. He watches against the snares and baits of Satan, and studies to be acquainted with his devices. He is very suspicious of his plots, and is very jealous in what comes across him, lest Satan should have some design upon him. He wrestles against principalities and powers; he entertains the messenger of Satan as men do the messenger of death. He keeps his eye upon his enemy, and watches in his duties, lest Satan should get an advantage.

**[3] We turn from the WORLD.** Before a man has true faith, he is overcome by the world. He either bows down to mammon, or idolizes his reputation, or is a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God. Here is the root of man's misery by the fall. He is turned aside to the creature, and gives that esteem, confidence and affection to the creature—which is due to God alone.



O miserable man, what a deformed monster has sin made you! God made you a little lower than the angels; sin has made you little better than the devils! Sin has made you a monster that has his head and his heart where his feet should be--and his feet kicking against heaven--and everything out of place. The world which was formed to

serve you--now rules you! The deceitful harlot has bewitched you with her enchantments--and made you bow down and serve her!

But converting grace sets all in order again, and puts God on the throne, and the world at his footstool; Christ in the heart, and the world under the feet. 'I am crucified to the world, and the world to me' (Gal 6:14). Before this change, all the cry was 'Who will show us any worldly good?' but now he prays, 'Lord, lift you up the light of your countenance upon me', and take the corn and wine whoever will (Psalm 4:6-7). Before, his heart's delight and content were in the world; then the song was, 'Soul, take your ease—eat, drink, and be merry! You have much goods laid up for many years.' [Luke 12:19] But now all this is withered, and there is no loveliness, that we should desire it; and he tunes up with the sweet psalmist of Israel, 'The Lord is the portion of my inheritance; the lines are fallen to me in a fair place, and I have a goodly heritage.' [Psalm 16:5-6] Nothing else can make him content. He has written vanity and vexation upon all his worldly enjoyments, and loss and dross upon all human excellencies. He has life and immortality now in pursuit. He pants for grace and glory, and has an incorruptible crown in view. His heart is set to seek the Lord. He first seeks the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and religion is no longer a casual matter with him—but his main care. Before, the world had the sway with him. He would do more for gain than godliness—more to please his friend or his flesh, than the God that made him; and God must stand by until

the world was first served. But now all must stand by; he hates father and mother, and life, and all, in comparison of Christ.

Well then, pause a little, and look within. Does not this concern you? You pretend to be for Christ—but does not the world sway you? Do you not take more real delight and contentment in the world than in Him? Do you not find yourself more at ease when the world is in your mind and you are surrounded with carnal delights, than when retired to prayer and meditation in your room, or attending upon God's Word and worship? There is no surer evidence of an unconverted state than to have the things of the world uppermost in our aim, love and estimation.

**With the sound convert, Christ has the supremacy.** How dear is His name to him! How precious is His favor! The name of Jesus is engraved on his heart. Honor is but air, and laughter is but madness, and mammon is fallen like Dagon before the ark, with hands and head broken—when once Christ is savingly revealed. Here is the pearl of great price to the true convert; here is his treasure; here is his hope. This is his glory, 'My beloved is mine, and I am his.' [Song 2:16] O, it is sweeter to him to be able to say, 'Christ is mine!', than if he could say, 'The kingdom is mine; the Indies are mine.'

**[4] We turn from our own RIGHTEOUSNESS.** Before conversion, man seeks to cover himself with his own fig-leaves, and to make himself acceptable with God, by his own duties. He is apt to trust in himself, and set up his own righteousness, and to reckon his pennies for gold, and not to submit to the righteousness of God. But conversion changes his mind; now he counts his own righteousness as filthy rags. He casts it off, as a man would the verminous tatters of a nasty beggar. Now he is brought to poverty of spirit, complains of and condemns himself; and all his inventory is, 'I am poor, and

miserable, and wretched, and blind, and naked!' [Rev 3:17]. He sees a world of iniquity in his *holy* things, and calls *his once-idolized righteousness* but filth and loss; and would not for a thousand worlds be found in it!

Now he begins to set a high price upon Christ's righteousness. He sees the need of Christ in every duty, to justify his person and sanctify his performances; he cannot live without Him; he cannot pray without Him. Christ must go with him, or else he cannot come into the presence of God; he leans upon Christ, and so bows himself in the house of his God. He sets himself down for a lost undone man without Him; his life is hid in Christ, as the root of a tree spreads in the earth for stability and nourishment. Before, the gospel of Christ was a stale and tasteless thing; but now—how sweet is Christ! Augustine could not relish his once-admired Cicero, because he could not find in his writings the name of Christ. How emphatically he cries, 'O most sweet, most loving, most kind, most dear, most precious, most desired, most lovely, most fair!' all in a breath, when he speaks of and to Christ. In a word, the voice of the convert is, with the martyr, 'None but Christ!'

**7. The OBJECT to which we turn in conversion is—God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit**—whom the true convert takes as his all-sufficient and eternal blessedness. A man is never truly sanctified until his heart be truly set upon God above all things, as his portion and chief good. These are the natural breathings of a believer's heart: 'You are my portion.' 'My soul shall make her boast in the Lord.' 'My expectation is from him; he alone is my rock and salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God' (Psalm 119:57; Psalm 34:2; Psalm 62).

Would you be certain whether you are converted or not? Now let your soul and all that is within you attend. Have you taken God for your happiness? Where does the desire of your heart lie? What is the source of your greatest satisfaction? Come, then, and with Abraham lift up your eyes eastward, and westward, and northward, and southward, and look around you; what is it that you would have to make you happy? If God should give you your choice, as He did to Solomon, or should say to you, as Ahasuerus to Esther, 'What is your petition, and what is your request, and it shall be granted you?' [Esther 5:6] what would you ask? Go into the *gardens of pleasure*, and gather all the fragrant flowers there—would these satisfy you? Go to the *treasures of mammon*; suppose you may carry away as much as you desire. Go to the towers, to the *trophies of honor*. What do you think of being a man of renown, and having a name like the name of the great men of the earth? Would any of these, would all of these satisfy you, and make you to count yourself happy? If so, then certainly you are carnal and unconverted.

If not, go farther; wade into the divine excellencies, the store of His mercies, the hiding of His power, the unfathomable depths of His all-sufficiency. Does this suit you best and please you most? Do you say, 'It is good to be here. Here will I pitch, here will I live and die'? Will you let all the world go rather than this? Then it is well between God and you: happy are you, O man—happy are you that ever you were born. If God can make you happy, you must be happy; for you have taken the Lord to be your God. Do you say to Christ as He to us, 'Your Father shall be my Father, and your God my God'? Here is the turning point. "Whom do I have in heaven but You? And I desire nothing on earth but You. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart, my portion forever." Psalm 73:25-26

An unsound convert never takes up his rest in God; but converting grace does the work, and so cures the fatal misery of the fall, by turning the heart from its idols—to the living God. Now the soul says, 'Lord, where shall I go? You have the words of eternal life.' [John 6:68] Here he centers, here he settles. It is the entrance of heaven to him; he sees his interest in God. When he discovers this, he says, 'Return unto your rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you' (Psalm 116:7). And he is even ready to breathe out Simeon's song, 'Lord, now let you your servant depart in peace' [Luke 2:29]; and says with Jacob, when his old heart revived at the welcome tidings, 'It is enough!' (Gen 45:28). When he sees he has a God in covenant to go to, this is all his salvation, and all his desire (2 Sam 23:5).

Is this the case with you? Have you experienced this? If so, then 'blessed are you of the Lord'. God has been at work with you; He has laid hold of your heart by the power of converting grace, or else you could never have done this.

More particularly, in conversion—

**[1] We turn to CHRIST**, the only Mediator between God and man (1 Tim 2:5). His work is to bring us to God (1 Pet 3:18). He is the way to the Father (John 14:6), the only *plank* on which we may escape, the only *door* by which we may enter (John 10:9). Conversion brings the soul to Christ to accept Him as the only means of life, as the only way, the only name given under heaven. He does not look for salvation in any other but Him; he throws himself on Christ alone.

'Here', says the convinced sinner, 'I will venture; and if I perish, I perish; if I die, I will die here. But, Lord, do not let me perish under the eye of Your mercy. Entreat me not to leave You, or to return from

following after You. Here I will throw myself; if You slay me, I will not go from Your door.'

Thus the poor soul ventures on Christ and resolvedly adheres to Him. Before conversion, the man made light of Christ; he minded his farm, friends, pleasures, more than Christ; now, Christ is to him as his necessary food, his daily bread, the life of his heart, the staff of his life. His great desire is, that Christ may be magnified in him. His heart once said, as they to the spouse, 'What is your beloved more than another?' (Song 5:9). He found more sweetness in his merry company, wicked games, earthly delights, than in Christ. He took religion for a fancy, and the talk of great enjoyments for an idle dream; but now to him to live is Christ. Now he says, 'But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ!' Philippians 3:7-8

**ALL of Christ is accepted by the sincere convert.** He loves not only the *wages*—but the *work* of Christ; not only the *benefits*—but the *burden* of Christ. He is willing not only to tread out the corn—but to draw under the yoke. He takes up the *commands* of Christ, yes, the *cross* of Christ.

**The unsound convert takes Christ by halves.** He is all for the salvation of Christ—but he is not for sanctification. He is for the privileges—but does not appropriate the person of Christ. He divides the *offices* and *benefits* of Christ. This is an error in the foundation. Whoever loves life, let him beware here. It is an undoing mistake, of which you have been often warned, and yet none is more common. Jesus is a sweet Name—but men do not love the Lord Jesus in

sincerity. They will not have Him as God offers, 'to be a *Prince* and a *Savior*' (Acts 5:31). They divide what God has joined, the *King* who rules—and the *Priest* who saves. They will not accept the salvation of Christ as He intends it; they divide it here. Every man's vote is for salvation from *suffering*—but they do not desire to be saved from *sinning*. They would have their lives saved—but still would have their lusts. Indeed, many divide here again; they would be content to have some of their sins destroyed—but they cannot leave the lap of Delilah, or divorce the beloved Herodias. They cannot be cruel to the right eye or right hand.

O be infinitely careful here; your soul depends upon it. The sound convert takes a whole Christ, and takes Him for all intents and purposes, without exceptions, without limitations, without reserve. He is willing to have Christ upon any terms; he is willing to have the *dominion* of Christ as well as *deliverance* by Christ. He says with Paul, 'Lord, what will you have me to do?' [Acts 9:6] Anything, Lord! He gives Christ the blank page—to write down His own conditions.

**[2] We turn to the laws, ordinances, and ways of Christ.** The heart which once was set against these, and could not endure the strictness of these bonds, the severity of these ways—now falls in love with them, and chooses them as its rule and guide forever.

Four things, I observe, God works in every sound convert, with reference to the laws and ways of Christ, by which you may come to know your state, if you will be faithful to your own souls. Therefore, keep your eyes upon your hearts as you go along.

**(i) The judgment is brought to approve of them and to subscribe to them as most righteous and most reasonable.** The mind is brought to like the ways of God; and the corrupt prejudices that were once against them as unreasonable and

intolerable, are now removed. The understanding assents to them all as holy, just, and good (Rom 7:12). How is David taken up with the excellencies of God's laws! How does he expatiate on their praises, both from their inherent qualities and admirable effects! (Psalm 19:8-10, etc.).

There is a twofold judgment of the understanding, the absolute and the comparative. The *absolute* judgment is when a man thinks such a course best in general—but not for him, or not under his present circumstances. Now, a godly man's judgment is for the ways of God, and that not only the absolute—but comparative judgment. He thinks them not only the best in general—but best for *him*! He looks upon the rules of piety not only as tolerable—but desirable; yes, more desirable than gold, fine gold; yes, much fine gold.

His judgment is fully determined that it is best to be holy, that it is best to be strict, that it is in itself the most eligible course, and that it is for him the wisest and most rational and desirable choice. Hear the godly man's judgment; 'I know, O Lord, that your judgments are right; I love your commandments above gold, yes, above fine gold; I esteem all your precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way' (Psalm 119:127-128). Mark, he approves of all that God requires—and disapproves of all that He forbids. 'Righteous, O Lord, and upright are your judgments. Your testimonies that you have commanded are righteous and very faithful. Your word is true from the beginning, and everyone of your righteous judgments endures forever' (Psalm 119:138, 160). See how readily and fully he subscribes; he declares his assent and consent to it, and all and everything contained therein.

**(ii) The desire of the heart is to know the whole mind of Christ.** He would not have one sin undiscovered, nor be ignorant of



one duty required. It is the natural and earnest breathing of a sanctified heart: 'Lord, if there be any way of wickedness in me—please reveal it. What I know not—teach me. If I have done iniquity—I will do it no more.' The unsound convert is willingly ignorant, he does not love to come to the light. He is willing to keep such and such a sin, and therefore is averse to know it to be a sin—so will not let in the light at that window. Now, the gracious heart is willing to know the whole latitude and compass of his Maker's law. He receives with all acceptance the Word which convinces him of any duty that he knew not, or minded not before, or which uncovers any sin that lay hidden before.

**(iii) The free and resolved choice of the will is for the ways of Christ, before all the pleasures of sin and prosperities of the world.** His consent is not extorted by some extremity of anguish, nor is it only a sudden and hasty resolve—but he is deliberately purposed, and comes freely to the choice. True, the flesh will rebel—yet the prevailing part of his will is for Christ's laws and government, so that he takes them up not as his toil or burden—but as his bliss. While the unsanctified person goes in Christ's ways as in chains and fetters—the true convert does it heartily, and counts Christ's laws his liberty. He delights in the beauties of holiness, and has this inseparable mark— he **had rather, if he might have his choice, live a strict and holy life, than the most prosperous and flourishing worldly life.**

'There went with Saul a band of men whose hearts God had touched' (1 Sam 10:26). When God touches the hearts of His chosen, they presently follow Christ, and, though drawn, do freely run after Him, and willingly devote themselves to the service of the Lord, seeking Him with their whole desire. Fear has its uses; but this is not the mainspring of motion with a sanctified heart. Christ does not control

His subjects by *force*—but is King of a *willing* people. They are, through His grace, freely devoted to His service. They serve out of choice, not as slaves—but as the son or spouse, from a spring of love and a loyal mind. In a word, *the laws of Christ are the convert's love, delight, and continual study.*

**(iv) The bent of his course is directed to keep God's statutes.** It is the daily care of his life to walk with God. He seeks great things, he has noble designs, though he falls too short. He aims at nothing less than perfection; he desires it, he reaches after it; he would not rest in any degree of grace, until he were quite rid of sin, and perfected in holiness (Phil 3:11-14).

Here the hypocrite's rottenness may be discovered. He desires holiness, as one well said, only as a bridge to heaven, and inquires earnestly what is the least that will serve his turn; and if he can get but so much as may bring him to heaven, this is all he cares for. But the sound convert desires holiness for holiness' sake, and not merely for heaven's sake. He would not be satisfied with so much holiness as might save him from hell—but desires the highest degree. Yet *desires* are not enough. What is your *way* and your *course*? Are the drift and scope of your *life* altered? Is holiness your pursuit, and piety your business? If not, you fall short of sound conversion.

And is this which we have described, the conversion which is of absolute necessity to salvation? Then be informed—that strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads unto life—that there are few that find it—that there is need of divine power savingly to convert a sinner to Jesus Christ.

Again, be exhorted, O man, to examine yourself. What does conscience say? Does it begin to accuse? Does it not pierce you as you go? Is this your judgment, and this your choice, and this your way,

that we have described? If so, then it is well. But does your heart condemn you, and tell you of a certain sin you are living in against your conscience? Does it not tell you there is such and such a secret way of wickedness that you wish to pursue; such and such a duty that you make no conscience of?

Does not conscience carry you to your closet, and tell you how seldom prayer and Scripture reading are performed there? Does it not carry you to your family, and show you the charge of God, and the souls of your children who are neglected there? Does not conscience lead you to your shop, your trade, and tell you of some iniquity there? Does it not carry you to the public-house, or the private club, and blame you for the loose company you keep there, the precious *time* which you misspend there, the *talents* which you waste there? Does it not carry you into your secret chamber, and read there your condemnation?

O *conscience!* do your duty. In the name of the living God, I command you—discharge your office. Lay hold upon this sinner, fall upon him, arrest him, apprehend him, undeceive him. What! will you flatter and soothe him while he lives in his sins? Awake, O conscience! What do you mean, O sleeper? What! have you no reproof in your mouth? What! shall this soul die in his careless neglect of God and of eternity, and you altogether remain silent? What! shall he go on still in his trespasses, and yet have peace? Oh, rouse yourself, and do your work. Now let *the preacher in your bosom* speak. Cry aloud, and spare not; lift up your voice like a trumpet. Let not the blood of his soul be required at your hands.

## The NECESSITY of Conversion

It may be you are ready to say, 'What does all this stir mean?' and are apt to wonder why I follow you with such earnestness, still ringing the same lesson in your ears—that you should repent and be converted. But I must say to you, as Ruth to Naomi, 'Entreat me not to leave you, or to return from following after you.' [Ruth 1:16] Were it a matter of indifference, might you be saved as you are, I would gladly let you alone; but would you not have me concerned for you, when I see you ready to perish? As the Lord lives, before whom I am—*I have not the least hope of seeing your face in heaven, except you be converted.* I utterly despair of your salvation, except you will be prevailed with thoroughly to turn and give up yourself to God in holiness and newness of life.

Jesus said, 'I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again' [John 3:3], and yet do you wonder why your ministers labor so earnestly for you? Do not think it strange that I am earnest with you to follow after holiness, and long to see the image of God upon you. Never did any, nor shall any, enter into heaven by any other way but this! The conversion described, is not a high attainment of some advanced Christians—but *every* soul that is saved undergoes this change.

What is it that you count necessary? Is your bread necessary? Is your breath necessary? Then your conversion is much more necessary. Indeed, this is the one thing necessary. Your *possessions* are not necessary; you may sell all for the pearl of great price, and yet be a gainer by the purchase. Your *life* is not necessary; you may part with it for Christ, to infinite advantage. Your *reputation* is not necessary; you may be reproached for the name of Christ, and yet be happy; yes, you may be much more happy in reproach than in repute. But your

*conversion* is necessary; your salvation depends upon it; and is it not needful in so important a matter to take care? On this one point depends your making or marring to all eternity.

But I shall more particularly show the necessity of conversion, in five things—

**1. Without conversion, your BEING is in vain.**

Is it not a pity, that you should be good for nothing—an unprofitable burden of the earth—a mere wart in the body of the universe? Thus you are, while unconverted, for you cannot answer the end of your being. Is it not for the divine pleasure that you are and were created? Did not God make you for Himself? Are you a man—and have you reason? Then, think how you came into being and why you exist. Behold God's workmanship in your body, and ask yourself for what purpose did God construct this fabric? Consider the noble faculties of your heaven-born soul. To what end did God bestow these excellencies? Was it to no other end than that you should please yourself, and gratify your senses? Did God send men into the world, only like the swallows, to gather a few sticks and mud, and build their nests, and raise up their young, and then die away? The very heathen could see farther than this. Are you so 'fearfully and wonderfully made' [Psalm 139:14], and do you not yet reason with yourself, 'Surely, I was made for some noble and exalted end!'

O man! set your reason a little in the chair. Is it not a pity such a goodly fabric should be raised in vain? Truly you are in vain, except you are for God. It were better you had no being—than not be for Him. Would you serve your end? You must repent and be converted; without this you are to no purpose; indeed, to bad purpose.

**You are to NO purpose.** Unconverted man is like a choice instrument, which has every string broken or out of tune. The Spirit of the living God must repair and tune it by the grace of regeneration, and sweetly move it by the power of actuating grace, or else your prayers will be but howlings, and all your service will make no music in the ears of the Most Holy. All your powers and faculties are so corrupt in your natural state that, except you be purged from dead works, you cannot serve the living God.

**An unsanctified man cannot work the work of God—**

**[1] He has no SKILL in it.** He is altogether as unskillful in the *work*, as in the *word* of righteousness. There are great mysteries in the *practice*, as well as in the *principles* of godliness. Now the unregenerate do not know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. You may as well expect him to read—who never learned the alphabet; or look for goodly music on the lute—from one that never set his hand to an instrument; as that a natural man should do the Lord any pleasing service. He must first be taught of God (John 6:45), taught to pray (Luke 11:1), taught to profit (Isa 48:17), taught to go (Hos 11:3), or else he will be utterly at a loss.

**[2] He has no STRENGTH for it.** How weak is his heart! (Ezek 16:30). He is soon tired. The Sabbath, what a weariness is it! (Mal 1:13). He is without strength (Rom 5:6), yes, dead in sin (Eph 2:5).

**[3] He has no MIND to it.** He desires not the knowledge of God's ways (Job 21:14). He does not know them, and he does not care to know them (Psalm 82:5). He knows not, neither will he understand.

**[4] He has neither due INSTRUMENTS nor MATERIALS for it.** A man may as well hew the marble without tools, or paint without colors or brushes, or build without materials—as perform

any acceptable service without the graces of the Spirit, which are both the materials and instruments in the work. *Almsgiving* is not a service of God but of vainglory—if it does not spring from love to God. What is the *prayer* of the lips without grace in the heart—but the carcass without life? What are all our *confessions*—unless they are exercises of godly sorrow and sincere repentance? What are our *petitions*—unless animated with holy desires and faith in the attributes and promises of God? What are our *praises* and *thanksgivings*—unless they spring from the love of God, and a holy gratitude and sense of God's mercies in the heart? So that a man may as well expect that trees should speak, or look for motion from the dead, as look for any service, holy and acceptable to God, from the unconverted. When the tree is evil, how can the fruit be good?

**Also, without conversion you live to BAD purpose.** The unconverted soul is a very cage of unclean birds (Rev 18:2), a sepulcher full of corruption and rottenness (Matt 23:27), a loathsome carcass full of crawling worms, and sending forth a most noxious stench in the nostrils of God (Psalm 14:3). O dreadful case! Do you not yet see a change to be needful? Would it not have grieved one to see the golden consecrated vessels of God's temple turned into quaffing bowls of drunkenness, and polluted with the idol's service? (Dan 5:2-3). Was it such an abomination to the Jews when Antiochus set up the picture of a swine at the entrance of the temple? How much more abominable, then, would it have been to have had the very temple itself turned into a stable or a pig sty; and to have had the holy of holies served like the house of Baal! This is just the case of the unregenerate. All your members are turned into instruments of unrighteousness, servants of Satan, and your inmost heart into a receptacle of uncleanness. You may see what kind of inhabitants are within—by what come out; for, 'out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness,

blasphemies' (Matt 15:19). This black troop shows what a hell there is within!

O abuse insufferable! to see a heaven-born soul abased to such vileness; to see the glory of God's creation, the chief of the works of God, the Lord of this lower world, eating husks with the prodigal! Was it such a lamentation to see those nobles—sit desolate in the streets; and the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, esteemed as earthen pitchers; and those who were clothed in scarlet embrace dunghills? (Lam 4:2,5). And is it not much more fearful to see the only being that has immortality in this lower world and carries the stamp of God, become as a vessel wherein is no pleasure, and be put to the most sordid use? O intolerable indignity! Better you were dashed in a thousand pieces, than continue to be abased to so vile a service!

**2. Not only man—but the whole visible CREATION is in vain without conversion.** God has made all the visible creatures in heaven and earth for the service of man, and man only is the spokesman for all the rest. Man is, in the world, like the tongue to the body, which speaks for all the members. The other creatures cannot praise their Maker, except by dumb signs and hints to man that he should speak for them. Man is, as it were, the high priest of God's creation, to offer the sacrifice of praise for all his fellow-creatures. The Lord God expects a tribute of praise from all His works. Now, all the rest do bring in their tribute to man, and pay it by his hand. So then, if a man is false, and faithless, and selfish—God is robbed of all, and has no active glory from His works.

O dreadful thought! that God should build such a world as this, and lay out such infinite power, and wisdom, and goodness thereupon, and all in vain! And that man should be guilty, at last, of robbing and



spoiling Him of the glory of all! O think of this. While you are unconverted, all the offices of the creatures are in vain to you. Your food nourishes you in vain. The sun holds forth its light to you in vain. Your clothes warm you in vain. Your horse carries you in vain. In a word, the unwearied labor and continued travail of the whole creation—so far as you are concerned—are in vain. The service of all the creatures which drudge for you, and yield forth their strength unto you, with which you should serve their Maker—is all but lost labor. Hence, 'the whole creation groans' (Rom 8:22) under the abuse of unsanctified men who pervert all things to the service of their lusts, quite contrary to the very end of their being.

**3. Without conversion, your RELIGION is vain.** All your religious performances will be but lost; for they can neither please God nor save your soul, which are the very ends of religion (Rom 8:8; 1 Cor 13:2-3). Be your services ever so costly—yet God has no pleasure in them (Isa 1:14; Mal 1:10). Is not that man's case dreadful, whose sacrifices are as murders, and whose prayers are a breath of abomination? (Isa 66:3; Prov 28:9). Many under conviction think they will set upon mending, and that a few prayers and alms will set all right again; but alas, sirs, while your hearts remain unsanctified your duties will not be accepted. How punctilious was Jehu! and yet all was rejected because his heart was not upright (2 Kings 10 with Hos 1:4). How blameless was Paul! and yet, being unconverted, all was but loss (Phil 3:6-7). Men think they do much in attending to God's service, and are ready to set Him down as their debtor; whereas their persons being unsanctified, their duties cannot be accepted.

O soul! do not think when your sins pursue you, that a little praying and reforming your ways will pacify God. You must begin with your heart. If that is not renewed, you can no more please God than one

who, having unspeakably offended you, should bring you the most loathsome thing to pacify you; or having fallen into the mire, should think with his filthy embraces to reconcile you.

It is a great misery to labor in the fire. The poets could not invent a worse hell for Sisyphus than to be ever toiling to get the stone up the hill, and then that it should presently roll down again and renew his labor. God threatens it as the greatest temporal judgments, that they should build and not inhabit, plant and not gather, and that their labors should be eaten up by strangers (Deut 28:30,38-41). Is it so great a misery to lose our common labors, to sow in vain, and to build in vain? How much more to lose our pains in religion—to pray, and hear, and fast in vain! This is an undoing and eternal loss.

Be not deceived; if you go on in your sinful state, though you should spread forth your hands—God will hide His eyes; though you make many prayers—He will not hear (Isa 1:15). If a man without skill set about our work, and spoil it in the doing, though he take much pains, we give him but small thanks. God will be worshiped after the due order. If a servant does our work—but quite contrary to our order, he shall have stripes rather than praise. God's work must be done according to God's mind, or He will not be pleased; and this cannot be, except it be done with a holy heart.

**4. Without true conversion your HOPES are in vain.** 'The hope of the hypocrite shall perish' (Job 8:12-13). 'The Lord has rejected your confidences' (Jer 2:37).

**[1] The hope of comfort here is vain.** It is not only necessary for the *safety*—but the *comfort* of your condition, that you be converted. Without this, you shall not know peace (Isa 59:8). Without the fear of God you cannot have the comfort of the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:31). God speaks peace only to His people and to His saints (Psalm 85:8).

If you have a false peace continuing in your sins, it is not of God's speaking, and therefore you may guess the author. Sin is a real sickness (Isa 1:5), yes, the worst of sickness; it is a leprosy in the head (Lev 13:44); the plague in the heart (1 Kings 8:38); it is brokenness in the bones (Psalm 51:8); it pierces, it wounds, it racks, it torments (1 Tim 6:10). A man may as well expect ease when his diseases are in their full strength, or his bones out of joint, as true comfort while in his sins.

O wretched man, that can have no ease in this case but what comes from the deadliness of the disease! You shall have the poor sick man saying in his wildness, *he is well*; when you see death in his face, he would be up and about his business, when the very next step is likely to be to his grave. The unsanctified often see nothing amiss; they think themselves whole, and cry not for the physician; but this only shows the danger of their case.

Sin naturally breeds diseases and disturbances in the soul. What a continual tempest is there in a discontented mind! What a corroding evil is inordinate care! What is passion—but a very fever in the mind? What is lust—but a fire in the bones? What is pride—but a deadly dropsy? What is covetousness—but an insatiable and insufferable thirst? What is malice and envy—but venom in the very heart? Spiritual sloth is but a scurvy in the mind, and carnal security a mortal lethargy. How can that soul have true comfort which is under so many diseases? But converting grace cures, and so eases the mind, and prepares the soul for a settled, standing, immortal peace. 'Great peace have those who love your law, and nothing shall offend them' (Psalm 119:165). They are the ways of wisdom, which afford pleasure and peace (Prov 3:17). David had infinitely more pleasure in the Word, than in all the delights of his court (Psalm 119:103,127). The conscience cannot be truly pacified until soundly purified (Heb

10:22). Cursed is that peace which is maintained in a way of sin (Deut 29:19-20). Two sorts of peace are more to be dreaded than all the troubles in the world—peace *with* sin—and peace *in* sin.

**[2] The hope of salvation hereafter is in vain.** This hope is most injurious to God, most pernicious to yourself. There is death, despair, and blasphemy in this hope.

There is **DEATH** in it. Your confidence shall be rooted out of your tabernacles, God will destroy it—root and branch; it will bring you to the king of terrors (Job 18:14). Though you may lean upon this house, it will not stand—but will prove like a ruinous building which, when a man trusts to it, falls down about him (Job 8:15).

There is **DESPAIR** in it. 'Where is the hope of the hypocrite when God takes away his soul?' (Job 27:8). Then there is an end forever of his hope. Indeed, the hope of the righteous has an end—but it is not a destructive—but a perfective end. His hope ends in fruition, others in frustration. The godly may say at death, 'It is finished'; but the wicked, 'It is perished', and may earnestly bemoan himself, as Job did, though mistakenly, in his case, 'Where now is my hope? He has destroyed me; I am gone, and my hope is removed like a tree' (Job 19:10). 'The righteous has hope in his death' (Prov 14:32). When the body is dying, his hopes are living; when his body is languishing, his hopes are flourishing; his hope is a living hope—but others a dying, yes, a damning, soul-undoing hope.

'When a wicked man dies, his expectation shall perish; and the hope of unjust men perishes' (Prov 11:7). It shall be cut off and prove like a spider's web (Job 8:14) which he spins out of his own bowels; but then comes death and destroys all, and so there is an eternal end of his confidence in which he trusted. 'The eyes of the wicked shall fail and their hope shall be as the giving up of the spirit' (Job 11:20).

Wicked men are fixed in their carnal hope, and will not be beaten out of it; they hold it fast, they will not let it go—but death will knock off their fingers. Though we cannot undeceive them, death and judgment will. When death strikes his dart through your liver, it will ruin your soul and your hopes together. The unsanctified have hope only in this life, and therefore are of all men most miserable. When death comes, it lets them out into the amazing gulf of endless despair.

There is **BLASPHEMY** in it. To hope we shall be saved, though continuing unconverted, is to hope that we shall prove God to be a liar. He has told you that, merciful and compassionate as He is, He will never save you notwithstanding, if you go on in a course of ignorance or unrighteousness. In a word, He has told you that whatever you are or do, nothing shall avail you to salvation unless you become new creatures. Now, to say God is merciful and to hope that He will save us without conversion, is in effect to say, 'We hope that God will not do as He says.' We must not set God's attributes at variance. God has resolved to glorify His mercy—but not to the prejudice of His truth, as the presumptuous sinner will find to his everlasting sorrow.

**Objection:** But we hope in Jesus Christ, we put our whole trust in God, and therefore do not doubt that we shall be saved.

Answer: This is not hope in Christ—but hope against Christ. To hope to see the kingdom of God without being born again, to hope to find eternal life in the *broad way*—is to hope Christ will prove a false prophet. David's plea is, 'I hope in your word' (Psalm 119:81). But this hope is against God's Word. Show me a word of Christ for your hope that He will save you in your ignorance or profane neglect of His service, and I will never try to shake your confidence.

God rejects this hope with abhorrence. Those condemned by the prophet went on in their sins; yet, says the prophet, 'will they lean upon the Lord' (Mic 3:11). *God will not endure to be made a prop to men in their sins.* The Lord rejected those presumptuous sinners who went on still in their trespasses and yet would stay themselves on Israel's God—as a man would shake off the briers that cleave to his garment.

If your hope is worth anything, it will purify you from your sins (1 John 3:3)—but cursed is that hope which cherishes men in their sins.

**Objection:** Would you have us despair?

Answer: You must despair of ever coming to heaven as you are, that is, while unconverted. You must despair of ever seeing the face of God without holiness. But you must by no means despair of finding mercy upon your thorough repentance and conversion. Neither may you despair of attaining to repentance and conversion in the use of God's means.

**5. Without conversion all that Christ has done and suffered will be, so far as it concerns you, in vain.** That is, it will in no way avail you to salvation. Many urge this as a sufficient ground for their hope, that Christ died for sinners; but I must tell you, Christ never died to save impenitent and unconverted sinners, so continuing. A great divine was accustomed in his private dealings with souls to ask two questions. What has Christ **done for you?** What has Christ **wrought in you?** Without the application of the Spirit in regeneration, we have no saving interest in the benefits of redemption. I tell you from the Lord, that Christ Himself cannot save you if you go on in this state.

[1] To save men in their sins would be against His trust. The Mediator is the servant of the Father, shows His commission from Him, acts in His name, and pleads His command for His justification (John 10:18,36; John 6:38,40). God has committed all things to Him, entrusted His own glory and the salvation of His elect with Him (Matt 11:27; John 17:2). Accordingly, Christ gives His Father an account of both parts of His trust before He leaves the world (John 17). Now Christ would quite thwart His Father's glory, tarnish His greatest trust, if He would save men in their sins: for this would overturn all His counsels, and offer violence to all His attributes.

It would overturn all God's counsels, of which this is the order, that men should be brought to salvation through sanctification (2 Thess 2:13). He has chosen them that they should be holy (Eph 1:4). They are elected to pardon and life through sanctification (1 Pet 1:2). If you can repeal the law of God's immutable counsel, or corrupt Him whom the Father has sealed to go directly against His commission, then, and not otherwise, you may get to heaven in this condition. To hope that Christ will save you while unconverted, is to hope that Christ will prove false to His trust. He never did, nor ever will save one soul but whom the Father has given Him in election, and drawn to Him in effectual calling (John 6:37,44). Be assured, Christ will save none in a way contrary to His Father's will.

**[1] To save men in their sins, would offer violence to all the ATTRIBUTES of God.**

To His **JUSTICE**. The righteousness of God's judgment lies in rendering to all according to their works. Now, should men sow to the flesh, and yet of the Spirit reap everlasting life—where would the glory of divine justice be?

To His **HOLINESS**. If God should not only save sinners—but save them in their sins, His most pure and strict holiness would be exceedingly defaced. The unsanctified, in the eyes of God's holiness—are worse than a swine or viper! It would be offering the extreme violence to the infinite purity of the divine nature to have such dwell with Him. They cannot stand in His judgment: they cannot abide His presence. If holy David would not endure such in his house, no, nor in his sight (Psalm 101:3,7), can we think God will? Should He take men as they are, from the mire of their filthiness—to the glory of heaven, the world would think that God was at no such great distance from sin, nor had any such dislike to it as we are told He has. They would be ready to conclude that God was altogether such an one as themselves, as some of old wickedly did, from the forbearance of God (Psalm 50:21).

To His **VERACITY**. God has declared from heaven that if any says he shall have peace, though he should go on in the imagination of his heart—that His wrath shall smoke against that man (Deut 29:19-20). He has declared that they alone, who confess and forsake their sins, shall find mercy (Prov 28:13). He has declared that they that shall enter into His holy hill must be of clean hands and a pure heart (Psalm 24:3-4). Where would God's truth be, if, notwithstanding all this—He should bring unconverted men to heaven? O desperate sinner, who dares to hope that Christ will make His Father a liar and nullify His word—to save the unconverted!

To His **WISDOM**. This were to throw away the choicest of mercies on those who would not value them, nor were any way suited to them.

**They would not VALUE them.** The unsanctified sinner puts but little value upon God's great salvation. He thinks no more of Christ,



than those who are whole, do of the physician. He prizes not His balm, values not His cure—but tramples on His blood. Now, would it stand with wisdom to force pardon and life upon those who would return no thanks for them? Will the all-wise God, when He has forbidden us to do it, throw His holy things to dogs and His pearls to swine—who would, as it were—but turn again and rend Him? This would make mercy to be despised indeed. Wisdom requires that life be given in a way suitable to God's honor, and that God provide for the securing of His own glory, as well as man's felicity. It would be dishonorable to God to bestow His choicest riches, on those who have more pleasure in their sins—than in the heavenly delights which He offers. God would lose the praise and glory of His grace, if He would cast it away upon those who were not only unworthy but unwilling.

Also, **the mercies of God are no way SUITED to the unconverted.** God's wisdom is seen in suiting things to each other, the means to the end, the object to the faculty, the quality of the gift to the capacity of the receiver. Now, if Christ should bring the unregenerate sinner to heaven, he could take no more felicity there than a beast would, if you should bring it into a beautiful room to the society of learned men; whereas the poor thing had much rather be grazing with his fellows in the field. Alas, what could an unholy man do in heaven? He could not be content there because nothing suits him. The **place** does not suit him; he would be quite out of his element, a fish out of water. The **company** does not suit him; what communion has darkness with light? corruption with perfection? vileness and sin with glory and immortality? The **employment** does not suit him; the anthems of heaven do not fit his mouth, do not suit his ear. Can you charm a donkey with music; or will you bring him to your organ and expect that he should make melody, or keep time with the tuneful choir? Had he skill, he would have no will, and so

could find no pleasure in it. Spread your table with delicacies before a languishing patient, and it will be but an offence. Alas, if the ungodly man thinks a sermon long and say of a Sabbath-day, 'What a weariness is it!' how miserable would he think it to be engaged in an everlasting Sabbath!

To His **IMMUTABILITY**, or else to His **OMNISCIENCE** or **OMNIPOTENCE**. It is enacted in heaven, and enrolled in the decree of the court above, that none but the pure in heart shall see God (Matt 5:8). Now, if Christ brings any to heaven unconverted, either He must get them in without His Father's knowledge—and then where is His omniscience? or against His will—and then where were His omnipotence? or He must change His will—and then where were His immutability?

Sinner, will you not give up your vain hope of being saved in this condition? Bildad says, 'Shall the earth be forsaken for you; or the rocks be moved out of their place?' (Job 18:4). May I not much more reason with you? Shall the laws of heaven be reversed for you? Shall the everlasting foundations be overturned for you? Shall Christ put out the eye of His Father's omniscience, or shorten the arm of His eternal power—for you? Shall divine justice be violated for you; or the brightness of His holiness be blemished for you? O the impossibility, absurdity, blasphemy, of such a confidence! To think Christ will ever save you in this condition, is to make the Savior become a sinner, and do more wrong to the infinite Majesty than all the wicked on earth or devils in hell ever did, or ever could do; and yet will you not give up such a blasphemous hope?

**[2] To save men in their sins would be against the WORD of Christ.** We need not say, 'Who shall ascend into heaven, to bring down Christ from above? Or, who shall descend into the deep, to

bring up Christ from beneath? The word is near us' (Rom 10:6-8). Are you agreed that Christ shall end the controversy? Hear then His own words: 'Except you be converted, you shall never enter into the kingdom of heaven.' 'You must be born again.' 'If I wash you not, you have no part in me.' 'Unless you repent, you shall perish' (Matt 18:3; John 3:7; John 13:8; Luke 13:3). One word, one would think, were enough from Christ; but how often and earnestly does He reiterate it: 'Truly, truly, unless a man be born again, he shall not see the kingdom of God' (John 3:3). Yes, He not only asserts but proves the necessity of the new birth from the carnality and sinfulness of man from his first birth, by reason of which man is no more fit for heaven than the beast is for the chamber of the king. And will you yet rest in your own presumptuous confidence, directly against Christ's words? He must go quite against the law of His kingdom and rule of His judgment, to save you in this state.

**[3] To save men in their sins would be against the OATH of Christ.** He has lifted up His hand to heaven, He has sworn that those who remain in unbelief and know not His ways (that is, are ignorant of them, or disobedient to them) shall not enter into His rest (Heb 3:18). And will you not yet believe, O sinner, that He is earnest? The covenant of grace is confirmed by an oath and sealed by blood; but all must be made void, and another way to heaven found out—if you be saved, living and dying unsanctified. God is come to His last terms with man, and has condescended as far as in honor He could. Men cannot be saved while unconverted, except they could get another covenant made, and the whole frame of the Gospel, which was established forever with such dreadful solemnities, quite altered. And must not they be demented who hope that they shall?

**[4] To save men in their sins would be against His HONOR.** God will so show His love to the sinner—and at the same time show

His hatred to sin. Therefore, he who names the name of Jesus must depart from iniquity and deny all ungodliness; and he who has hope of life by Christ, must purify himself as He is pure, otherwise Christ would be thought a favorer of sin (2 Tim 2:19; Titus 2:12; 1 John 3:3). The Lord Jesus would have all the world know, that though He pardons sin, He will not protect it. If holy David says, 'Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity' (Psalm 6:8), and shuts the doors against them (Psalm 101:7), shall we not much more expect it from Christ's holiness? Would it be for His honor, to have the *dogs* at His table, or to lodge the *swine* with His children, or to have Abraham's bosom to be a nest of vipers?

**[5] To save men in their sins would be against His offices.**

God has exalted Him to be a *Prince* and a *Savior* (Acts 5:31). He would act against both, should He save men in their sins. It is the office of a king to be a terror to evildoers, and a praise to those who do well. 'He is a minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath on him who does evil' (Rom 13:4). Now, should Christ favor the ungodly, so continuing, and take those to reign with Him who would not have Him reign over them, this would be quite against His office. He therefore reigns that He may put His enemies under His feet. Now, should He lay them in His bosom, He would frustrate the end of His regal power. It belongs to Christ, as a King, to subdue the hearts and slay the lusts of His chosen (Psalm 45:5; Psalm 110:3). What king would take rebels in open hostility, into his court? What were this but to betray life, kingdom, government, and all together? If Christ is a King, He must have honor, homage, subjection. Now, to save men while in their natural enmity—would be to obscure His dignity, lose His authority, bring contempt on His government, and sell His dear-bought rights for naught.

Again, as Christ would not be a Prince, so neither a Savior, if He would do this; for His salvation is spiritual. He is called Jesus because He saves His people *from* their sins (Matt 1:21). So that, should He save them *in* their sins, He would be neither Lord nor Jesus. To save men from the *punishment* of sin—and not from the *power* of sin—would be to do His work by halves, and be an imperfect Savior. His office as the Deliverer is to turn ungodliness from Jacob (Rom 11:26). He is sent to bless men, in turning them from their iniquities (Acts 3:26), to make an end of sin (Dan 9:24). So that He would destroy His own designs, and nullify His offices—to save men in their unconverted state.

Arise then! What do you mean, O sleeper? Awake, O secure sinner, lest you be consumed in your iniquities! Say, as the lepers, 'If we sit here, we shall die!' (2 Kings 7:3-4). Truly, it is not more certain that you are now out of hell, than that you shall speedily be in it—unless you repent and be converted. There is but this one door for you to escape by. Arise then, O sluggard, and shake off your excuses; how long will you slumber and fold your hands to sleep? Will you lie down in the midst of the sea, or sleep on the top of a mast? (Prov 23:34). There is no remedy—but you must either turn or burn! There is an unchangeable necessity of the change of your condition, unless you have resolved to abide the worst of it, and fight it out with the Almighty. If you love your life, O man, arise and come away. I think I see the Lord Jesus laying the merciful hands of a holy violence upon you; I think He acts like the angels to Lot: "Hurry," they said to Lot. "Take your wife and your two daughters who are here. Get out of here right now, or you will be caught in the destruction of the city." When Lot still hesitated, the angels seized his hand and the hands of his wife and two daughters and rushed them to safety outside the city, for the Lord was merciful. "Run for your lives!" the angels warned. "Do not stop anywhere in the valley. And don't look back!

Escape to the mountains, or you will die." Genesis 19:15-17 (Gen 19:15-17).

O how dreadful will your destruction be, if you should yet harden yourself in your sinful state! But none of you can say that you have not had fair warning. Yet I cannot leave you so. It is not enough for me to have delivered my own soul. What! shall I go away without my errand? Will none of you arise and follow me? Have I been all this while speaking to the wind? Have I been charming the deaf adder, or allaying the restless ocean with argument? Do I speak to the trees and rocks—or to men? to the tombs and monuments of the dead—or to the living? If you are men and not senseless stocks, stop and consider where you are going! If you have the reason and understanding of men, do not dare to run into the flames, and fall into hell with your eyes open! Stop and think, and set about the work of repentance. What, men? and yet run into the pit, when the very beasts will not be forced in? What, endowed with reason? and yet trifle with death and hell, and the vengeance of the Almighty? Are men only distinguished from brutes in that these, having no foresight, have no care to provide for the things to come, and will you, who are warned, not hasten your escape from eternal torments? O show yourselves men, and let reason prevail with you!

Is it a reasonable thing for you to contend against the Lord your Maker, or to harden yourselves against His word, as though the Strength of Israel would lie? (Isa 45:9; Job 9:4; 1 Sam 15:29). Is it reasonable that an understanding creature should lose; yes, live quite against the very end of his being? Is it reasonable that the only being in this world that God has made capable of knowing His will and bringing Him glory, should yet live in ignorance of his Maker, and be unserviceable to His use, yes, should be engaged *against* Him, and spit his venom in the face of his Creator? Hear, O heavens, and give

ear, O earth, and let the creatures without sense judge if this be reason, that man whom God has nourished and brought up, should rebel against Him? Judge in your own selves. Is it a reasonable undertaking for briars and thorns to set themselves in battle against the devouring fire? or for the potsherd of the earth to strive with its Maker? You will say, 'This is not reason'; or surely the eye of reason is quite put out. And, if this is not reason, then there is no reason that you should continue as you are—but there is every reason in the world that you should immediately turn and repent.

What shall I say? I could spend myself in this argument. O that you would only hearken to me; that you would now set upon a new course! Will you not be made clean? When shall it once be? Reader, will you sit down and consider the forementioned argument, and debate it whether it be not best to turn? Come, and let us reason together. Is it good for you to be here? Is it good for you to try whether God will be as good as His word, and to harden yourself in a conceit that all is well with you, while you remain unsanctified?

Alas, for such sinners! must they perish at last by hundreds? What course shall I use with them that I have not tried? 'What shall I do for the daughter of my people?' (Jer 9:7).

'O Lord God, help. Alas, shall I leave them thus? If they will not hear me—yet may You hear me. O that they might live in Your sight! Lord, save them—or they perish. My heart would melt to see their houses on fire when they were fast asleep in their beds; and shall not my soul be moved within me to see them falling into endless perdition? Lord, have compassion, and save them out of the burning. Put forth Your divine power—and the work will be done!'

## **The MARKS of the Unconverted**

While we keep aloof in general statements, there is little fruit to be expected; it is the close hand-fight that does execution. David is not awakened by the prophet's hovering at a distance in parabolic insinuations. Nathan is forced to close with him, and tell him plainly, 'You are the man!' [2 Sam 12:7] Few will, in words, deny the necessity of the new birth; but they have a self-deluding confidence that the work is not to be done *now*. And because they know themselves to be free from that gross hypocrisy which takes up religion merely for a color to deceive others, and for covering wicked designs, they are confident of their sincerity, and do not suspect that more close hypocrisy, in which the greatest danger lies and by which a man deceives his own soul. But man's deceitful heart is such a matchless cheat—and self-delusion so reigning and so fatal a disease—that I do not know which is the greater—the difficulty, or the necessity of the undeceiving work that I am now upon. Alas for the unconverted, they must be undeceived—or they will be undone! But how shall this be effected?

'Help, O all-searching Light, and let Your discerning eye disclose the rotten foundation of the self-deceiver. Lead me, O Lord God, as You did the prophet, into the chambers of imagery, and dig through the wall of sinners' hearts, and reveal the hidden abominations that are lurking out of sight in the dark. O send Your angel before me to open the sundry wards of their hearts, as You did before Peter, and make even the iron gates fly open of their own accord. And as Jonathan no sooner tasted the honey but his eyes were enlightened, so grant, O Lord, that when the poor deceived souls with whom I have to do shall cast their eyes upon these lines, their minds may be illuminated, and their consciences convinced and awakened, that they may see with



their eyes, and hear with their ears, and be converted, and You may heal them.'

This must be premised before we proceed, that it is most certain that *men may have a confident persuasion that their hearts and states are good—while yet they are unsound*. Hear the Truth Himself who shows, in Laodicea's case, that men may be wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked—and yet not know it. Yes, they may be confident they are rich, and increased in grace (Rev 3:17). 'There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes—and yet are not washed from their filthiness' (Prov 30:12). Who better persuaded of his state than Paul, while he yet remained unconverted? (Rom 7:9). So that they are miserably deceived who take a *strong confidence* for a *sufficient evidence*. Those who have no better proof than barely a strong persuasion that they are converted—are certainly as yet strangers to conversion.

But to come closer. As it was said to the adherents of Antichrist, so here—some of the unconverted carry their marks in their *forehead* more openly, and some in their *hands* more covertly. The apostle reckons up some upon whom he writes the sentence of death, as in these dreadful catalogues which I beseech you to attend to with all diligence: 'For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person--such a man is an idolater--has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.' (Eph 5:5-6). 'But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars--their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death' (Rev 21:8). 'Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers

nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God' (1 Cor 6:9-10). Woe to those who have their name written in this catalogue. Such may know, as certainly as if God had told them from heaven, that they are unsanctified, and under an impossibility of being saved in this condition.

**I. OPEN sinners.** There are then these several classes that, past all dispute, are unconverted; they carry their marks in their foreheads.

[1] The **immoral**. These are ever reckoned among the goats, and have their names, whoever else is left out, in all the forementioned catalogues.

[2] The **covetous**. These are ever branded for idolaters, and the doors of the kingdom are shut against them by name.

[3] **Drunkards**. Not only such as drink away their reason—but withal, yes, above all, such as are too strong for strong drink. The Lord fills His mouth with woes against these, and declares them to have no inheritance in the kingdom of God! (Isa 5:11-12,22; Gal 5:21).

[4] **Liars**. The God who cannot lie has told them that there is no place for them in His kingdom, no entrance into His holy hill; but their portion is with the father of lies, whose children they are, in the lake of burnings! (Rev 21:8,27; John 8:44; Prov 6:17).

[5] **Swearers**. The end of these, without deep and speedy repentance, is swift destruction, and most certain and unavoidable condemnation (James 5:12; Zech 5:1-3).

[6] **Railers** and backbiters, who love to take up a reproach against their neighbor, and fling all the dirt they can in his face, or else wound him secretly behind his back (Psalm 15:1,3; 1 Cor 5:11).

[7] **Thieves**, extortioners, oppressors, who grind the poor, or defraud their brethren when they have opportunity. These must know that God is the avenger of all such (1 Thess 4:6). Hear O you false and purloining and wasteful servants; hear, O you deceitful tradesmen, hear your sentence! God will certainly shut His door against you, and turn your treasures of unrighteousness into the treasures of wrath, and make your ill-gotten silver and gold to torment you, like burning metal in your flesh! (James 5:2-3).

[8] All who do ordinarily live in the profane neglect of God's worship, that do not hear His Word, who do not call on His name, who restrain prayer before God, who do not mind their own nor their families' souls—but live without God in the world! (John 8:47; Job 15:4; Psalm 14:4; Psalm 79:6; Eph 2:12 and Eph 4:18).

[9] Frequenters and lovers of vain company. God has declared that He will be the destroyer of all such, and that they shall never enter into the hill of His rest! (Prov 9:6 and Prov 13:20).

[10] Scoffers at religion, who make a scorn of holy living, and mock at the messengers and diligent servants of the Lord, and at their holy profession, and make themselves merry with the weakness and failings of professing Christians. 'Hear, you despisers,' hear your dreadful doom! (Prov 19:29; 2 Chron 36:16).

Sinner, consider diligently whether you are not to be found in one of these ranks, for if this is the case, you are in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity; for all these do carry their marks in their foreheads, and are undoubtedly the sons of death. And if so, the Lord pity our

poor congregations. O how small a number will remain when these ten sorts are left out.

Sirs, what efforts you make to keep up your confidence of your good state when God from heaven declares against you, and pronounces you in a state of damnation! I would reason with you, as God with them, 'How can you say, I am not polluted? See your way in the valley; know what you have done' (Jer 2:23). Man, is not your conscience aware of your tricks of deceit, of your secret sins, of your way of lying? Yes, are not your friends, your family, your neighbors, witnesses to your profane neglect of God's worship, to your covetous practices, to your envious and malicious behavior? May they not point at you as you go, 'There goes a gaming prodigal; there goes a drunken Nabal, a companion of evildoers; there goes a railer, or a scoffer, or a loose-liver!' Beloved, God has written it as with a sunbeam in the Book by which you must be judged—that these are not the marks of His children; and that none such, except renewed by converting grace, shall ever escape the damnation of hell.

O that you would now be persuaded to repent and turn from all your transgressions, or else iniquity will be your ruin (Ezek 18:30). Alas, for poor hardened sinners. Must I leave you at last where you are? Must I leave the drinker still at his bar? Must I leave the malicious still in his venom? However, you must know that you have been warned, and that I am clear of your blood; and whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear, I will leave these Scriptures with them, which will prove either as thunderbolts to awaken them, or as searing-irons to harden them. 'Surely God will crush the heads of his enemies, the hairy crowns of those who go on in their sins.' 'He who, being often reproved, hardens his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.' 'Because I have called, and you refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded, I will laugh at

your calamity—when your destruction comes as a whirlwind' (Psalm 68:21; Prov 29:1; Prov 1:24-27).

**II. SECRET sinners.** And now I imagine many will begin to bless themselves, and think all is well, because they cannot be reproached with these grosser evils. But I must tell you that there is another sort of unsanctified people, who carry their mark not in their foreheads—but more secretly and covertly. These frequently deceive themselves and others, and pass for good Christians, when they are all the while unsound at heart. Many pass undiscovered until death and judgment bring all to light. These self-deceivers seem to come even to heaven's gate with confidence of their admission, and yet are turned away at last (Matt 7:22). I beseech you deeply to lay to heart and firmly retain this awakening consideration—that multitudes perish by the hand of some secret sin, that is not only hidden from others—but from lack of observing their own hearts—is hidden even from themselves. A man may be free from open pollutions, and yet die at last by the hand of some unobserved iniquity; and there are these **twelve hidden sins**, through which souls go down by numbers into the chambers of eternal death.

These you must search carefully for, and take them as black marks wherever they are found, revealing a graceless and unconverted state; and as you love your lives, read carefully with a holy jealousy of yourselves, lest you should be the people concerned.

**[1] Gross wilful ignorance** (Hos 4:6). O how many poor souls does this sin kill in the dark, while they think truly they have good hearts, and are all set for heaven. This is the murderer which dispatches thousands in a silent manner, when they suspect nothing, and do not see the hand which destroys them. You shall find, whatever excuses you make for ignorance, that it is a soul-ruining

evil (Isa 27:11; 2 Thess 1:8; 2 Cor 4:3). Ah, would it not have grieved a man's heart to see that dreadful spectacle when the poor Christians were shut up in a barn, and a butcher came, with his hands warmed in human blood, and led them one by one, blindfold, to a block where he slew them one after another, by scores, in cold blood? But how much more should your hearts bleed to think of the hundreds that ignorance destroys in secret and leads blindfold to the block! Beware that this is not your case. Make no plea for ignorance; if you spare that sin, know that it will not spare you! Would a man keep a murderer in his bosom?

**[2] Secret reserves in closing with Christ.** To forsake all for Christ, to hate father and mother, yes, a man's own life for Him, 'This is a hard saying' (Luke 14:26). Some will do much—but they will not have that religion which will save them. They never come to be entirely devoted to Christ, nor to be fully resigned to Him. They must have the sweet sin; they mean to do themselves no harm; they have secret exceptions for life, liberty, or estate. Many take Christ thus, and never consider His self-denying terms, nor count the cost; and this error in the foundation mars all, and ruins them forever (Luke 14:28-33).

**[3] Formality in religion.** Many rest in the externals of religion and in the outward performance of holy duties. And very often this most effectually deceives men, and more certainly undoes them than open profaneness; as it was in the Pharisee's case. They hear, they fast, they pray, they give alms—and therefore will not believe their case is bad. Whereas, resting in the work done, and coming short of the heart-work and the inward power and vitality of religion, they fall at last into the burning, from the flattering hope and confident persuasion of their being all set on the way to heaven. Oh dreadful

case, when a man's religion shall serve only to harden him, and effectually to delude and deceive his own soul!

**[4] The prevalence of wrong motives in holy duties.** This was the bane of the Pharisees. Oh how many a poor soul is undone by this, and drops into hell before he discerns his mistake! He performs his 'good duties' and so thinks all is well—but does not perceive that he is actuated by carnal motives all the while. It is too true that even with the really sanctified, many carnal ends will often creep in; but they are the matter of their hatred and humiliation, and never come to be habitually prevalent with them, and bear the greatest sway. But when the main thing that ordinarily moves a man to religious duties is some carnal end—as to satisfy his conscience, to get the reputation of being religious, to be seen by men, to show off his gifts and talents, to avoid the reproach of being a profane and irreligious person, or the like—this reveals an unsound heart. Oh Christians, if you would avoid self-deceit, see that you mind not only your actions but your motives.

**[5] Trusting in their own righteousness.** This is a soul-ruining mischief. When men trust in their own righteousness they do indeed reject Christ's. Beloved, you had need be watchful on every hand, for not only your sins—but your duties may undo you. It may be you never thought of this; but so it is, that a man may as certainly perish by his seeming righteousness and supposed graces—as by gross sins; and that is, when a man trusts to these as his righteousness before God, for satisfying His justice, appeasing His wrath, procuring His favor, and obtaining His pardon. This is to put Christ out of office, and make a Savior of our own duties and graces. Beware of this, O professing Christians; you are much in duties—but this one fly will spoil all the ointment. When you have done most and best, be sure to

go out of yourselves—to Christ; reckon your own righteousness as filthy rags (Phil 3:9; Isa 64:6).

**[6] A secret enmity against the strictness of true religion.**

Many moral people, punctilious in their formal devotions, have yet a bitter enmity against strictness and zeal, and hate the life and power of true religion. They do not like this forwardness, nor that men should make such a stir in religion. They condemn the strictness of religion as singularity, indiscretion, and intemperate zeal, and with them a zealous preacher or fervent Christian is but a wild enthusiast. These men do not love holiness as holiness (for then they would love the height of holiness), and therefore are undoubtedly rotten at heart, whatever good opinion they have of themselves.

**[7] The resting in a certain degree of religion.** When they have so much as will save them, as they suppose, they look no farther, and so show themselves short of true grace, which always sets men aspiring to perfection (Phil 3:13; Prov 4:18).

**[8] The predominant love of the world.** This is the sure evidence of an unsanctified heart. 'If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him' (1 John 2:15). But how often does this sin lurk under the fair cover of profession. Yes, such a power of deceit is there in this sin that many times, when everybody else can see the man's worldliness and covetousness, he cannot see it himself—but has so many excuses and pretenses for his eagerness after the world, that he blinds his own eyes and perishes in his self-deceit! How many professing Christians are there, with whom the world has more of their hearts and affections than Christ, 'who mind earthly things', and thereby are evidently after the flesh, and likely to end in destruction (Rom 8:5; Phil 3:19). Yet ask these men, and they will tell you confidently they prize Christ above all; for they do not see their



own earthly-mindedness for lack of a strict observance of the workings of their own hearts. Did they but carefully search, they would quickly see that their greatest satisfaction is in the world, and that their greatest care and main endeavor are to get and secure the world—which are the certain signs of an unconverted sinner. May the professing part of the world take earnest heed lest they perish by the hand of this sin unobserved. Men may be, and often are, kept off from Christ as effectually by the inordinate love of lawful comforts, as by the most wicked lives.

**[9] Reigning malice and envy** against those that disrespect them, and are injurious to them. Oh how do many who seem to be religious, remember injuries and carry grudges, rendering evil for evil, loving to take revenge, wishing evil to those who wrong them. This is directly against the rule of the Gospel, the pattern of Christ, and the nature of God. Doubtless, where this evil is kept boiling in the heart, and is not hated, resisted, and mortified—but habitually prevails, that person is in the very gall of bitterness, and in a state of death (Matt 18:32-35; 1 John 3:14-15).

**[10] Unmortified pride.** When men love the praise of men more than the praise of God, and set their hearts upon men's esteem, applause, and approbation—it is most certain that they are yet in their sins, and strangers to true conversion (John 12:43; Gal 1:10). When men do not see, nor complain, nor groan under the pride of their own hearts—it is a sign they are stark dead in sin! Oh how secretly does this pride live and reign in many hearts, and they know it not—but are total strangers to themselves (John 9:40).

**[11] The prevailing love of pleasure.** This is a black mark. When men give the flesh the liberty that it craves, and pamper and please it, and do not deny and restrain it; when their great delight is in

gratifying their bellies and pleasing their senses; whatever appearances they may have of religion—all is unsound. A flesh-pleasing life cannot be pleasing to God. 'Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh', and are careful to keep it under control, as their enemy (Gal 5:24; 1 Cor 9:25-27).

**[12] Carnal security**, or a presumptuous confidence that their condition is already good. Many cry, 'Peace and safety', when sudden destruction is coming upon them. This was that which kept the foolish virgins sleeping when they should have been working—upon their beds when they should have been at the markets. They did not perceive their lack of oil until the bridegroom was come; and while they went to buy, the door was shut! And oh that these foolish virgins had no successors! Where is the place, yes, where is the house almost, where these do not dwell? Men are willing to cherish in themselves, upon ever so slight grounds, a hope that their condition is good—and by these means perish in their sins. Are you at peace? Show me upon what grounds your peace is maintained. Is it Scripture peace? Can you show the distinguishing marks of a sound believer? Can you evidence that you have something more than any hypocrite in the world ever had? If not, fear this peace more than any trouble; and know that a carnal peace commonly proves the most mortal enemy of the soul, and while it smiles and kisses and speaks fairly—it fatally smites, as it were, under the fifth rib.

By this time I think I hear my readers crying out, with the disciples, 'Who then shall be saved?' [Matt 19:25; Mark 10:26; Luke 18:26] Set out from our congregations all those ten ranks of the **profane** on the one hand, and then take out all these twelve classes of **self-deceiving hypocrites** on the other hand—and tell me whether it is only a remnant that shall be saved. How few will be the sheep that shall be left, when all these shall be separated and set among the

goats. For my part, of all my numerous hearers, I have no hope to see any of them in heaven that are to be found among these twenty-two classes that are here mentioned, except by sound conversion they are brought into another condition.

And now, *conscience*, do your work! Speak out, and speak home to him who hears or reads these lines. If you find any of these marks upon him, you must pronounce him utterly unclean. Do not take a lie into your mouth. Do not speak peace to him to whom God speaks no peace. Do not let self-love or carnal prejudice bribe or blind you. I summon you from the court of heaven to come and give evidence. As you will answer it at your peril, give a true report of the state and case of him who reads this book. Conscience, will you altogether be silent at such a time as this? I adjure you by the living God that you tell the truth. Is the man converted—or is he not? Does he allow himself in any way of wickedness—or does he not? Does he truly love, and please, and prize, and delight in God above all things—or not? Come, give a definite answer.

How long shall this soul live in uncertainty? O conscience, bring in your verdict. Is this man a new man—or is he not? How do you find it? Has there passed a thorough and mighty change upon him—or not? When was the time, where was the place—or what were the means by which this thorough change of the new birth was wrought in his soul? Speak, conscience; or if you cannot tell the time and place, can you show Scripture evidence that the work is done? Has the man ever been taken off from his false foundation, from the false hopes and false peace in which once he trusted? Has he been deeply convinced of sin, and of his lost and undone condition, and brought out of himself, and off from his sins—to give himself up entirely to Jesus Christ? Or do you not find him to this day under the power of ignorance—or in the mire of worldliness? Have you not found upon

him the gains of unrighteousness? Do you not find him a stranger to prayer, a neglecter of the Word, a lover of this present world? Do you not sometimes catch him in a lie? Do you not find his heart fermented with malice—or burning with lust—or going after his covetousness? Speak plainly to all the forementioned particulars. Can you acquit this man, this woman, from being in any of the twenty-two classes here described? If he is found in any of them, set him aside; his portion is not with the saints. He must be converted and made a new creature—or he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Beloved, do not be your own betrayers. Do not deceive your own hearts, nor set your hands to your own ruin by a willful blinding of yourselves. Set up a tribunal in your own breasts. Bring the Word and conscience together. 'To the law and to the testimony.' [Isa 8:20] Hear what the Word concludes of your state. Oh follow the search until you find how the case stands. Make a mistake here—and you perish! And, such is the treachery of the heart, the subtlety of the temper, and the deceitfulness of sin—all conspiring to flatter and deceive the poor soul; and so common and easy it is to make a mistake, that it is a thousand to one that you will be deceived, unless you are very careful and thorough and impartial in the inquiry into your spiritual condition.

Oh therefore be diligent in your work; go to the bottom, search with candles; weigh yourself in the balance, come to the standard of the sanctuary; bring your coin to the touchstone. Satan is a master of deceit; he can draw to the life; he is perfect in the trade; there is nothing which he cannot imitate. You cannot wish for any grace—but he can fit you with a counterfeit. Be jealous; trust not even your own heart. Go to God to search you and try you, to examine you and prove your thoughts. If other helps do not suffice to bring all to an issue—but you are still at a loss, consult some godly and faithful minister or

Christian friend. Do not rest until you have put the business of your eternal welfare out of doubt.

'O Searcher of hearts, set this soul searching, and help him in his search.'

### **Miseries of the Unconverted**

So unspeakably dreadful is the case of every unconverted soul, that I have sometimes thought if I could only convince men that they are still unregenerate, the work would be more than half done.

But I find by sad experience that such a spirit of sloth and slumber possesses the unsanctified that, though they are convinced that they are yet unconverted, often they carelessly sit still. Through the love of sensual pleasure—or the hurry of worldly business—or the noise and clamor of earthly cares and lusts and affections—the voice of conscience is drowned, and men go no farther than some faint wishes and general purposes of repenting and amending.

It is therefore of high necessity that I not only convince men that they are unconverted—but that I also endeavor to bring them to a sense of the fearful misery of this state.

But here I find myself aground at first setting off. What tongue can tell the heirs of hell sufficiently of their misery, unless it were Dives in that flame (Luke 16:24)? Where is the ready writer whose pen can depict the misery of those who are without God in the world? This cannot fully be done, unless we know the infinite ocean of bliss which is in perfection in God, and from which a state of sin excludes men.

'Who knows', says Moses, 'the power of your anger?' (Psalm 90:11). And how shall I tell men that which I do not know? Yet so much we know, as one would think would shake the heart of that man that had the least degree of spiritual life and sense.

But this is yet the more perplexing difficulty, that *I am to speak to those who are spiritually dead!* Alas! this is not the least part of man's misery—that he is dead, dead in trespasses and sins.

Could I bring paradise into view—or represent the kingdom of heaven to as much advantage as the tempter did the kingdoms of the world, and the glory thereof, to our Savior; or could I uncover the face of the deep and devouring gulf of Hell in all its terrors, and open the gates of the infernal furnace; alas, he has no eyes to see it! Could I paint the beauties of holiness, or the glory of the Gospel; or could I expose to view the more than diabolical deformity and ugliness of sin; he can no more judge of the loveliness and beauty of the one, and the filthiness and hatefulness of the other, than a blind man of colors. He is alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in him because of the blindness of his heart (Eph 4:18). He neither knows nor can know—the things of God, because they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor 2:14). His eyes cannot be savingly opened but by converting grace (Acts 26:18). He is a child of darkness, and walks in darkness. Yes, the light in him is darkness.

Shall I read his eternal sentence—or sound in his ear the terrible trumpet of God's judgments, that one would think should make both his ears tingle, and strike him into Belshazzar's fit, even to change his countenance, loose his joints, and make his knees smite one against another? Alas, he perceives me not—he has no ears to hear! Or shall I call up the daughters of music, and sing the song of Moses and the Lamb? Yet he will not be stirred. Shall I allure him with the joyful

sound, and lovely song, and glad tidings of the Gospel; with the most sweet and inviting calls, comforts, and cordials of the divine promises so exceedingly great and precious? It will not affect him savingly, unless I could find him ears, as well as tell him the news.

What then shall I do? Shall I show him the lake which burns with fire and brimstone; or shall I open the box of spikenard, very precious, which fills the whole house of the universe with its perfume, and hope that the savor of Christ's ointments and the smell of His garments will attract him? Alas! dead sinners are like the dumb idols; they have mouths—but they speak not; have they eyes—but they see not; they have ears—but they hear not; they have noses—but they smell not; they have hands—but they handle not; they have feet—but they walk not; neither do they speak through their throat [Psalm 115:5-7]. They are destitute of spiritual life and motion.

But let me try the sense that last leaves us, and draw the sword of the Word; yet, though I choose my arrows from God's quiver, and direct them to the heart, nevertheless he does not feel it; for how should he, being past feeling? (Eph 4:19). So that, though 'the wrath of God abides on him' [John 3:36], and the mountainous weight of so many sins—yet he goes up and down as light as if nothing ailed him. In a word, he carries a dead soul in a living body; and his flesh is but the walking coffin of a corrupt mind that is twice dead (Jude 12).

Which way then shall I come at the miserable object whom I have to deal with? Who shall make the heart of stone relent—or the lifeless carcass to feel and move? That God who is able from stones to raise up children unto Abraham, who raises the dead, and melts the mountains, and strikes water out of the flint; who loves to work beyond the hopes and belief of man, who peoples His church with dry bones—He is able to do this! Therefore I bow my knee to the

most high God, and as our Savior prayed at the sepulcher of Lazarus, and the Shunammite ran to the man of God for her dead child, so your mourning minister carries you in the arms of prayer, to that God in whom your help is found.

'O all-powerful Jehovah, who works, and none can hinder You, who has the keys of death and hell—pity the dead souls that lie here entombed, and roll away the gravestone, and say as to the dead body of Lazarus, *Come forth!* Enlighten this darkness, O inaccessible Light, and let the dayspring from on high visit the dark regions of the dead, to whom I speak; for You can open the eye that death itself has closed. You that formed the ear, can restore the hearing. Say to these ears, *Ephphatha!* and they shall be opened. Give *eyes* to see Your excellencies, a *taste* that may relish Your sweetness, a *scent* that may savor Your ointment, a *feeling* that may discern the privilege of Your favor, the burden of Your wrath, the intolerable weight of unpardoned sin! And give Your servant the command to prophesy to dry bones, and let the effects of this prophecy be as of Your prophet when he prophesied the valley of dry bones into a living army exceeding great!'



But I must proceed, as I am able, to unfold that misery which, I confess, no tongue can unfold, no heart can sufficiently comprehend. Know therefore that while you are unconverted:

**1. The infinite God is engaged against you!** It is no small part of your misery that you are without God. How does Micah run crying after the Danites, 'You have taken away my gods, and what have I more?' (Judg 18:24). Oh what a mourning then must you lift up, who are without God, who can lay no claim to Him without daring usurpation! How piercing a moan is that of Saul in his last extremity, 'The Philistines are upon me—and God is departed from me!' (1 Sam 28:15). Sinners, what will you do in the day of your visitation? Where will you flee to for help? What will you do when the Philistines are upon you; when the world shall take its eternal leave of you; when you must bid your friends, houses, and lands, farewell for evermore? What then, I say, will you do—who have not God to go to? Will you call on Him? Will you cry to Him for help? Alas, He will not own you! He will not take any notice of you—but will send you away with 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you who work iniquity!' (Matt 7:23).

Those who know what it is to have a God to go to, a God to live upon—they know a little what a fearful misery it is to be without God. This made a holy man cry out, 'Let me have God or nothing. Let me know Him and His will, and what will please Him, and how I may come to enjoy Him!'

But you are not only without God—but God is against you! Oh if God would stand neutral, though He did neither own nor help the poor sinner, his case would not be so deeply miserable. Though God should give up the poor creature to the will of his enemies, to do their worst with him; though He should deliver him over to the

tormentors, that devils should tear and torture him to their utmost power and skill—yet this were not half so fearful. But God will set Himself against the sinner; and, believe it, 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God' (Heb 10:31). **As there is no friend like Him—so there is no enemy like Him.** As much as heaven is above the earth, omnipotence above impotence, so much more terrible is it to fall into the hands of the living God, than into the paws of bears and lions, yes, furies or devils. God Himself will be your tormentor; your destruction shall come from the presence of the Lord (2 Thess 1:9).

If God be against you, who shall be for you? 'If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?' (1 Sam 2:25). 'You, even you, are to be feared; and who shall stand in your sight when you are angry?' (Psalm 76:7). **Who or what shall deliver you out of His hands?** Can money? 'Riches profit not in the day of wrath' (Prov 11:4). Can kings or warriors? No; 'they shall cry to the mountains and rocks to fall on them, and hide them from the face of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?' (Rev 6:15-17).

Sinner, I think this would go like a dagger to your heart, to know that God Himself is your enemy! Oh where will you go? Where will you shelter yourself? There is no hope for you, unless you lay down your weapons and sue out your pardon, and get Christ to stand as your friend and make your peace. If it were not for this, you might go into some howling wilderness, and there pine in sorrow, and run mad for anguish of heart and horrible despair. But in Christ there is a possibility of mercy for you, yes, an offer of mercy to you, that you may have God more for you, than He is now against you. But if you will not forsake your sins, nor turn thoroughly and purposefully to

God by a sound conversion, the wrath of God abides on you, and He proclaims Himself to be against you, as in the prophet: 'I myself, the Sovereign Lord, am now your enemy!' (Ezek 5:8).

**[1] His FACE is against you.** 'The face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them' (Psalm 34:16). Woe unto them whom God shall set His face against! When He did but look on the armies of the Egyptians, how terrible was the consequence! 'I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and will cut him off from the midst of my people; and you shall know that I am the Lord' (Ezek 14:8).

**[2] His HEART is against you.** He hates all the workers of iniquity. **Man, does not your heart tremble to think of your being an object of God's hatred?** 'Though Moses and Samuel stood before me—yet my mind could not be towards this people: cast them out of my sight' (Jer 15:1). 'My soul loathed them, and their souls also abhorred me' (Zech 11:8).

**[3] All His ATTRIBUTES are against you.** His **JUSTICE** is like a flaming sword unsheathed against you. "As surely as I live, when I sharpen My flashing sword and begin to carry out justice, I will bring vengeance on My enemies and repay those who hate Me!" (Deut 32:41-42). So exact is justice that it will by no means clear the guilty. God will not discharge you, He will not hold you guiltless—but will require the whole debt in person from you, unless you can make a Scripture claim to Christ and His satisfaction. When the enlightened sinner looks on justice, and sees the balance in which he must be weighed and the sword by which he must be executed, he feels an earthquake in his bosom; but Satan keeps this out of sight and persuades the soul, while he can, that the Lord is all made up of mercy, and so lulls it asleep in sin. Divine justice is exact; it must

have satisfaction to the utmost farthing. It denounces 'indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish to every soul that does evil' (Rom 2:8-9). It 'curses every one that continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them' (Gal 3:10).

The justice of God to the unpardoned sinner who has a sense of his guilt, is more terrible than the sight of the creditor to the bankrupt debtor, of the judge and bench to the robber—or of the irons and gibbet to the guilty murderer. When justice sits upon life and death, what dreadful work does it make with the wretched sinner! 'Bind him hand and foot; cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 'Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire' (Matt 22:13; Matt 25:41). This is the terrible sentence that justice pronounces. Sinner, by this severe justice must you be tried; and as God lives, this killing sentence must you hear, unless you repent and be converted.

The **HOLINESS** of God is against you. He is not only angry with you—so He may be with His children—but He has a fixed habitual displeasure against you. God's nature is infinitely contrary to sin, and so He cannot delight in a sinner outside of Christ.

Oh what a misery is this, to be out of the favor, yes, under the hatred of God; that God, who can as easily lay aside His nature and cease to be God, as not be contrary to you and detest you, except you be changed and renewed. Oh sinner, how dare you think of the bright and radiant sun of purity—or the beauties, the glory of holiness in God? 'The stars are not pure in his sight.' 'He humbles himself to behold things that are done in heaven' (Job 25:5; Psalm 113:6). Oh those all-searching eyes of His! What do they spy in you; and have you no saving interest in Christ—that He should plead for you? I think He should hear you crying out, astonished, with the

Bethshemites, 'Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?' [1 Sam 6:20]

The **POWER** of God is mounted like a mighty cannon against you. The glory of God's power is to be displayed in the amazing confusion and destruction of those who obey not the gospel. He will make His power known in them (Rom 9:22) how mightily He can torment them. For this end He raises them up 'that he might make his power known' (Rom 9:17). O man, are you able to contend with your Maker?

Sinner, the **power** of God's **anger** is against you—and power and anger together make fearful work. It were better you had all the world in arms against you than to have the power of God against you. There is no escaping His hands--no breaking loose from His prison. 'The thunder of his power, who can understand?' (Job 26:14). Unhappy man—who shall understand it by feeling it! 'Who has ever challenged him successfully? Without warning, he moves the mountains, overturning them in his anger. He shakes the earth from its place, and its foundations tremble. If he commands it, the sun won't rise and the stars won't shine. He alone has spread out the heavens and marches on the waves of the sea. If he sends death to snatch someone away, who can stop him? The mightiest forces against him are crushed beneath his feet. If it is a matter of strength, look, He is the Mighty One!' (Job 9). And are you a fit match for such an antagonist? 'O consider this, you that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver' (Psalm 50:22). Submit to mercy. Let not dust and stubble battle against the Almighty. Set not briers and thorns against Him in battle, lest He go through them, and consume them together. But lay hold on His strength that you may make peace with Him (Isa 27:4-5). 'Woe to him who strives with his Maker!' (Isa 45:9).

The **WISDOM** of God is set to ruin you. He has ordained His arrows, and prepared instruments of death, and made all things ready (Psalm 7:11-13). His counsels are against you to contrive your destruction (Jer 18:11). He laughs in Himself to see how you will be taken and ensnared in the evil day (Psalm 37:13). 'The Lord shall laugh at him, for he sees that his day is coming.' He sees how you will come down mightily in a moment, how you will wring your hands, and tear your hair, and eat your flesh, and gnash your teeth for anguish and astonishment of heart, when you see you are fallen irremediably into the pit of destruction!

The **TRUTH** of God is sworn against you. If He is faithful and true, you must perish if you go on in sin. Unless He is false to His Word, you must die—unless you repent. 'If we believe not—yet he abides faithful, he cannot deny himself' (2 Tim 2:13). He is faithful to His *threatenings* as well as to His *promises*—and will show His faithfulness in our destruction, if we believe not. God has told you as plain as it can be spoken, that if He wash you not—you have no part in Him; that if you live after the flesh—you shall die; that unless you be converted—you shall never enter into the kingdom of heaven (John 13:8; Rom 8:13; Matt 18:3). Beloved, as the immutable faithfulness of God in His promise and oath affords believers strong consolation, so it is to unbelievers for strong consternation and confusion.

Oh sinner, tell me, what do you think of all the ***threatenings*** of God's Word, which stand upon record against you? Do you believe they are true or not? If not, you are a wretched infidel. But, if you do believe them, O heart of adamant that you have, that you can walk up and down in quiet—when the truth and faithfulness of God are engaged to destroy you! The whole book of God testifies against you while you remain unconverted. It condemns you in every leaf, and is

to you like Ezekiel's roll, written within and without with lamentation, and mourning, and woe! And all this shall surely come upon you—unless you repent. 'Heaven and earth shall pass away—but one jot or tittle of this word shall never pass away' (Matt 5:18).

Now, put all this together, and tell me if the case of the unconverted is not deplorably miserable! As we read of some people who had bound themselves by an oath and a curse to kill Paul; so you must know, O sinner, that all the attributes of the infinite God are bound by an oath to punish you. Oh man, what will you do? Where will you flee? If God's omniscience can find you—you shall not escape. If the true and faithful God will regard His oath, you must perish—unless you believe and repent. If the Almighty has power to torment you, you must be totally miserable in soul and body to all eternity, unless it be prevented by speedy conversion.

**2. The whole CREATION of God is against you.** 'The whole creation', says Paul, 'groans and travails in pain' (Rom 8:22). But what is it that the creation groans under? The fearful abuse it is subject to, in serving the lusts of unsanctified men. And what is it that the creation groans for? For freedom and liberty from this abuse; for the 'creature is not willingly made subject to this bondage' (Rom 8:20-21). If the irrational and inanimate creatures had speech and reason, they would cry out under it, as a bondage insufferable, to be abused by the ungodly, contrary to their natures and the ends which the great Creator made them for. It is a saying of an eminent divine, 'The liquor that the drunkard drinks, if it had reason, like a man, to know how shamefully it is abused, would groan in the barrel against him, it would groan in the cup against him, groan in his throat, in his stomach against him; it would fly in his face, if it could speak. And if God should open the mouths of His creatures, as He did the mouth of Balaam's donkey, the proud man's garment on his

back would groan against him. There is not a creature, if it had reason to know how it is abused until a man is converted—but would groan against him. The land would groan to bear him, the air would groan to give him breath, their houses would groan to lodge them, their beds would groan to ease them, their food to nourish them, their clothes to cover them, and the creature would groan to give them any help and comfort, so long as they live in sin against God.'

I think this would be a terror to an unconverted soul—to think he is a burden to the creation. 'Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?' (Luke 13:7). If inanimate creatures could but speak, your food would say, 'Lord, must I nourish such a wretch as this, and yield forth my strength for him, to dishonor You? No, I will choke him rather, if You will give commission.' The very air would say, 'Lord, must I give this man breath, to set his tongue against heaven, and scorn Your people, and vent his pride and wrath, and filthy talk, and belch out oaths and blasphemy against You? No, if You will but say the word, he shall be breathless for me.' His poor beast would say, 'Lord, must I carry him upon his wicked designs? No, I will break his bones, I will end his days—if I may have but permission from You.' A wicked man—the earth groans under him, and hell groans for him—until death satisfies both. While the Lord of hosts is against you, be sure the host of the Lord is against you, and all the creatures as it were up in arms until, upon a man's conversion, the controversy being settled between God and him, He makes a covenant of peace with the creature for him (Job 5:22-24; Hos 2:18-20).

**3. SATAN has his full power over you.** You are held fast in the paw of that roaring lion who is greedy to devour (1 Pet 5:8); 'Then they may come to their senses and escape the Devil's trap, having been captured by him to do his will.' (2 Tim 2:26). This is the evil spirit who works in the children of disobedience (Eph 2:2). His



drudges they are, and his lusts they do. He is the ruler of the darkness of this world (Eph 6:12), that is, of ignorant sinners who live in darkness. You pity the poor Indians who worship the devil for their god—but little think it is your own case. It is the common misery of all the unsanctified—that the devil is their god. Not that they intend to do him homage. They will be ready to defy him—but all this while they serve him, and live under his government. 'His servants you are to whom you obey' (Rom 6:16). O how many then will be found to be the real servants of the devil, who take themselves for no other than the children of God!

He can no sooner offer a sinful delight or opportunity for your unlawful advantage than you embrace it. If he suggests a lie—or prompts you to revenge, you readily obey. If he forbids you to read or pray, you hearken to him, and therefore his servants you are. Indeed, he stands behind the curtain, he acts in the dark, and sinners do not see who sets them working—but all the while he leads them. Doubtless the liar does not intend to serve Satan but his own advantage; yet it is he who stands unobserved and puts the thing into his heart. Undoubtedly Judas when he sold his Master for money, and the Chaldeans and Sabeans when they plundered Job, did not intend to do the devil a pleasure—but to satisfy their own covetous thirst; yet it was he who actuated them in their wickedness (John 13:27; Job 1:12,15,17). Men may be very slaves and common drudges for the devil and not know it; nay, they may please themselves in thoughts of liberty!

Are you yet in ignorance and not turned from darkness unto light? I fear that you are under the power of Satan. Do you live in the wilful practice of any known sin? Know that you are of the devil. Do you live in strife—or envy—or malice? Truly he is your father. O dreadful case! **However Satan may provide his slaves with various**

**pleasures—yet it is but to draw them into endless perdition.**

The serpent comes with the fruit in his mouth but, like Eve--you do not see the deadly sting! He who is now your tempter--will one day be your tormentor! O that I could but make you see how bad a master you serve, how merciless a tyrant you gratify; whose pleasure is to make your perdition and damnation sure, and to heat the furnace hotter and hotter in which you must burn for millions and millions of ages!

**4. The guilt of all your SINS lies like a mountain upon you.**

Poor soul, you do not feel it—but this is that which seals your misery. While unconverted, none of your sins are blotted out, they are all upon record against you. Regeneration and remission of sins, are never separated; the unsanctified are unjustified and unpardoned. It is a fearful thing to be in debt—but above all, in God's debt; for there is no arrest so formidable as His, no prison so dreary as His. Look upon an enlightened sinner who feels the weight of his own guilt; oh how frightful are His looks, how fearful are his complaints! His comforts are turned into wormwood, and his moisture into drought, and his sleep is departed from his eyes. He is a terror to himself and all that are about him, and is ready to envy the very stones that lie in the street, because they are without sense and do not feel his misery, and he wishes he had been a dog rather than a man because then death had put an end to his misery; whereas now it will be but the beginning of that which will know no ending.

However you may make light of it now—you will one day find the guilt of unpardoned sin to be a heavy burden. This is a millstone that 'whoever falls upon it shall be broken; but upon whoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder' (Matt 21:44). The guilt of our sins caused the agony and death of the blessed Savior. And if it did this in the green tree, what will it do in the dry?

Oh think of your case in time. Can you think of that threat without trembling, 'You shall die in your sins!' (John 8:24). Oh, better were it for you to die in a jail, in a ditch, in a dungeon, than die in your sins. If death, as it will take away all your comforts, would take away all your sins too, it would be some mitigation; but your sins will follow you when your friends leave you, and all worldly enjoyments shake hands with you. Your sins will not die with you as a prisoner's other debts will; but they will go to judgment with you there to be your accusers; and they will go to hell with you there to be your tormentors. O the work that these will make you! O look over your debts in time; how everyone of God's commandments is ready to arrest you, and take you by the throat for the innumerable bonds it has upon you. What will you do, then, when they shall all together come in against you? Hold open the eyes of your conscience to consider this, that you may despair of yourself and be driven to Christ, and fly for refuge to lay hold on the hope that is set before you.

**5. Your raging LUSTS miserably enslave you.** While unconverted you are a very servant to sin; it reigns over you, and holds you under its dominion, until you are brought within the bonds of God's covenant. There is not such another tyrant as sin. O the vile and fearful work that it engages its servants in!

Would it not pierce your heart to see a company of poor creatures drudging and toiling to carry together faggots and fuel for their own burning? This is the employment of sin's drudges.

Even while they bless themselves in their unrighteous gains, while they sing in their pleasure—they are but treasuring up vengeance for their eternal burning; they are but adding to the pile of Tophet, and

flinging in oil to make the flame rage the fiercer. Who would serve such a master—whose work is drudgery—whose wages are death?

What a woeful spectacle was the poor wretch possessed with the legion of demons! Would it not have grieved your heart to see him among the tombs cutting and wounding himself? This is your case; such is your work; every stroke is a thrust at your heart. Conscience indeed is now asleep; but when death and judgment shall bring you to your senses, then will you feel the anguish in every wound.

The convinced sinner is an instance of the miserable bondage of sin. Conscience flies upon him, and tells him the end of these things; and yet he is such a slave to his lusts that on he goes, though he sees it will be his perdition. When the temptation comes, lust breaks the cords of all his vows and promises, and carries him headlong to his own destruction.

**6. The furnace of ETERNAL VENGEANCE is heated ready for you.** Hell and destruction open their mouths upon you; they gape for you; they groan for you (Isa 5:14), waiting as it were with a greedy eye as you stand on the brink. If the wrath of men be 'as the roaring of a lion' (Prov 19:12), 'more heavy than the sand' (Prov 27:3), what is the wrath of the infinite God? If the burning furnace heated in Nebuchadnezzar's fiery rage, when he commanded it to be made seven times hotter, was so fierce as to burn up even those who drew near to throw the three children in—how hot is that burning of the Almighty's fury! Surely this is seventy times seven more fierce. What do you think, O man, of being a faggot in hell to all eternity? 'Can your heart endure—or can your hands be strong in the days that I shall deal with you?' (Ezek 22:14). Can you abide the everlasting burnings? Can you dwell with consuming fire, when you shall be as glowing iron in hell, and your whole body and soul shall be as fully

possessed by God's burning vengeance as the sparkling iron with fire, when heated in the fiercest furnace?

Some of the choicest servants of God, when under the hidings of His face, and dreading the effects of His displeasure, have bewailed their condition with bitter lamentations. How then will you endure when God shall pour out all His vials, and set Himself against you to torment you, when He shall make your conscience the tunnel by which He will be pouring His burning wrath into your soul forever, and when he shall fill all your pores as full of torment as they are now full of sin, when immortality shall be your misery, and to die the death of a brute, and be swallowed in the gulf of annihilation, shall be such a felicity as the whole eternity of wishes and an ocean of tears shall never purchase?

Now you can put off the evil day, and laugh and be merry, and forget the terror of the Lord. But how will you hold out—or hold up, when God casts you into a 'bed of torments' (Rev 2:22): and makes you to 'lie down in sorrow' (Isa 50:11); when roarings and blasphemies shall be your only music, and the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation, shall be your only drink! (Rev 14:10) In a word, when the smoke of your torment shall ascend forever and ever, and you shall have no rest day and night, no rest in your conscience, no ease in your bones; but you shall be an execration and astonishment, and a curse and a reproach, for evermore! (Jer 42:18)

Oh sinner, stop here, and consider. If you are a man, and not a senseless block, consider. Think where you are standing—upon the very brink of destruction. As the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, there is but a step between you and this. You do not know when you lie down to sleep tonight—but you may be in hell before morning.

You do not know when you rise up this day—but you may drop in before night. Dare you make light of this? Will you go on in such a dreadful condition, as if nothing ailed you? If you put it off and say that this does not belong to you, look again over the previous chapter, and tell me the truth. Are none of those black marks found upon you? Do not blind your eyes. Do not deceive yourself. See your misery while you may prevent it. Think what it is to be a vile outcast, a lost reprobate, a vessel of wrath, into which the Lord will be pouring out His tormenting fury while He has a being. Divine wrath is a fierce, devouring, everlasting, unquenchable fire—and this must be your portion, unless you consider your ways, and speedily turn to the Lord by a sound conversion.

Sinner, it is in vain to flatter you—this would be but to draw you into the unquenchable fire. Know from the living God that here you must lie; with these burnings you must dwell until immortality dies and immutability changes, until eternity runs out and omnipotence is no longer able to punish—unless you be in good earnest renewed by sanctifying grace.

**7. The LAW discharges all its threats and curses at you.** Oh how dreadfully does it thunder! It flashes devouring fire in your face. Its words are as drawn swords, and as the sharp arrows of the mighty. It demands satisfaction to the utmost, and cries, *Justice! Justice!* It speaks blood, and war, and wounds, and death, against you. O man away to your stronghold; away from your sins; haste to the sanctuary, the city of refuge—even the Lord Jesus Christ. Hide in Him—or else you are lost, without any hope of recovery.

**8. The GOSPEL itself binds the sentence of eternal damnation upon you.** If you continue in your impenitent and unconverted state, know that the Gospel denounces a much sorer

condemnation than ever would have been for the transgression only of the first covenant. Is it not a dreadful case to have the Gospel itself fill its mouth with threats; to have the Lord to roar from Mount Zion against you? (Joel 3:16). Hear the terror of the Lord. 'He who believes not, shall be damned.' 'Unless you repent, you shall all perish.' 'This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light.' 'He who believes not—the wrath of God abides on him.' 'If the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?' 'He who despised Moses' law died without mercy: of how much more terrible punishment shall he be thought worthy who has trodden under foot the Son of God?' (Mark 16:16; Luke 13:3; John 3:19,36; Heb 2:2-3; Heb 10:28-29).

And is this true indeed? Is this your misery? Yes, it is as true as God is. Better open your eyes and see it now while you may remedy it, than blind and harden yourself until, to your eternal sorrow, you shall *feel* what you would not believe. And if it is true, what do you mean by lingering and loitering in such a state as this?

Alas for you, poor man! How effectually has sin undone you, depraved you and despoiled you even of your reason to look after your own everlasting good! O miserable wretch! What stupidity and senselessness have surprised you! Oh let me knock and awake this sleeper! Who dwells within the walls of this flesh? Is there a soul here, a rational, understanding soul; or are you only a senseless lump?

Are you a rational soul, and yet so far brutified as to forget that you are immortal, and to think yourself to be as the beasts that perish? Having reason to understand the eternity of the future state, do you

yet make light of being everlastingly miserable, which is to be so much below the brute, as it is worse to act against reason than to act without it? Oh unhappy soul—that was the glory of man, the companion of angels, and the image of God; that was God's representative in the world, and had the supremacy among the creatures, and the dominion over your Maker's works; are you now become a slave to the world? Are you heaping together a little *refined earth*, so unsuited to your spiritual immortal nature? Oh why do you not consider where you will spend eternity? Death is at hand; the Judge is even at the door. Yet a little while, and 'time shall be no longer' [Rev 10:6]. And will you run the hazard of continuing in such a state, in which, if you are overtaken, you are irrecoverably miserable?

Come then, arise, and attend to your nearest concerns. Tell me where you are going? What! will you live in such a course, in which every act is a step to perdition; and you do not know but the next night you may make your bed in hell? Oh, if you have a spark of reason, consider, and turn and hearken to your true friend, who would show you your present misery, that you might in time make your escape, and be eternally happy.

Hear what the Lord says. 'Do you not fear Me? Do you not tremble before Me?' (Jer 5:22). O sinners, do you make light of the wrath to come? I am sure there is a time coming when you will not make light of it. Why! the very devils believe and *tremble*. What! are you more hardened than they? Will you run upon the edge of the precipice? Will you play at the hole of the asp? Will you put your hand into the cockatrice's den? Will you dally with devouring wrath as if you were indifferent whether you escape or endure it? There is no one so insane as the willful sinner, who goes on in his unconverted state without thinking—as if nothing ailed him. The man that runs into the



cannon's mouth and sports with his blood—or lets out his life in a frolic, is sensible, sober, and serious, compared with him who goes on still in his trespasses. 'He shakes his fist at God and vaunts himself against the Almighty' (Job 15:25). Is it wisdom to sport with the second death—or to venture into the lake which burns with fire and brimstone? What shall I say? I can find no expression, no comparison, by which to set forth the dreadful madness of the soul that will go on in sin.

Awake! awake! O sinner, arise and take your flight. There is but one door that you may flee by, and that is the narrow door of conversion and the new birth. Unless you sincerely turn from all your sins, and come to Jesus Christ, and take Him for the Lord your righteousness, and walk in Him in holiness and newness of life; as the Lord lives, it is not more certain that you are now out of hell, than that you shall without fail be in it but a few days or nights from now! Oh set your heart to think of your case. Does not your everlasting misery or welfare deserve a little consideration? Look again over the miseries of the unconverted. If the Lord has not spoken by me, regard me not; but if it is the very word of God that all this misery lies upon you, what a state you are in! Is it for one that has his senses to live in such a condition, and not to make all possible haste to prevent his utter ruin?

O man, who has bewitched you, that in the matters of this present life you shall be wise enough to forecast your business, foresee your danger, and prevent your ruin; but in matters of everlasting consequence shall be slight and careless, as if they little concerned you? Is it nothing to you to have all the attributes of God engaged against you? Can you live without His favor? Can you escape His hands—or endure His vengeance? Do you hear the creation groaning under you, and hell groaning for you—and yet think your case good

enough? Are you under the power of corruption, in the dark, noisome prison, fettered with lusts, working out your own damnation—and is this not worth a thought? Will you make light of all the terrors of the law, of all its curses and thunders, as if they were but the threatenings of a child? Do you laugh at hell and destruction—or can you drink the envenomed cup of the Almighty's fury?

Gird up now your loins like a man, and answer me. Are you such a leviathan as that the scales of your pride should resist your Maker? Will you esteem His arrows as straw, and the instruments of death as rotten wood? Are you chief of all the children of pride, even that you should count His darts as stubble, and laugh at the shaking of His spear? Do you mock at fear, and are you not frightened, do you not turn back from God's sword when His quiver rattles against you, the glittering spear and the shield? Well, **if the threats and calls of the Word will not awaken you—I am sure death and judgment will.** Oh what will you do when the Lord comes forth against you, and in His fury falls upon you, and you shall *feel* what you now *read*?

If when Daniel's enemies were cast into the den of lions, both they and their wives and their children, the lions had the mastery over them and broke all their bones in pieces before they came to the bottom of the den—what shall become of you when you fall into the hands of the living God?

Oh, do not then contend with God. Repent and be converted, so none of this shall come upon you. 'Seek the Lord while He may be found; call to Him while He is near. Let the wicked one abandon his way, and the sinful one his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, so He may have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will freely forgive.' (Isa 55:6-7).

## Directions to the Unconverted

Before you read these directions, I advise you, yes, I charge you before God and His holy angels, that you resolve to follow them, as far as conscience shall be convinced of their agreeableness to God's Word and your state; and call in His assistance and blessing that they may succeed. And as I have sought the Lord and consulted His oracles as to what advice to give you, so must you entertain it with that awe, reverence, and purpose of obedience, which the word of the living God requires.

Now, then, attend. 'Set your heart unto all that I shall testify unto you this day; for it is not a vain thing—it is your life' (Deut 32:46). This is the aim of all that has been spoken hitherto, to bring you to set your heart upon turning to God. I would not trouble you, nor torment you before the time with the thoughts of your eternal misery—but in order that you may make your escape. Were you shut up under your present misery without remedy, it were but mercy to let you alone, that you might take in that little poor comfort which you are capable of in this world; but you may yet be happy, if you do not willfully refuse the means of your recovery. Behold, I hold open the door to you; arise, take your flight. I set the way of life before you; walk in it, and you shall live, and not die. *It grieves me that you should be your own murderers, and throw yourselves headlong*, when God and man cry out to you, as Peter in another case to his Master, 'Spare yourself.'

The destruction of ungodly men is willful. God has made his people out to them, as Paul to the jailer when about to murder himself, 'Do

yourself no harm.' [Acts 16:28] The ministers of Christ forewarn them, and follow them, and would gladly have them back; but *alas! no exhortations or entreaties will prevail—but men will hurl themselves into perdition, while pity itself looks on.*

What shall I say? Would it not grieve a person of any humanity, if, in the time of a raging plague, he should have a remedy that would infallibly cure all the country and recover the most hopeless patients, and yet his friends and neighbors should die by hundreds around him, because they would not use it? Men and brethren, though you carry the certain symptoms of death on your faces—yet I have a prescription that will cure you all infallibly. Follow these directions, and if you do not then win heaven, I will be content to lose it.

Hear, then, O sinner, and as ever you would be converted and saved, take the following counsel.

**1. Set it down with yourself as an undoubted truth, that it is impossible for you ever to get to heaven in this your unconverted state.**

Can any other but Christ save you? and He tells you He will never do it except you are regenerated and converted. Does He not keep the keys of heaven, and can you go in without His permission? as you must, if ever you go in your natural condition, without a sound and thorough conversion.

**2. Labor to get a thorough sight and lively sense and feeling of your sins.**

Until men are weary and heavy laden, and pricked at the heart, and quite sick of sin, they will not come to Christ for cure, nor sincerely enquire, 'What shall we do?' [Acts 2:37] They must see themselves as

dead men, before they will come unto Christ that they may live. Labor, therefore, to set all your sins in order before you; do not be afraid to look upon them—but let your spirit make diligent search. Enquire into your heart, and into your life; enter into a thorough examination of yourself and all your ways, that you may make a full discovery; and call in the help of God's Spirit, out of a sense of your own inability to do this by yourself, for it is His proper work to convince of sin. Spread all before your conscience, until your heart and eyes are set weeping. Do not leave striving with God and your own soul, until it cry out under the sense of your sins, as the enlightened jailer, 'What must I do to be saved?' [Acts 16:30] To this purpose,

**Meditate on the NUMBER of your sins.** David's heart failed when he thought of this, and considered that he had more sins than the hairs of his head. This made him cry out for the multitude of God's tender mercies. *The loathsome carcass does not more hatefully swarm with crawling maggots, than an unsanctified soul with filthy lusts.* They fill his head, his heart, his eyes and his mouth. Look backward; where was ever the place, what was ever the time, in which you did not sin? Look inward; what part or power can you find in soul or body which is not poisoned with sin; what duty do you ever perform, into which this poison is not shed? Oh how great is the sum of your debts, who ha been all your life running into debt, and never did or can pay off one penny! Look over the sin of your nature, and all its cursed brood, the sins of your life. Call to mind your omissions and commissions; the sins of your thoughts, words, and actions; the sins of your youth, and the sins of your riper years. Do not be like a desperate bankrupt who is afraid to look over his books. Read the records of conscience carefully. These books must be opened sooner or later.

**Meditate upon the AGGRAVATIONS of your sins**, as they are the grand enemies of the God of your life, and of the life of your soul; in a word, they are the public enemies of all mankind. How do David, Ezra, Daniel, and the good Levites, aggravate their sins, from the consideration of their opposition to God and His good and righteous laws, and of the mercies and warnings against which they were committed! Oh the work that sin has done in the world! This is the enemy that has brought in death; that has robbed and enslaved man, that has turned the world upside down, and sown the dissensions between man and the creatures, between man and man, yes, between man and himself, setting the animal part against the rational, the will against the judgment, lust against conscience; yes, worst of all, between God and man, making the sinner both hateful to God and the hater of God. O man, how can you make so light of sin?

Sin is the traitor that thirsted for the blood of the Son of God, that sold Him, that mocked Him, that scourged Him, that spat in His face, that tore His hands, that pierced His side, that pressed His soul, that mangled His body, that never left Him until he had bound Him, condemned Him, nailed Him, crucified Him, and put Him to an open shame! Sin is that deadly poison, so powerful of operation that one drop of it, shed on the root of mankind, has corrupted, spoiled, poisoned, and ruined the whole race. Sin is the bloody executioner that has killed the prophets, burned the martyrs, murdered all the apostles, all the patriarchs, all the kings and potentates. Sin has destroyed cities, swallowed empires, and devoured whole nations. Whatever weapon it was done by, it was sin that caused the execution. Do you yet think sin only a small thing?

If Adam and all his children could be dug out of their graves, and their bodies piled up to heaven, and an inquiry were made as to what

heinous murderer were guilty of all this blood, it would be all found in sin!

Study the nature of sin, until your heart incline to fear and loathe it; and meditate on the aggravations of your particular sins, how you have sinned against all God's warnings, against your own prayers, against mercies, against corrections, against clearest light, against freest love, against your own resolutions, against promises, vows, and covenants of better obedience. Charge your heart with these things until it blush for shame, and be brought out of all good opinion of itself.

**Meditate on the DESERT of sin.** It cries to Heaven; it calls for vengeance. Its due wages are death and damnation; it brings the curse of God upon the soul and body. The least sinful word or thought lays you under the infinite wrath of God. O what a load of wrath, what a weight of curses, what treasures of vengeance, have all the millions of your sins deserved! Oh judge yourself that the Lord may not judge you.

**Meditate on the deformity and DEFILEMENT of sin.** It is black as hell, the very image and likeness of the devil drawn upon the soul. It would terrify you to see yourself in the hateful deformity of your nature. There is no mire so unclean, no plague or leprosy so detestable as sin, in which you are plunged and rendered more displeasing to the pure and holy nature of the glorious God than the vilest object can be to you. Could you take up a toad into your bosom; could you cherish it, and take delight in it? But you are as contrary to the pure and perfect holiness of the divine nature, until you are purified by the blood of Jesus and the power of renewing grace.

Above all other sins, consider these two.

**[1] The sin of your heart.** It is to little purpose to lop off the branches while the root of corruption remains untouched. In vain do men stop up the streams, when the fountain is running which fills up all again. Let the axe of your repentance, with David's go to the root of sin. Study how deep, how permanent is your natural pollution, how universal it is, until you cry out, with Paul, against your body of death. The heart is never soundly broken until thoroughly convinced of the heinousness of its original and deep-rooted depravity. Here fix your thoughts; Sin is that which makes you backward to all good, and prone to all evil; that sheds blindness, pride, prejudice, and unbelief into your **mind**; enmity, inconstancy, and obstinacy into your **will**; inordinate heats and colds into your **affections**; insensibleness and unfaithfulness into your **conscience**; slipperiness into your **memory**. In a word, sin has put every wheel of the soul out of order, and made it, from a habitation of holiness, to become a very hell of iniquity. This is what has defiled and perverted all your members, and turned them into weapons of unrighteousness, and servants of sin; that has filled the head with carnal and corrupt designs, the hand with sinful practices, the eyes with wandering and wantonness, the tongue with deadly poison. This is what has opened the ears to tales, flattery and filthy talk, and shut them against the instructions of life; and has rendered your heart the cursed source of all deadly imaginations, so that it pours out its wickedness without ceasing even as naturally as a fountain pours forth its waters—or the raging sea casts forth mire and dirt.

And will you yet be in love with yourself, and tell us any longer of your good heart? Oh never leave meditating on the desperate contagion, the original corruption of your heart, until, with Ephraim, you bemoan yourself; and with the deepest shame and sorrow smite on your bosom, as the publican; and, with Job, abhor yourself and repent in dust and ashes.



**[2] The particular evil that you are most addicted to.** Find out all its aggravations; set home upon your heart all God's threats against it. Repentance drives before it the whole herd—but especially sticks the arrow in the beloved sin, and singles this out, above the rest, to run it down. Oh labor to make this sin odious to your soul, and double your guard and resolutions against it, realize that this is most dishonoring to God and dangerous to you.

**3. Strive to affect your heart with a deep sense of your present misery.**

Read over the previous chapter again and again, and get it out of the book into your heart. *Remember when you lie down, that for all you know, you may awake in flames; and when you rise up, that by the next night you may make your bed in hell.* Is it nothing to you to live in such a fearful state, to stand tottering on the brink of the bottomless pit; and to live at the mercy of every disease that, if it but fall upon you, will send you forthwith into the burnings? Suppose you saw a condemned wretch hanging over Nebuchadnezzar's burning fiery furnace by nothing but a thread which was ready to break every moment, would not your heart tremble for such a one? You are the man! This is your very case, O man, woman, who reads this, if you are yet unconverted. What if the thread of your life should break—and you know not but it may be the next night, yes, the next moment—where would you be then? Where would you drop? Truly, upon the breaking of this thread, *you would fall into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, where you must lie while God has a being*, if you die in your present state. And does not your soul tremble as you read? Do not your tears wet the paper, and your heart throb in your bosom? Do you not yet begin to smite on your bosom, and think with yourself what need you have of a change? Oh what is

your heart made of? Have you not only lost all regard to God—but all love and pity to yourself?

O study your misery until your heart cry out for Christ as earnestly as ever a drowning man did for a boat—or the wounded man for a surgeon. Men must come to see the danger and feel the smart of their deadly sores and sickness—or Christ will be to them a physician of no value. The manslayer hastens to the city of refuge, when pursued by the avenger of blood; but men must be even forced and driven out of themselves—or they will not come to Christ. It was distress and extremity that made the prodigal think of returning. While Laodicea thinks herself rich, increased in goods, in need of nothing, there is little hope. She must be deeply convinced of her wretchedness, blindness, poverty, and nakedness, before she will come to Christ for His gold, raiment, and eye salve. Therefore hold the eyes of conscience open, amplify your misery as much as possible, do not flee the sight of it for fear it should fill you with terror. The sense of your misery is but as it were the festering of the wound, which is necessary to the cure. Better now to *fear* the torments that await you—than to *feel* them hereafter.

#### **4. Settle it in your heart that you must look outside of yourself and away from your own doings for help.**

Do not think your praying, reading, hearing, confessing or amending, will effect the cure. These must be attended to—but you are undone if you rest in them. *You are a lost man if you hope to escape drowning on any other plank but Jesus Christ!*

You must renounce your own wisdom, your own righteousness, your own strength, and throw yourself wholly upon Christ—or you cannot escape. While men trust in themselves, and establish their own righteousness, and have confidence in the flesh, they will not come

savingly to Christ. You must know your gain to be but loss, your strength but weakness, your righteousness to be but rags and rottenness, before there will be an effectual closure between Christ and you. Can the lifeless body shake off its grave-clothes, and unloose the cords of death? Then may you recover yourself, who are dead in trespasses and sins, and under an impossibility of serving your Maker acceptably in this condition.

Therefore, when you go to pray or meditate—or to do any of the duties to which you are here directed, go out of yourself, and call in the help of the Spirit, as despairing to do anything pleasing to God in your own strength. Yet do not neglect duty. While the eunuch was reading, then the Holy Spirit did send Philip to him. When the disciples were praying, when Cornelius and his friends were hearing, then the Holy Spirit fell upon and filled them all.

## **5. Henceforth renounce all your sins.**

If you yield yourself to the practice of any sin, you are undone. In vain do you hope for life by Christ, except you depart from iniquity. Forsake your sins—or you cannot find mercy. *You cannot be married to Christ except you be divorced from sin.* Give up the traitor—or you can have no peace with heaven. Keep not Delilah in your lap. You must part with your sins—or with your soul: spare but one sin and God will not spare you. Your sins must die—or you must die for them. If you allow one sin, though but a little, a secret one, though you may plead necessity, and have a hundred shifts and excuses for it, the life of your soul must go for the life of that sin. And will it not be dearly bought?

O sinner, hear and consider. If you will part with your sins, God will give you His Christ. Is not this a fair exchange? I testify unto you this day, that if you perish, it is not because there was never a Savior

provided, nor life tendered—but because, with the Jews, you prefer the murderer before the Savior, sin before Christ, and love darkness rather than light. Search your heart therefore with candles, as the Jews did their houses for leaven before the Passover. Labor to find out your sins; enter into your closet, and consider ... What evil have I lived in? ... What duty have I neglected towards God? ... what sin have I lived in against my brother? And now *strike the darts through the heart of your sin*, as Joab did through Absalom's. Do not stand looking at your sins, nor rolling the morsel under your tongue—but cast it out as poison, with fear and detestation.

Alas, what will your sins do for you that you should hesitate to part with them? They will flatter you—but they will undo you and poison you while they please you, and arm the justice and wrath of the infinite God against you. They will open hell for you, and pile up fuel to burn you. Behold the gibbet that they have prepared for you. O treat them like Haman, and do upon them the execution they would else have done upon you. Away with them, crucify them and let Christ only be Lord over you.

## **6. Make a solemn choice of God for your portion and blessedness.**

With all possible devotion and veneration, take the Lord for your God. Set the world, with all its glory, and paint, and gallantry, with all its pleasures and promotions, on the one hand; and set God, with all His infinite excellencies and perfections, on the other; and see that you do deliberately make your choice. Take up your rest in God. Sit down under His shadow. Let His promises and perfections turn the scale against all the world. Settle it in your heart, that the Lord is an all-sufficient portion, that you cannot be miserable while you have God to live upon. Take Him for your shield and exceeding great

reward. God alone is more than all the world; content yourself with Him. Let others possess the preferments and glory of the world; but you must place your happiness in the favor of God, and in the light of His countenance.

Poor sinner, you have fallen off from God, and have engaged His power and wrath against you; yet know, that of His abundant grace He offers to be your God again in Christ. What do you say? Will you have the Lord for your God? Take this counsel, and you shall have Him. Come to Him by Christ, renounce the idols of your pleasures, gain, reputation. Let these be pulled from their throne, and set God's interest uppermost in your heart. Take Him as God, to be chief in your affections and purposes; for He will not endure to have any set above Him. In a word, you must take Him in all His personal relations and in all His essential perfections.

**[1] In all His personal relations.** God the FATHER must be taken for your Father. O come to Him with the prodigal: 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight, and am not worthy to be called your son' [Luke 15:21]; but since of Your wonderful mercy You are pleased to take me, that am of myself most vile, even a beast and no man before You—to be Your child, I solemnly take You for my Father, commend myself to Your care, and trust to Your providence, and cast my burden on You. I depend on Your provision, and submit to Your corrections, and trust under the shadow of Your wings, and hide in Your chambers, and fly to Your name. I renounce all confidence in myself; I repose my confidence in You. I declare my engagement with You; I will be for You, and not for another.'

God the SON must be taken for your Savior, your Redeemer, and your Righteousness. He must be accepted, as the only way to the Father, and the only means of life. O then put off the raiment of your

captivity, put on the wedding garment, and go and marry yourself to Christ. 'Lord, I am Yours, and all I have, my body, soul, and estate. I give my heart to You; I will be Yours undividedly, Yours everlastingly. I will set Your name on all I have, and use it only as Your goods, during Your absence, resigning all to You. I will have no king but You to reign over me. Other lords have had dominion over me; but now I will make mention of Your name only, and do here take an oath of fidelity to You, promising to serve and fear You above all competitors. I reject my own righteousness, and despair of ever being pardoned and saved for my own duties or graces, and lean solely on Your all-sufficient sacrifice and intercession for pardon, life, and acceptance before God. I take You for my only Guide and Instructor, resolving to be directed by You, and to wait for Your counsel.'

Lastly, God the SPIRIT must be taken for your Sanctifier, for your Advocate, your Counselor, your Comforter, the Teacher of your ignorance, the Pledge of your inheritance. 'Awake, you North wind, and come, you South wind—and blow upon my garden' (Song 4:16). 'Come, Spirit of the Most High; here is a temple for You; do You rest here forever; dwell here. Lo, I give possession to You, full possession; I send You the keys of my heart, that all may be Yours. I give up the use of all to You, that every faculty and every member may be Your instrument to work righteousness and do the will of my Father who is in heaven.'

**[2] In all His essential perfections.** Consider how the Lord has revealed Himself to you in His Word. Will you take Him as such a God? O sinner, here is the most blessed news that ever came to the sons of men: The Lord will be your God, if you will but close with Him in His excellencies. Will you have the merciful, the gracious, the sin-pardoning God to be your God? 'O yes,' says the sinner,

'otherwise I am undone.' But He further tells you, 'I am the holy and sin-hating God; if you will be owned as one of My people, you must be holy—holy in heart, holy in life. You must put away all your iniquities, be they ever so dear, ever so natural, ever so necessary to the maintaining of your worldly interest. Unless you will be at enmity with sin, I cannot be your God. Cast out the leaven. Put away the evil of your doings; cease to do evil; learn to do well. Bring forth My enemies—or there is no peace to be had with Me.' What does your heart answer?

'Lord, I desire to be holy as You are holy, and to be made partaker of Your holiness. I love You, not only for Your goodness and mercy—but for Your holiness and purity. I take Your holiness for my happiness. O be to me a fountain of holiness. Set on me the stamp and impress of Your holiness. I will thankfully part with all my sins at Your command. My wilful sins I do henceforth forsake; and for my infirmities that cleave unto me, though I would be rid of them, I will strive against them continually. I detest them, and will pray against them, and never let them have rest in my soul.' Beloved, whoever of you will thus accept the Lord, He shall be your God.

Again, He tells you, 'I am the all-sufficient God. Will you lay all at My feet, give up all to My disposal, and take Me for your only portion? Will you own and honor my all-sufficiency? Will you take Me as your happiness and treasure, your hope and bliss? I am a sun and a shield all in one; will you have Me for your all?' Now what do you say to this? Does your soul long for the onions and fleshpots of Egypt? Are you loath to change your earthly happiness for a portion in God; and though you would be glad to have God and the world too—yet can you not think of having Him, and nothing but Him; but had rather take up with the earth below, if God would but let you keep it as long as you would? This is a fearful sign. But now, if you are willing to sell

all for the Pearl of great price; if your heart answers, 'Lord, I desire no other portion but You. Take the grain and the wine and the oil who will—just so that I may have the light of Your countenance. I fix upon You for my happiness; I gladly venture myself on You, and trust myself with You. I set my hope in You; I take up my rest with You. Let me hear You say, "I am your God, your salvation," and I have enough, all I wish for. I will make no terms with You but for Yourself. Let me have You for sure, let me be able to make my claim and see my title to Yourself; and for other things, I leave them to You. Give me more or less, anything or nothing; I will be satisfied in my God.' Take Him thus, and He is your own.

Again, He tells you, 'I am the sovereign Lord; if you will have Me for your God you must give Me the supremacy. You must not make Me second to sin or any worldly interest. If you will be My people I must have the rule over you; you must not live at your pleasure. Will you come under My yoke? Will you bow to My government? Will you submit to My discipline, to My Word, to My rod?' Sinner, what do you say to this? 'Lord, I had rather be at Your command than live at my own will. I had rather have Your will to be done than mine. I approve of and consent to Your laws, and account it my privilege to be under them. And though the flesh rebels, and often break its bounds, I have resolved to take no other Lord but You. I willingly take the oath of Your supremacy, and acknowledge You for my Sovereign, and resolve all my days to pay the tribute of worship, obedience, love, and service to You, and to live to You to the end of my life.' This is a right acceptance of God.

To be short, He tells you, 'I am the true and faithful God. If you will have Me for your God you must be content to trust Me. Will you venture yourselves upon My Word, and depend on My faithfulness, and take My bond for your security? Will you be content to follow Me



in poverty, and reproach, and affliction here; and to tarry until the next world for your preferment? Will you be content to labor and suffer, and to tarry for your returns until the resurrection of the just? My promise will not always be instantly fulfilled; will you have the patience to wait?'

Now, beloved, what do you say to this? Will you have this God for your God? Will you be content to live by faith, and trust Him for an unseen happiness, an unseen heaven, an unseen glory? Do your hearts answer, 'Lord, we will venture ourselves upon You. We commit ourselves to You, we cast ourselves upon You. We know whom we have trusted. We are willing to take Your word; we prefer Your promises before our own possessions, and the hopes of heaven before all the enjoyments of earth. We will do Your pleasure—what You will here, so that we may have but Your faithful promise for heaven hereafter.' If you can in trust, and upon deliberation, thus accept of God, He will be yours. Thus there must be, in a right conversion to God, a closing with Him suitable to His excellencies. But when men close with His mercy—but yet love sin, hating holiness and purity; or will take Him for their Benefactor—but not for their Sovereign; or for their Patron, and not for their Portion; this is no thorough and sound conversion.

## **7. Accept the Lord Jesus in all His offices as yours.**

Upon these terms Christ may be had. Sinner, you have undone yourself, and are plunged into the ditch of most deplorable misery, out of which you are never able to escape; but Jesus Christ is able and ready to help you, and He freely offers Himself to you. Be your sins ever so many, ever so great—or of ever so long continuance—yet you shall be most certainly pardoned and saved, if you do not wretchedly neglect the offer that in the name of God is here made to

you. The Lord Jesus calls you to look to Him and be saved. Come unto Him, and He will never cast you out. Yes, He beseeches you to be reconciled. He cries in the streets; He knocks at your door. He invites you to accept Him, and live with Him. If you die, it is because you would not come to Him for life (Isa 45:22; John 6:37; 2 Cor 5:20; Prov 1:20; Rev 3:20; John 5:40).

Accept an offered Christ now, and you are made forever. Give your consent to Him now, and the match is made; all the world cannot hinder it. Do not stand off because of your unworthiness. I tell you, nothing can undo you but your own unwillingness. Speak, man; will you give your consent? Will you have Christ in all His relations to be yours—your King, your Priest, your Prophet? Will you have Him and bear His cross? Do not take Christ without consideration—but sit down first and count the cost. Will you lay all at His feet? Will you be content to run all hazards with Him? Will you take your lot with Him, fall where it will? Will you deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Him? Are you deliberately, understandingly, freely determined to cleave to Him in all times and conditions? If so, you shall never perish—but you have passed from death unto life. Here lies the main point of your salvation, that you are found in your covenant-closure with Jesus Christ; and therefore, if you love yourself, see that you be faithful to God and your soul here.

## **8. Resign all your powers and faculties, and your whole interest to be His.**

'They gave their own selves unto the Lord' (2 Cor 8:5). 'Present your bodies a living sacrifice' (Rom 12:1). The Lord seeks not yours—but you. Resign therefore your body with its members to Him, and your soul with all its powers, that He may be glorified in your body and in your spirit, which are His.

In a right closing with Christ all your faculties are given up to Him. Your **judgment** says, 'Lord, You are worthy of all acceptance, Chief of ten thousand: happy is the man who finds You. All the things that are to be desired are not to be compared with You' (Prov 3:13-15).

The **understanding** lays aside its corrupt reasonings and cavils, and its prejudices against Christ and His ways. It is now past questioning, and determines for Christ against all the world. It concludes it is good to be here, and sees such a treasure in this field, such a value in this pearl, as is worth all (Matt 13:44-46). 'O here is the richest prize that ever man was offered; here is the most sovereign remedy that ever mercy prepared. He is worthy of my esteem, worthy of my choice, worthy of my love, worthy to be embraced, adored, admired, for evermore (Rev 5:12). I approve of His articles: His terms are righteous and reasonable, full of equity and mercy.'

Again, the **will** resigns. It stands no longer wavering—but is peremptorily determined: 'Lord, Your love has overcome me, You have won me, and You shall have me. Come in, Lord; to You I freely open; I consent to be saved in Your own way. You shall have anything—nay, have all, let me have but You.

The **memory** gives up to Christ: 'Lord, here is a storehouse for You: out with the trash: lay in the treasures. Let me be a repository of Your truth, Your promises, Your providences.'

The **conscience** comes in: 'Lord, I will ever side with You: I will be Your faithful registrar. I will warn when the sinner is tempted, and smite when You are offended. I will witness for You, and judge for You, and guide into Your ways, and will never let sin have quiet in this soul.' The affections also come to Christ: 'O,' says Love, 'I am sick for You.'

'O,' says **Desire**, 'now I have what I sought for. Here is the Desire of nations; here is bread for me, and balm for me: all that I want.'

**Fear** bows the knee with awe and veneration: 'Welcome, Lord, to You will I pay my homage. Your Word and rod shall command my actions; You will I reverence and adore; before You will I fall down and worship.'

**Grief** likewise puts in: 'Lord, Your displeasure and Your dishonor, Your people's calamities and my own iniquities, shall be what shall set me a-weeping. I will mourn when You are offended; I will weep when Your cause is wounded.'

**Anger** likewise comes in for Christ: 'Lord, nothing so enrages me as my folly against You, that I should be so besotted as to hearken to the flatteries of sin and the temptations of Satan against You.'

**Hatred**, too, will side with Christ: 'I protest mortal enmity to Your enemies, that I will never be a friend to Your foes. I vow an eternal quarrel with every sin. I will give no quarter, I will make no peace.' Thus let all your powers yield to Jesus Christ.

Again, you must give up your whole interest to Him. If there is anything that you keep back from Christ, it will be your undoing (Luke 14:33). Unless you will forsake all, in preparation and resolution of your heart, you cannot be His disciple. You must hate father and mother, yes, and your own life also, in comparison with Him, and as far as it stands in competition with Him. In a word, you must give Him yourself, and all that you have without reservation—or else you can have no part in Him.

**9. Choose the laws of Christ as the rule of your words, thoughts and actions.**

This is the true convert's choice. But here remember these three rules.

**1. You must choose them all, there is no getting to heaven by a partial obedience.** It is not enough to take up the cheap and easy part of religion, and let alone the duties that are costly and self-denying, and oppose the interests of the flesh; you must take all or none. A sincere convert, though he makes conscience of the greatest sins and weightiest duties—yet he makes true conscience of little sins and of all duties.

**2. You must choose Christ's laws for all times, for prosperity and adversity.** A true convert is resolved in his course; he will stand to his choice, and will not set his back to the wind, and be of the religion of the times. 'I have stuck to your testimonies; I have inclined my heart to perform your statutes always, even to the end. Your testimonies have I taken as a heritage forever. I will have respect to your statutes continually' (Psalm 119:31,112,117).

**3. This must be done deliberately and understandingly.** The disobedient son said, 'I go, sir,' but he went not. How fairly did they promise, 'All that the Lord our God shall speak unto you we will do it!' And it is likely they meant what they said. But when it came to the trial it was found that there was not such a heart in them as to do what they had promised (Deut 5:27,29).

**If you would be sincere in closing with the laws and the ways of Christ, study the meaning, and breadth, and extent of them.** Remember that they are spiritual; they reach the very thoughts and inclinations of the heart; so that, if you will walk by this rule, your very thoughts and inward motions must be under government. Again, they are very strict and self-denying, quite contrary to your natural inclinations. You must take the strait gate,

the narrow way, and be content to have the flesh curbed from the liberty it desires. In a word, they are very large, for 'your commandment is exceeding broad' (Psalm 119:96).

**Do not rest in general commands, for there is much deceit in them—but bring down your heart to the particular commands of Christ.** Those Jews, in the prophet, seemed as well resolved as any in the world, and called God to witness that they meant as they said. But they rested in generals. When God's command crosses their inclination, they will not obey (Jer 42:1-6; Jer 43:2). Take the Westminster Assembly's Larger Catechism, and see their excellent and most comprehensive exposition of the commandments, and put your heart to it. Are you resolved, in the strength of Christ, to set upon the conscientious practice of every duty that you find to be required of you, and to set against every sin that you find to be forbidden? This is the way to be sound in God's statutes, that you may never be ashamed (Psalm 119:80).

**Observe the special duties that your heart is most against, and the special sins that it is most inclined to, and see whether it be truly resolved to perform the one and forgo the other.** What do you say to your bosom sin, your profitable sin? What do you say to costly, hazardous, and flesh-displeasing duties? If you halt here, and do not resolve, by the grace of God, to cross the flesh and be in earnest, you are unsound.

**10. Let all this be completed in a solemn covenant between God and your soul.**

Set apart some time, more than once, to be spent in secret before the Lord—in seeking earnestly His special assistance and gracious acceptance of you—in searching your heart, whether you are sincerely willing to forsake all your sins, and to resign yourself, body

and soul, unto God and His service; to serve Him in holiness and righteousness all the days of your life.

Compose your spirit into the most serious frame possible, suitable to a transaction of so high importance. Lay hold on the covenant of God, and rely on His promise of giving grace and strength, by which you may be enabled to perform your promise. Do not trust to your own strength, to the strength of your own resolutions; but take hold on His strength.

Being thus prepared, on some convenient time set apart for the purpose, enter upon the work, and solemnly, as in the presence of the Lord, fall down on your knees and spreading forth your hands towards heaven open your heart to the Lord in these—or the like words:

'O most holy God, for the passion of Your Son, I beseech You accept Your poor prodigal now prostrating himself at Your door. I have fallen from You by my iniquity, and am by nature a son of death, and a thousand-fold more the child of hell by wicked practice. But of Your infinite grace You have promised mercy to me in Christ, if I will but turn to You with all my heart. Therefore, upon the call of Your gospel, I am now come in, and throwing down my weapons, submit myself to Your mercy. And because You require, as the condition of my peace with You, that I should put away my idols, and be at defiance with all Your enemies, which I acknowledge I have wickedly sided with against You, I here from the bottom of my heart renounce them all, firmly covenanting with You, not to allow myself in any known sin—but conscientiously to use all the means that I know You have prescribed for the death and utter destruction of all my corruptions.

'And whereas formerly I have inordinately and idolatrously set my affections upon the world, I do here resign my heart to You who made it, humbly declaring before Your glorious Majesty, that it is the firm resolution of my heart, and that I do sincerely desire grace from You, that when You shall call me hereunto, I may practice this my resolution through Your assistance, to forsake all that is dear unto me in this world, rather than to turn from You to the ways of sin; and that I will watch against all its temptations, whether of prosperity or adversity, lest they should withdraw my heart from You. I beseech You also to help me against the temptations of Satan, to whose wicked suggestions I resolve by Your grace never to yield myself a servant. And because my own righteousness is but as filthy rags, I renounce all my confidence therein, and acknowledge that I am of myself a hopeless, helpless, undone creature, without righteousness or strength.

'And forasmuch as You have of Your bottomless mercy offered most graciously to me, a wretched sinner, to be again my God through Christ, if I would accept You; I call upon heaven and earth to record this day, that I do here solemnly avouch You for the Lord my God, and with all possible veneration, bowing the neck of my soul under the feet of Your most sacred Majesty, I do here take You the Lord Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for my portion and chief good, and do give myself, body and soul, to be Your servant, promising and vowing to serve You in holiness and righteousness all the days of my life.

'And since You have appointed the Lord Jesus Christ the only means of coming unto You, I do here solemnly join myself in a marriage covenant to Him.



'O Blessed Jesus, I come to You hungry and thirsty, poor and wretched, miserable, blind and naked, a most loathsome polluted wretch, a guilty condemned criminal, unworthy to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord, much more to be solemnly married to the King of Glory. But such is Your unparalleled love, I do here with all my power accept You, and do take You for my Head and Husband, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, for all times and conditions, to love, honor and obey You before all others, and this to the death. I embrace You in all Your offices. I renounce my own worthiness, and do here avow You to be the Lord my Righteousness. I renounce my own wisdom, and do here take You for my only Guide. I renounce my own will, and take Your will for my law.

'And since You have told me that I must suffer if I will reign, I do here covenant with You to take my lot, as it falls, with You, and by Your grace assisting to run all hazards with You, truly supposing that neither life nor death shall part between You and me.

'And because You have been pleased to give me Your holy laws, as the rule of my life, and the way in which I should walk to Your kingdom, I do here willingly put my neck under Your yoke, and set my shoulder to Your burden; and subscribing to all Your laws as holy, just, and good, I solemnly take them as the rule of my words, thoughts, and actions; promising that though my flesh contradict and rebel—yet I will endeavor to order and govern my whole life to Your direction, and will not allow myself to neglect anything that I know to be my duty.

'Only because through the frailty of my flesh, I am subject to many failings, I am bold humbly to request, that unintentional shortcomings, contrary to the settled bent and resolution of my heart, shall not make void this covenant, for so You have said.

'Now, Almighty God, Searcher of hearts, You know that I make this covenant with You this day, without any known guile or reservation, beseeching You, that if You espy any flaw or falsehood therein, You would reveal it to me, and help me to do it aright.

'And now, O God the Father, whom I shall be bold from this day forward to look upon as my God and Father, glory be to You for finding out such a way for the recovery of undone sinners. Glory be to You, O God the Son, who have loved me and washed me from my sins in Your own blood, and are now become my Savior and Redeemer. Glory be to You, O God the Holy Spirit, who by the finger of Your almighty power, has turned about my heart from sin to God.

'O high and holy Jehovah, the Lord God Omnipotent, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, You are now become my covenant Friend, and I through Your infinite grace am become Your covenant servant. Amen, so be it. And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven.'

This covenant I advise you to make, not only in heart—but in word; not only in word—but in writing; and that you would with all possible reverence spread the writing before the Lord, as if you would present it to Him as your Act and Deed. And when you have done this, set your hand to it and sign it. Keep it as a memorial of the solemn transactions that have passed between God and you, that you may have recourse to it in doubts and temptations.

**11. Take heed of delaying your conversion—but make a speedy, an immediate surrender of your heart to God.**

'I made haste, and delayed not' (Psalm 119:60). Remember and tremble at the sad instance of the foolish virgins who did not come until the door of mercy was shut, and of a convinced Felix who put

off Paul to another season—but we do not find that he had another season. O come in while it is called today, lest you should be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin; lest the day of grace should be over, and the things which belong to your peace should be hid from your eyes. Now mercy is wooing you; now Christ is waiting to be gracious to you, and the Spirit of God is striving with you. Now ministers are calling; now conscience is stirring; now the market is open, and oil may be had, you have opportunity for the buying. Now Christ is to be had for the taking. Oh! strike in with the offers of grace. Oh! now—or never. If you make light of this offer, God may swear in His wrath that you shall never taste of His supper (Luke 14:24).

## **12. Attend conscientiously upon the Word, as the means appointed for your conversion.**

Attend, I say, not customarily—but conscientiously, with this desire, design, hope, and expectation, that you may be converted by it. Come to every sermon you hear with this thought: 'O I hope God will now come in; I hope this day may be the time, this may be the man by whom God will bring me home.' When you are coming to the privileges of God's house, lift up your heart to God thus: 'Lord, let this be the Sabbath, let this be the season in which I may receive renewing grace. O let it be said that this day such a one was born unto You.'

Objection. You will say, I have been a hearer of the Word a long time—yet it has not been effectual to my conversion.

Answer. Yes; but you have not attended upon it in this manner, as a means of your conversion, nor with this design, nor praying for and expecting the happy effect from it.

### **13. Strike in with the Spirit when He begins to work upon your heart.**

When He works convictions, O do not stifle them—but join in with Him, and beg the Lord to give you saving conversion. 'Quench not the Spirit.' [1 Thess 5:19] Do not reject Him, do not resist Him. Beware of stifling convictions with evil company or worldly business. When you are in anguish on account of sin and fears about your eternal state, beg of God that you may have peace only in thoroughly renouncing all sin, loathing it in your inmost soul, and giving your whole heart, without reserve, to Christ. Say to Him, 'Strike home, Lord; do not leave the work half-done. Go to the bottom of my corruption, and let out the lifeblood of my sins.' Thus yield yourself to the working of the Spirit, and hoist your sails to His gusts.

### **14. Set upon the constant and diligent use of serious and fervent prayer.**

He who neglects prayer is a profane and unsanctified sinner. He who is not constant in prayer is a hypocrite, unless the omission be contrary to his ordinary course, under the force of some instant temptation. One of the first things conversion appears in, is that it sets men a-praying. Therefore set to this duty. Let not one day pass in which you have not, morning and evening, set apart some time for solemn prayer in secret. Also, call your family together daily to worship God with you. Woe be unto you, if you be found among the families that call not upon God's name (Jer 10:25). But cold and lifeless devotions will not reach halfway to heaven. Be fervent and importunate. Importunity will carry it; without violence the kingdom of heaven will not be taken. You must strive to enter, and wrestle with tears and supplications as Jacob, if you would gain the blessing. You are undone forever without grace, and therefore you must set to

it, and resolve to take no denial. That man who is fixed in this resolution says, 'Well, I must have grace—or I will never give over until I have grace; I will never cease earnestly pleading, and striving with God and my own heart, until He renews me by the power of His grace.'

### **15. Forsake your evil company, and forbear the occasions of sin.**

You will never be turned from sin until you decline and forego the temptations of sin. I never expect your conversion from sin, unless you are brought to some self-denial, so as to flee the occasions. If you will be nibbling at the bait, and playing on the brink, and tampering with the snare—your soul will surely be taken. When God exposes men, in His providence, unavoidably to temptation, and the occasions are such as we cannot remove, we may expect special assistance in the use of His means; but when we tempt God by running into danger, He will not engage to support us when we are tempted. And, of all temptations, one of the most fatal and pernicious is evil companions. O what hopeful beginnings have these often stifled! O the souls, the estates, the families, the towns, that these have ruined! How many poor sinners have been enlightened and convinced, and been just ready to escape the snare of the devil, and have even escaped it: and yet wicked company has pulled them back at last, and made them sevenfold more the children of hell! In a word, I have no hopes for you, except you shake off your evil company. Your life depends upon it: forsake this—or you cannot live. Will you be worse than the donkey of Balaam, to run on when you see the Lord with a drawn sword in the way? Let this sentence be written in capitals upon your conscience, 'A companion of fools shall be destroyed!' (Prov 13:20). The Lord has spoken it, and who shall reverse it?

And will you run upon destruction when God Himself forewarns you? If God ever changes your heart, it will appear in the change of your company. O fear and flee the gulf by which so many thousands have been swallowed up in perdition. It will be hard for you indeed to make your escape. Your companions will be mocking you out of your religion, and will study to fill you with prejudices against strictness, as ridiculous and comfortless. They will be flattering you and alluring you; but remember the warnings of the Holy Spirit: 'My son, if sinners entice you—do not consent. If they say, Come with us, cast in your lot among us; walk not in the way with them, refrain your foot from their path; avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away. For the way of the wicked is as darkness, they know not at what they stumble. They lie in wait for their own blood, they lurk privily for their own lives' (Prov 1:10-19; Prov 4:15-19).

My soul is moved within me to see how many of my hearers and readers are likely to perish, both they and their houses, by this wretched mischief, even the frequenting of such places and company, by which they are drawn into sin. Once more I admonish you, as Moses did Israel, 'Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men' (Num 16:26). O flee from them as you would those that had the plague-sores running in their foreheads. These are the devil's pimps and decoys; and if you do not make your escape they will draw you into perdition, and will prove your eternal ruin.

**16. Set apart a day to humble your soul in secret by fasting and prayer, to work a sense of your sins and miseries upon your heart.**

Read over a thorough exposition of the Commandments, and write down the duties omitted, and sins committed by you against every commandment, and so make a catalogue of your sins, and with

shame and sorrow spread them before the Lord. And if your heart be truly willing to the terms, join yourself solemnly to the Lord in that covenant set down in Direction 10 of this chapter, and the Lord grant you mercy in His sight.

Thus, I have told you what you must do to be saved. Will you now obey the voice of the Lord? Will you arise and set to the work? O man, what answer will you make, what excuse will you have, if you should perish at last through very wilfulness, when you have known the way of life? I do not fear your miscarrying, if your own idleness does not at last undo you, in neglecting the use of the means that are so plainly here prescribed. Rouse up, O sluggard, and ply your work. Be doing, and the Lord will be with you.

### **A Short Soliloquy for an Unregenerate Sinner**

Ah! wretched man that I am! What a condition have I brought myself into by sin! Oh! I see my heart has deceived me all this while, in flattering me that my condition was good. I see, I see, I am but a lost and undone man, forever undone, unless the Lord help me out of this condition. My sins! My sins! Lord, what an unclean, polluted wretch I am! More loathsome and odious to You than the most hateful venom or repulsive carcass can be to me. Oh! what a hell of sin is in this heart of mine, which I have flattered myself to be a good heart! Lord, how universally am I corrupted, in all my parts, powers, performances! All the imaginations of my heart are only evil continually. I am under an inability to, and aversion from, and an enmity against anything that is good; and am prone to all that is evil. My heart is a very sink of sin: and oh the innumerable hosts and swarms of sinful thoughts, words and actions that have flowed from it! Oh the load of guilt that is on my soul! My head is full, and my

heart is full; my mind and my members, they are all full of sin. Oh my sins! How do they stare upon me! Woe is me, my creditors are upon me: every commandment takes hold upon me, for more than ten thousand talents, yes, ten thousand times ten thousand. How endless then is the sum of all my debts! If this whole world were filled up from earth to heaven with paper, and all this paper written over within and without by arithmeticians—yet, when all were added up, it would come inconceivably short of what I owe to the least of God's commandments. Woe unto me, for my debts are infinite, and my sins are increased. They are wrongs to an infinite Majesty, and if he who commits treason against an earthly king is worthy to be racked, drawn and quartered; what have I deserved that have so often lifted up my hand against Heaven, and have struck at the crown and dignity of the Almighty?

Oh my sins! my sins! Behold, a troop comes! Multitudes! multitudes! there is numbering of their armies. Innumerable evils have compassed me about; my iniquities have taken hold upon me; they have set themselves against me. Oh! it were better to have all the regiments of hell come against me, than to have my sins fall upon me, to the spoiling of my soul. Lord, how am I surrounded! How many are they that rise up against me! They have beset me behind and before; they swarm within me and without me; they have possessed all my powers, and have fortified my unhappy soul as a garrison, which this brood of hell mans and maintains against the God who made me.

And they are as mighty as they are many. The sands are many—but then they are not great: the mountains great but then they are not many. But woe is me, my sins are as *many* as the sands, and as *mighty* as the mountains! Their weight is greater than their number. It were better that the rocks and the mountains should fall upon me,



than the crushing and unsupportable load of my own sins. Lord, I am heavy laden; let mercy help—or I am gone. Unload me of this heavy guilt, this sinking load—or I am crushed without hope, and must be pressed down to hell. If my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my sins laid in the balance together, they would be heavier than the sand of the sea; therefore my words are swallowed up: they would weigh down all the rocks and the hills, and turn the balance against all the isles of the earth. O Lord, You know my manifold transgressions, and my mighty sins.

Ah, my soul! Alas, my glory! How are you humbled! Once the glory of the creation, and the image of God: now, a lump of filthiness, a coffin of rottenness, replenished with stench and loathsomeness. Oh what work has sin made with you! You shall be termed 'Forsaken' and all the rooms of your faculties 'Desolate', and the name that you shall be called by is 'Ichabod'—or, 'Where is the glory?' How are you come down mightily! My beauty is turned into deformity, and my glory into shame. Lord, what a loathsome leper am I! The ulcerous bodies of Job or Lazarus were not more offensive to the eyes and nostrils of men, than I must needs be to the most holy God, whose eyes cannot behold iniquity.

And what misery have my sins brought upon me! Lord, what a state I am in! Sold under sin, cast out of God's favor, accursed from the Lord, cursed in my body, cursed in my soul, cursed in my name, in my estate, my relations, and all that I have. My sins are unpardoned, and my soul within a step of death. Alas! what shall I do? Where shall I go? Which way shall I look? God is frowning on me from above, hell gaping for me beneath, conscience smiting me within, temptations and dangers surrounding me without. Oh, where shall I fly? What place can hide me from Omniscience? What power can secure me from Omnipotence?

What do you mean, O my soul, to go on thus? Are you in league with hell? Have you made a covenant with death? Are you in love with your misery? Is it good for you to be here? Alas, what shall I do? Shall I go on in my sinful ways? Why then, certain damnation will be my end; and shall I be so besotted and mad as to go and sell my soul to the flames, for a little ale—or a little ease, for a little pleasure or gain or comfort to my flesh? Shall I linger any longer in this wretched state? No: if I tarry here I shall die. What then, is there no help? No hope? None, except I turn. Why—but is there any remedy for such woeful misery? Any mercy after such provoking iniquity? Yes: as sure as God's oath is true, I shall have pardon and mercy yet, if I presently, sincerely, and unreservedly turn by Christ to Him.

Why then, I thank You upon the bended knees of my soul, O most merciful Jehovah, that Your patience has waited for me hitherto; for had You taken me away in this state, I had perished forever. And now I adore Your grace, and accept the offers of Your mercy, I renounce all my sins, and resolve by Your grace to set myself against them, and to follow You in holiness and righteousness all the days of my life.

Who am I, Lord, that I should make any claim to You—or have any part or portion in You, who am not worthy to lick up the dust of Your feet? Yet since You hold forth the golden scepter, I am bold to come and touch. To despair would be to disparage Your mercy; and to stand off when You bid me come, would be at once to undo myself and rebel against You under pretense of humility. Therefore I bow my soul unto You, and with all possible thankfulness accept You as mine, and give up myself to You as Your. You shall be Sovereign over me, my King, and my God. You shall be on the throne, and all my powers shall bow to You, they shall come and worship before Your feet. You shall be my portion, O Lord, and I will rest in You.

You call for my heart. Oh that it were any way fit for Your acceptance! I am unworthy, O Lord, everlastingly unworthy to be Yours. But since You will have it so, I freely give my heart to You. Take it, it is Yours. Oh that it were better! But Lord, I put it into Your hands—who alone can mend it. Mold it after Your own heart; make it as You would have it, holy, humble, heavenly, soft, tender, flexible—and write Your law upon it.

Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Enter in triumphantly. Take me up for Yourself forever. I give myself to You, I come to You, as the only way to the Father, as the only Mediator, the means ordained to bring me to God. I have destroyed myself—but in You is my help. Save, Lord—or else I perish. I come to You, with the rope about my neck. I am worthy to die and to be damned. Never was the pay more due to the laborer; than death and hell, my just wages, are due to me for my sins. But I fly to Your merits; I trust alone to the value and virtue of Your sacrifice, and prevalence of Your intercession. I submit to Your teaching, I make choice of Your government. Stand open, O everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may enter in.

O You Spirit of the Most High, the Comforter and Sanctifier of Your chosen, come in with all Your glorious train, all Your courtly attendants—Your fruits and graces. Let me be Your habitation. I can give You but what is Your own already; but here with the widow I give my two mites, my soul and my body, into Your treasury, fully resigning them up to You, to be sanctified by You, to be servants to You. They shall be Your patients—cure their maladies. They shall be Your agents—govern You their actions. Too long have I served the world; too long have I hearkened to Satan; but now I renounce them all, and will be ruled by Your dictates and directions, and guided by Your counsel.

O blessed Trinity, O glorious Unity, I deliver myself up to You. Receive me: write Your name, O Lord, upon me, and upon all that I have, as Your proper goods. Set Your mark upon me, upon every member of my body, and every faculty of my soul. I have chosen Your precepts. Your law will I lay before me; this shall be the copy which I will keep in my eye, and study to write after. According to this rule do I resolve by Your grace to walk: after this law shall my whole man be governed. And though I cannot perfectly keep one of Your commandments—yet I will allow myself in the breach of none. I know my flesh will hang back: but I resolve, in the power of Your grace, to cleave to You and Your holy ways, whatever it cost me. I am sure I cannot come off a loser by You: and therefore I will be content with reproach, and difficulties and hardships here, and will deny myself, and take up Your cross, and follow You. Lord Jesus, Your yoke is easy, Your cross is welcome, as it is the way to You. I lay aside all hopes of a worldly happiness. I will be content to tarry until I come to You. Let me be poor and low, little and despised here, so I may be but admitted to live and reign with You hereafter. Lord, You have my heart and hand to this agreement. Be it as the laws of the Medes and Persians, never to be reversed. To this I will stand: in this resolution, by Your grace, I will live and die. I have sworn, and will perform it, that I will keep Your righteous judgments. I have given my free consent, I have made my everlasting choice. Lord Jesus, confirm the contract. Amen.

### **The Motives to Conversion**

Though what has already been said of the necessity of conversion and of the miseries of the unconverted might be sufficient to induce

any considerate mind to resolve upon a present turning to God; yet, knowing *what a piece of desperate obstinacy and untractableness the heart of man naturally is*, I have thought it necessary to add some motives to persuade you to be reconciled to God.

'O Lord, do not fail me now, at my last attempts. If any soul has read hitherto, and is yet untouched, Lord, fasten on him now, and do Your work. *Take him by the heart*, overcome him, persuade him, until he says, "You have prevailed, for You are stronger than I." Lord, did not You make me a fisher of men, and have I toiled all this while and caught nothing? Alas, that I should have spent my strength for nothing! and now I am casting my last net. Lord Jesus, stand upon the shore, and direct how and where I shall spread my net; and let me so with arguments, enclose the souls I seek, that they may not be able to get out. Now, Lord, for a multitude of souls; now for a full draught. O Lord God, remember me, I pray You, and strengthen me this once, O God.'

Men and brethren, heaven and earth call upon you; yes, hell itself preaches the doctrine of repentance unto you. The ministers of the churches labor for you. The angels of heaven wait for you, for your repenting and turning unto God. O sinner, why should devils laugh at your destruction, and deride your misery, and sport themselves with your folly? This will be your case, except you turn. And were it not better you should be a joy to angels—than a laughingstock and sport for devils. Truly, if you would but come in, the heavenly hosts would take up their anthems and sing, 'Glory to God in the highest'; the morning stars would sing together, and all the sons of God shout for joy, and celebrate this new creation as they did the first. Your repentance would, as it were, make a holiday in heaven, and the glorious spirits would rejoice, in that there is a new brother added to their society, another heir born to the Lord, and a lost son received

safe and sound. *The true penitent's tears are indeed the wine that makes glad both God and man.*

If it be little that men and angels would rejoice at your conversion, know also that God Himself would rejoice over you, even with singing (Luke 15:9; Isa 62:5). Never did Jacob with such joy weep over the neck of his Joseph, as your heavenly Father would rejoice over you upon your coming to Him. Look over the story of the Prodigal Son. I think I see how the aged father lays aside his state and forgets his years; behold, how he runs. O the haste that mercy makes: the sinner makes not half that speed. I think I see how his heart moves, how his compassions yearn. How quick-sighted is love! Mercy spies him a great way off; forgets his riotous course, unnatural rebellion, horrid unthankfulness—not a word of these—and receives him with open arms, clasps him about his neck, kisses him; calls for the fattened calf, the best robe, the ring, the shoes—the best cheer in heaven's store, the best attire in heaven's wardrobe. Yes, the joy cannot be held in his own bosom. Others must be called to participate. The friends sympathize; but none know the joy the father has in his newborn son, whom he has received from the dead. I think I hear the music at a distance. O the melody of the heavenly choristers! I cannot learn the song (Rev 14:3) but I think I overhear the theme at which all the harmonious choir with one consent strike sweetly in: 'For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' [Luke 15:24] I need not explain the parable further. God is the father: Christ is the provision, His righteousness the robe, His grace the ornaments, ministers, saints and angels, the friends and servants, and you that read, if you will but sincerely repent and turn, the welcome prodigal, the happy instance of this grace, the blessed subject of this joy and love.

O rock! O adamant! What! not moved yet? Not yet resolved to turn and to close with mercy? I will try yet once again. If one were sent to you from the dead, would you be persuaded? Why, hear the voice from the dead, from the damned, crying to you, that you should repent: 'I pray you that you would send him to my father's house; for I have five brethren; that he may testify to them, lest they also come into this place of torment; if one went to them from the dead, they will repent' (Luke 16:27-28). Hear, O man; your predecessors in impenitence preach to you from the infernal flames, that you should repent. O look down into the bottomless pit. Do you see how the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever? What do you think of those chains of darkness? Can you be content to burn? Do you see how the worm gnaws, how the fire rages? What do you say to that gulf of perdition? Will you take up your habitation there? O lay your ear to the door of hell. Do you hear the curses and blasphemies, the weepings and wailings, how they lament their follies and curse their day? How do they roar and gnash their teeth! how deep their groans! how inconceivable their miseries! If the shrieks of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, were so terrible when the earth clave asunder and opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and all that appertained to them, that all Israel fled at the cry of them (Num 16:33-34), O how fearful would the cry be, if God would take off the covering from the mouth of hell, and let the cry of the damned ascend in all its terror among the children of men! And of their moans and miseries this is the piercing, killing emphasis and burden, 'Forever! forever!'

As God lives—who made your soul, you are but a few hours away from all this—unless you be converted.

O! I am even lost and swallowed up in the abundance of those arguments that I might suggest. If there be any point of wisdom in all the world, it is to repent and come in. If there be anything righteous,

anything reasonable—this is it. If there be anything that may be called madness and folly, and anything that may be counted sottish, absurd, brutish, and unreasonable, it is this, to go on in your unconverted state. Let me beg of you, as you would not willingly destroy yourself, sit down and weigh, besides what has been said, these following motives, and let conscience say if it be not most reasonable that you should repent and turn.

### **1. The God who made you, most graciously invites you.**

His most sweet and merciful nature invites you. O the kindness of God, His boundless compassion, His tender mercies! As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways above our ways, and His thoughts above our thoughts. 'He is full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy' (Psalm 86:15). This is a great argument to persuade sinners to come. 'Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful. He is not easily angered. He is filled with kindness and is eager not to punish you.' [Joel 2:13]

If there were no hope of mercy, it would be no wonder that rebels should stand out; but never had subjects such a gracious prince, such pity, patience, and clemency to deal with, as you have. 'Who is a God like unto You, that pardons iniquity?' (Mic 7:18). O sinners, see what a God you have to deal with. If you will but turn, 'He will have compassion on you; He will subdue your iniquities, and cast all your sins into the depths of the sea!' 'Return unto me, says the Lord of hosts, and I will return unto you' (Mal 3:7).

Sinners do not fail in that they have too high thoughts of God's mercies—but in that they overlook His justice—or they promise themselves mercy outside of God's way. His mercies are beyond all imagination; great mercies, manifold mercies (Neh 9:19), tender mercies, sure mercies, everlasting mercies—and all is yours, if you



will but turn. Are you willing to come in? The Lord has laid aside His terror and erected a throne of grace. He holds forth the golden scepter: touch and live! Would a merciful man slay his enemy when prostrate at his feet, acknowledging his wrong, begging pardon, and offering to enter with him into a covenant of peace? Much less will the merciful God. Study His name (Exod 34:7), 'Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.' Also read experience, Neh 9:17.

God's soul-encouraging calls and promises invite you. Ah, what an earnest suitor is mercy to you! How lovingly, how instantly, it calls after you! How earnestly it woos you! 'Return O backsliding Israel, says the Lord, and I will not cause my anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, says the Lord, and I will not keep anger forever; only acknowledge your iniquity. Turn, O backsliding children, says the Lord; return, and I will heal your backslidings. You have played the harlot with many lovers; yet return unto me, says the Lord' (Jer 3:12-13). 'As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked—but that he turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?' (Ezek 33:11). 'If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he has committed, and keeps all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All the transgressions that he has committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him; in his righteousness that he has done, he shall live [Ezek 18:21-22]. ... Repent, and turn you from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will you die, O Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him who dies, says the Lord God, therefore turn yourselves, and live!' (Ezek 18:30-32).

O melting, gracious words: the voice of God, and not of a man! This is not the manner of men, for the offended sovereign to sue to the offending, traitorous rebel. O how does mercy follow you, and plead with you! Is not your heart broken yet? O that today you would hear His voice!

## **2. The doors of heaven are thrown open to you.**

The everlasting gates are set wide open for you, and an abundant entrance into the kingdom of heaven is administered to you.

Christ now addresses you, and calls upon you to arise and take possession of this good land. View the glory of the other world, as set forth in the map of the gospel. Get up into the Pisgah of the promises, and lift up your eyes northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, and that goodly mountain. Behold the Paradise of God, watered with the streams of glory. Arise and walk through the land, in the length of it, and in the breadth of it; for the land which you see, the Lord will give it to you forever, if you will but return. Let me say to you, as Paul to Agrippa, 'Do you believe the prophets?' [Acts 26:27] If you believe indeed, view what glorious things are spoken of the city of God, and know that all this is here offered in the name of God to you. As truly as God is true, it shall be forever yours, if you will but thoroughly turn.

Behold the city of pure transparent gold, whose foundations are garnished with all manner of precious stones, whose gates are pearls, whose light is glory, whose temple is God. Do you believe this? If you do, are you not beside yourself, that will not take possession when the gates are thrown open to you, and you are bidden to enter? O you sons of folly, will you embrace the ash-heap and refuse the kingdom? Behold, the Lord takes you up into the mountain, shows you the

kingdom of heaven and all the glory thereof, and tells you, 'All this I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me; if you will submit to mercy, accept my Son, and serve me in righteousness and holiness.' 'O fools and slow of heart to believe!' [Luke 24:25] Will you seek and serve the world, and neglect eternal glory? What! not enter into paradise when the flaming sword, which was once set to keep you out, is now used to drive you in? But you will say I am uncharitable to think you infidels and unbelievers. What, then, shall I think of you? Either you are desperate unbelievers that do not believe it; or that you are beside yourselves, that you know and believe the excellence and eternity of this glory, and yet do so fearfully neglect it.

Do but attend to what is offered you: a blessed kingdom, a kingdom of glory, a kingdom of righteousness, a kingdom of peace, and an everlasting kingdom. Here you shall dwell, here you shall reign forever, and the Lord shall seat you on a throne of glory, and with His own hand shall set the royal diadem upon your head, and give you a crown—not of thorns, for there shall be no sinning nor suffering there: not of gold, for this shall be viler than the dirt in that day; but a crown of life, a crown of righteousness, a crown of glory, yes, you shall put on glory as a robe, and shall shine like the sun in the firmament of your Father.

Look now on your worthless flesh. This flesh, which is mere dust and ashes, shall be brighter than the stars. In short, you shall be made like unto the angels of God and behold His face in righteousness. Look now and tell me, do you not yet believe? If not, conscience must pronounce you an infidel; for it is the very word of God that I speak.

But if you say you believe, let me next know your resolution. Will you embrace this for your happiness? Will you forgo your sinful gains,

your forbidden pleasures? Will you trample on the world's esteem, and stop your ears to its flatteries, and wrest yourself out of its embraces? Will you be content to take up with reproach and poverty, if they lie in the way to heaven, and follow the Lord with humble self-denial, in a mortified and flesh-displeasing life? If so, all is yours—and that forever!

And is not the offer a fair one? Is it not just that he should be damned, who will go on and perish, when all this may be had by taking it? Will you not take God at His word? Will you not let go your hold of the world, and lay hold on eternal life? If not, let conscience tell you whether you are not beside yourself, that you should neglect so happy a choice, by which you might be made happy forever.

### **3. God will give you unspeakable privileges in this life.**

Though the fullness of your blessedness shall be reserved until hereafter—yet God will give you no little things in hand. He will redeem you from your thralldom. He will pluck you from the paw of the lion. The serpent shall bruise your heel—but you shall bruise his head. He shall deliver you from this present evil world. Prosperity shall not destroy you; adversity shall not separate Him and you. He will redeem you from the power of the grave, and make the king of terrors to be a messenger of peace to you. He will take out the curse from the cross, and make affliction the refining-pot to purify the metal, the fan to blow off the chaff, the medicine to cure the mind. He will save you from the arrest of the law, and turn the curse into a blessing to you. He has the keys of hell and of death, and shuts and no man opens, and He will shut its mouth, as once He did the lions', that you shall not be hurt of the second death.

Besides, He will not only save from misery—but install you into unspeakable prerogatives. He will bestow Himself upon you; He will

be a Friend and a Father unto you. He will be a Sun and a Shield to you. In a word, He will be a God to you. And what more can be said? What may you expect that God should do for you, and be to you? That He will be, that He will do. She who marries a prince expects he should do for her like a prince—that she may live in suitable state, and have an answerable dowry. He who has a king for his father or a friend, expects he should do for him like a king. Alas, the kings and monarchs of the earth, so much above you, are but like the painted butterflies among the rest of their kind—or the fair colored palmerworm among the rest of the worms, if compared with God. As He infinitely exceeds the glory and power of His glittering dust, so He will, beyond all proportion, exceed in doing for His favorites whatever princes can do for theirs. He will give you grace and glory, and withhold no good thing from you. He will take you for His sons and daughters, and make you heirs of His promises, and establish His everlasting covenant with you. He will justify you from all that law, conscience and Satan can charge upon you. He will give you free access into His presence, and accept your person, and receive your prayers. He will abide in you, and hold a constant and friendly communion with you. His ear shall be open, His door open, His store open, at all times to you. His blessing shall rest upon you, and He will make your enemies serve you, and work out all things for good unto you.

#### **4. The terms of mercy are brought as low as possible to you.**

God has stooped as low to sinners as with honor He can. He will not be the author of sin, nor stain the glory of His holiness; and how could He come lower than He has, unless He should do this?

God does not impose anything unreasonable or impossible, as a condition of life, upon you. Two things were necessary to be done, according to the tenor of the first covenant. 1. That we should fully satisfy the demands of justice for past offences. 2. That we should perform personally, perfectly, and perpetually, the whole law for the time to come. By our sins we render salvation through either of these ways impossible. But behold God's gracious provision in both. He is content to take of the Surety, and He of His own providing too, what He might have exacted from you. 'All things are of God, who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation: namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and has committed unto us the word of reconciliation' (2 Cor 5:18-19). He declares Himself to have received a ransom, and that He expects nothing but that you should accept His Son, and He shall be righteousness and redemption to you. If you come in His Christ, and set your heart to please Him, making this your chief concern, He will graciously accept you.

O consider the condescension of your God! Let me say to you, as Naaman's servant to him, 'My father, if the prophet had bid you do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much rather when he says to you, Wash and be clean!' [2 Kings 5:13] If God demanded some great, some severe and rigorous thing of you, to escape eternal damnation, would you not have done it? Suppose it had been to spend all your days in sorrow in some howling wilderness—or pine with famine, would you not have thankfully accepted eternal redemption, though these had been the conditions? Nay, farther, if God had told you that you should burn in the fire for millions of ages—or be so long tormented in hell, would you not have accepted it? Alas, all these are not so much as one grain of sand in the glass of eternity. If your offended Creator should have held you

but one year upon the rack, and then bid you come and forsake your sins, accept Christ, and serve him a few years in self-denial or lie in this case forever and ever; do you think you would have hesitated at the offer, and disputed the terms, and have been unresolved whether to accept the proposal? O sinner, return and live; why should you die when life is to be had for the taking, when mercy entreats you to be saved? Could you say, 'Lord, I knew you, that you were a hard man', [Matt 25:24] even then you would have no excuse; but when the God of Heaven has stooped so low, and condescended so far, if still you stand off, who shall plead for you?

**Objection:** Notwithstanding all the advantages of the new covenant, I am unable to repent and believe, and so comply with its conditions.

**Answer:** These you may perform by God's grace enabling; but let the next consideration serve for a fuller answer.

## **5. God offers all needed grace to enable you.**

'I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded' (Prov 1:24). What though you are plunged into the ditch of that misery from which you can never get out? Christ offers to help you out; He reaches out His hand to you; and if you perish, it is for refusing His help. 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man open to me, I will come in.' (Rev 3:20). What though you are poor, and wretched, and blind, and naked? Christ offers a cure for your blindness, a covering for your nakedness, riches for your poverty. He offers you His righteousness, His grace: 'I counsel you to buy of me gold, that you may be rich; and white raiment, that you may be clothed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.' [Rev 3:18] Do you say, 'The condition is impossible; for I have nothing with which to buy?' You must know that this buying is 'without money and without price.' [Isa 55:1] This buying is by begging and seeking with your

whole heart. God commands you to know Him, and to fear Him. Do you say, 'Yes—but my mind is blinded, and my heart is hardened from His fear?' I answer that God offers to enlighten your mind, and to teach you His fear. So that now, if men live in ignorance and estrangement from the Lord, it is because they will not understand, and do not desire the knowledge of His ways. 'If you cry after knowledge, if you Seek her as silver, then shall you understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.' (Prov 2:3-5). Is not this a fair offer? 'Turn at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you' (Prov 1:23). Though of yourselves you can do nothing—yet you may do all through His Spirit enabling you, and He offers assistance to you. God bids you 'wash and be made clean' [Isa 1:16]. You say you are unable, as much as the leopard to wash out his spots. Yes—but the Lord offers to cleanse you; so that if you are filthy still, it is through your own wilfulness: 'I have purged you, and you were not purged' (Ezek 24:13). 'O Jerusalem, will you not be made clean: when shall it once be?' (Jer 13:27). God invites you to be made clean, and entreats you to yield to Him. O accept His offers, and let Him do for you, and in you, what you cannot do for yourselves

### **Conclusion**

And now, beloved, let me know your mind. What do you intend to do? Will you go on and die—or will you turn and lay hold on eternal life? How long will you linger in Sodom? How long will you halt between two opinions? Have you not yet resolved whether Christ or Barabbas, whether bliss or torment, whether this vain and wretched world—or the paradise of God, is the better choice? Is it a disputable case whether the polluted waters of this world are better than all the streams of Eden; or whether the vile pool of sin is to be preferred before the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb? Can the world really do that for you, which



Christ can? Will it stand by you to eternity? Will pleasures, lands, titles, and treasures go with you after death? If not, had you not need look after something that will? What do you mean to stand wavering? Shall I leave you at last, like Agrippa, only almost persuaded? You are forever lost if left here; as good be not at all—as not altogether a Christian. How long will you rest in idle wishes and fruitless purposes? When will you come to a fixed, firm, and full resolve? Do you not see how Satan cheats you by tempting you to delay? How long has he drawn you on in the way of perdition!

Well, do not put me off with a dilatory answer; tell me not later. I must have your immediate consent. If you are not now resolved, while the Lord is treating with you and inviting you, much less likely are you to be later, when these impressions are worn off, and you are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Will you give me your hand? Will you set open the door and give the Lord Jesus the full and ready possession? Will you put your name unto His covenant? What do you resolve upon? If you still delay, my labor is lost, and all is likely to come to nothing. Come, cast in your lot; make your choice. 'Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation; [2 Cor 6:2] today, if you will hear His voice.' [Heb 3:7] Why should not this be the day from which you are able to date your happiness? Why should you venture a day longer in this dangerous and dreadful condition? What if God should this night require your soul? O that you might know in this your day the things that belong to your peace, before they be hid from your eyes! This is your day—and it is but a day. Others have had their day—and have received their doom! And now are you brought upon the stage of this world, here to act your part for your eternity. Remember, if you do not make a wise choice now, you are undone forever. What your present choice is—such must be your eternal condition.

And is it true indeed? Are life and death at your choice? Why, then, what hinders but that you should be happy? Nothing does or can hinder but your own wilful neglect or refusal. It was the saying of the eunuch to Philip, 'See, here is water, what hinders me to be baptized?' [Acts 8:36] So I may say to you, 'See, here is Christ, here is mercy, pardon, life; what hinders you from being pardoned and saved?' One of the martyrs, as he was praying at the stake, had his pardon set by him in a box, which indeed he rightly refused, because upon unworthy terms; but here the terms are most honorable and easy. O sinner, will you perish with your pardon by you? Do but henceforth give your consent to Christ, to renounce your sins, deny yourself, take up the yoke and the cross—and you win the day. Christ is yours; pardon, peace, life, blessedness, are all yours. And is not this an offer worth embracing? Why should you hesitate or doubtfully dispute about the case? Is it not past controversy whether God is better than sin—and glory than vanity? Why should you forsake your own mercy—and sin against your own life? When will you shake off your sloth, and lay by your excuses? Boast not of tomorrow, you know not where you may lodge this night!

Now the Holy Spirit is striving with you. He will not always strive. Have you not felt your heart warmed by the Word, and been almost persuaded to leave off your sins and come to Christ? Have you not felt some motions in your mind, in which you have been warned of your danger, and told what your careless course would end in? It may be you are like young Samuel who, when the Lord called once and again, knew not the voice of the Lord—but these motions are the offers, and callings, and strivings of the Spirit. O take advantage of the tide, and know the day of your visitation.

Now the Lord Jesus stretches wide His arms to receive you. He beseeches you by us. How movingly, how meltingly, how

compassionately He calls. The church is put into a sudden ecstasy at the sound of His voice, 'it is the voice of my beloved!' [Song 2:8]. O will you turn a deaf ear to His voice? Is it not the voice that breaks the cedars, and makes the mountains to skip like a calf; that shakes the wilderness, and divides the flames of fire? It is not Sinai's thunder—but a soft and still voice. It is not the voice of Mount Ebal, a voice of cursing and terror—but the voice of Mount Gerizim, the voice of blessing and glad tidings of good things. It is not the voice of the trumpet nor the noise of war—but a message of peace from the King of peace. I may say to you, O sinner, as Martha to her sister, 'The Master has come, and he is calling for you.' [John 11:28] Now then, with Mary, arise quickly and come unto Him.

How sweet are His invitations! He cries in the open concourse, 'If any man thirsts—let him come unto me and drink' (John 7:37). How bountiful is He! He excludes none. '*Whoever* will, let him take the water of life freely' (Rev 22:17). 'Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine that I have mingled. Forsake the foolish and live' (Prov 9:5-6). 'Come unto me, take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and you shall find rest to your souls' (Matt 11:28-29). 'Him who comes to me, I will never cast out' (John 6:37).

How does He bemoan the obstinate refuser! 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered your children, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings—and you would not!' (Matt 23:37). 'Behold me, behold me: I have stretched out my hands all the day to a rebellious people' (Isa 65:1-2). O be persuaded now at last to throw yourselves into the arms of His love.

Behold! The Lord Jesus has thrown open the prison doors—and now He comes to you by His ministers, and beseeches you to come out. If it were from a palace or paradise that Christ did call you, it were no

wonder that you were unwilling; and yet how easily was Adam beguiled from it; but it is from your prison, from your chains, from the dungeon, from the darkness, that He calls you, and yet will you not come? He calls you unto liberty, and yet will you not hearken? His yoke is easy, His laws are liberty, His service is freedom, and whatever prejudice you may have against His ways, if God may be believed, you shall find them all pleasure and peace, and shall taste sweetness and joy unutterable, and take infinite delight and felicity in them (Prov 3:17; 1 Pet 1:8; Psalm 119:103,111,165).

Beloved, I am reluctant to leave you. I cannot tell how to give you up. I am now ready to close—but I would see a covenant made between Christ and you before I end. What! shall I leave you at last as I found you? Have you read thus far, and not yet resolved to abandon all your sins and to close with Jesus Christ? Alas, what shall I say? What shall I do? Will you throw away all my importunity? Have I run in vain? Have I used so many arguments, and spent so much time to persuade you—and must I sit down at last in disappointment? But it is a small matter that you disregard me; you put a slight upon the God who made you; you reject the compassion and beseechings of a Savior, and will be found resisters of the Holy Spirit—if you will not now be prevailed upon to repent and be converted.

Well, though I have called you long, and you have refused, I shall yet this once more lift up my voice like a trumpet, and cry from the highest places of the city before I conclude, with the miserable exclamation, 'All is over!' Once more I shall call after heedless sinners, that, if it be possible, I may awaken them; 'O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord' (Jer 22:29). Unless you are resolved to die, lend your ears to the last calls of mercy. Behold, in the name of God, I make open proclamation to you, 'Hearken unto me, O

children; hear instruction and be wise, and refuse it not' (Prov 8:32-33).

"Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David." (Isa 55:1-3).

Ho, everyone who is sick of any manner of disease or torment—or is possessed with an evil spirit, whether of pride, fury, lust—or covetousness—come to the Physician! Bring your sick! Lo, here is He who heals all manner of sicknesses, and all manner of diseases, among the people (Matt 4:23-24).

Ho, everyone who is in distress, gather yourselves unto Christ, and He will become a Captain over you. He will be your protection from the arrests of the law; He will save you from the hand of justice. Behold, He is an open sanctuary to you; He is a known refuge. Away with your sins and come in unto Him, lest the avenger of blood seize you, lest devouring wrath overtake you.

Ho, every blind and ignorant sinner, come and buy eye salve, that you may see. Away with your excuses; you are forever lost if you continue in this state. But accept Christ for your Prophet, and He will be a light unto you. Cry unto Him for knowledge, study His Word, take pains about religion, humble yourself before God, and He will teach you His way, and make you wise unto salvation. But if you will not follow Him—but sit down because you have but one talent, He will condemn you for a wicked and slothful servant (Matt 25:24-26).

Ho, every profane sinner, come in and live! Return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy on you; be entreated. O return, come! You who have filled your mouth with oaths and execrations; all manner of sins and blasphemies shall be forgiven you, if you will but thoroughly turn unto Christ and come in. O unclean sinner, put away your whoredoms out of your sight, and your adulteries from between your breasts, and give yourself unto Christ, as a vessel of holiness, alone for His use; and then, 'though your sins be as scarlet—they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson—they shall be as wool' (Luke 7:47; Isa 1:18; Hos 2:2).

Hear, O you drunkards, how long will you be drunk? Put away your wine. Though you have rolled in the filthiness of your sin, give yourselves unto Christ, to live soberly, righteously, and godly; embrace His righteousness; accept His government; and though you have been vile, He will wash you (Rev 1:5).

Hear, O you loose companions, whose delight is in vain and wicked society, to sport away your time in carnal mirth; come in at Wisdom's call, and choose her and her ways, and you shall live (Prov 9:5-6).

Hear, O you scorers, hear the word of the Lord. Though you make a mock at godliness and its professors, though you have made a scorn of Christ and His ways—yet even to you does He call, to gather you under the wings of His mercy. In a word, though you should be found among the worst of that black roll—yet upon your thorough conversion you shall be washed, you shall be sanctified, you shall be justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God (1 Cor 6:10-11).

Ho, every formal professor, you who are but lukewarm and resting in the form of godliness. Give over your halting; be a true Christian; be

zealous and repent; and then, though you have been an offence to Christ—you shall be the joy of His heart (Rev 3:16-20).

And now bear witness that mercy has been offered you. 'I call heaven and earth to record against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that you may live' (Deut 30:19). I can only entreat you and warn you. I cannot otherwise compel you to be happy; if I could, I would. What answer will you send me with to my Master? Let me speak to you as Abraham's servant to Nahor's family, 'And now if you will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me.' O for such a happy answer as Rebecca gave them: 'And they called Rebecca, and said unto her, Will you go with this man? and she said, I will go' (Gen 24:49-58). O that I had this answer from you!

Why should I, who agonize for your salvation—be your accuser? Why should the passionate pleadings of mercy be turned into horrid aggravations of your obstinacy and additions to your misery? Judge in yourselves; do you not think their condemnation will be doubly dreadful—who shall still go on in their sins, after all endeavors to recall them? Doubtless it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, yes, for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for you! (Matt 11:22-24).

Beloved, if you have any pity for your perishing souls, close with the present offers of mercy. If the God that made you have any authority with you, obey His command and come in. If you are not the despisers of grace, and would not shut the doors of mercy against yourselves, repent and be converted. Let not heaven stand open for you in vain. Let not the Lord Jesus open His stores and bid you buy without money and without price in vain. Let not His Spirit and His ministers strive with you in vain, and leave you now at last

unpersuaded, lest the sentence go forth against you, 'The bellows blow fiercely to burn away the lead with fire, but the refining goes on in vain; the wicked are not purged out. They are called rejected silver, because the Lord has rejected them' (Jer 6:29-30).

'Father of spirits, take the heart in hand that is too hard for my weakness. Do not end—though I have done. A word from Your effectual power will do the work. O You who has the key of David, who opens and no man shuts—open this heart, as You did Lydia's, and let the King of Glory enter in, and make this soul Your captive. Let not the tempter harden him in delays. Let him not stir from this place, nor take his eyes from these lines, until he resolves to forego his sins, and accept life on Your self-denying terms. In Your Name, O Lord God, did I go forth to these labors; in Your name do I close them. Let not all the time they have cost be lost hours; let not all the thoughts of the heart, and all the pains that have been about them be lost labor. Lord, put Your hand upon the heart of this reader, and send Your Spirit, as once You did Philip to join himself to the chariot of the eunuch while he was reading the Word. And though I should never know it while I live—yet I beseech You, O Lord God, let it be found at the last day that some souls are converted by these labors; and let some be able to stand forth and say that by these persuasions they were won unto You. Amen, Amen.' Let him who reads say, Amen.

## **From the Second Head of Doctrine at the Synod of Dort, 1619**



Seek the LORD while He may be found: The Presentation of the Gospel

"Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near."

Isa 55:6- (NIV).

What is the gospel of Jesus Christ?

1. God is not only supremely merciful, but also supremely just. And his justice requires (as he hath revealed himself in his Word) that our sins committed against his infinite majesty should be punished, not only with temporal, but with eternal punishments, both in body and soul; which we can not escape, unless satisfaction be made to the justice of God.
2. Since, therefore, we are unable to make that satisfaction in our own persons, or to deliver ourselves from the wrath of God, he hath been pleased of his infinite mercy to give his only-begotten Son for our surety, who was made sin, and became a curse for us and in our stead, that he might make satisfaction to divine justice on our behalf.
3. The death of the Son of God is the only and most perfect sacrifice and satisfaction for sin; is of infinite worth and value, abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world.
4. This death derives its infinite value and dignity from these considerations; because the person who submitted to it was not only really man and perfectly holy, but also the only-begotten Son of God, of the same eternal and infinite essence with the Father and Holy Spirit, which qualifications were necessary to constitute him a

Saviour for us; and because it was attended with a sense of the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin.

5. Moreover the promise of the gospel is, that whosoever believeth in Christ crucified shall not perish, but have everlasting life. This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be declared and published to all nations, and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction, to whom God out of his good pleasure sends the gospel.

6. And, whereas many who are called by the gospel do not repent nor believe in Christ, but perish in unbelief; this is not owing to any defect or insufficiency in the sacrifice offered by Christ upon the cross, but is wholly to be imputed to themselves.

7. But as many as truly believe, and are delivered and saved from sin and destruction through the death of Christ, are indebted for this benefit solely to the grace of God given them in Christ from everlasting, and not to any merit of their own.

8. For this was the sovereign counsel and most gracious will and purpose of God the Father, that the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of his Son should extend to all the elect, for bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith, thereby to bring them infallibly to salvation: that is, it was the will of God, that Christ by the blood of the cross, whereby he confirmed the new covenant, should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation, to salvation, and given to him by the Father; that he should confer upon them faith, which, together with all the other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, he purchased for them by his death; should purge them from all sin, both original and actual, whether committed before or after believing; and having faithfully preserved them even

to the end, should at last bring them free from every spot and blemish to the enjoyment of glory in his own presence forever.

9. This purpose proceeding from everlasting love towards the elect, has, from the beginning of the world to this day, been powerfully accomplished, and will, henceforward, still continue to be accomplished, notwithstanding all the ineffectual opposition to the gates of hell; so that the elect in due time may be gathered together into one, and that there never may be wanting a Church composed of believers, the foundation of which is laid in the blood of Christ, which may steadfastly love and faithfully serve him as their Saviour, who, as a bridegroom for his bride, laid down his life for them upon the cross; and which may celebrate his praises here and through eternity.

From the Second Head of Doctrine at the Synod of Dort, 1619

# Difficult Questions, Certain Answers

by Nathan Pitchford

## ***Difficult Questions***

Why does my life seem so empty? Why do I find it so hard to improve myself? Why does that the long-awaited raise I just got (or house, car, professional success, boyfriend/girlfriend, etc.) seem like such a letdown? Does anyone else feel like the American Dream isn't all it's cracked up to be? Isn't there more to life than this? And what about after this life? What comes then?

As human beings, we all grapple with questions and struggles that no mere machine could understand. This is because we are not just machines. We are uniquely created in the image of God, and we will never find the answers to the deepest questions which confront us unless we hear from him. Until then, all we can do is try to cover up our doubts, fears, and guilt by chasing pleasures which always let us down in the end, or working for goals that can never be enough to satisfy us at our deepest level of need. We may have all the entertainment that money can provide; but in those rare moments of soul-deep truthfulness, we realize that in all our flurry of activity, we are still lacking one thing: *a purpose that is great enough to satisfy us forever.*

## ***The Purpose for Which We Were Made***

Fortunately, God has not left us without providing certain answers to all of these questions. We were made in his image (Genesis 1:26-27), to enjoy fellowship with him (Psalm 16:11; 17:5; 65:4) and glorify him

forever (Isaiah 43:7; Revelation 4:11), ruling over all the earth in love and righteousness (Genesis 1:28), and dwelling with each other in peace and unity (Psalm 133:1; John 13:34-35). Until we experience that purpose, and know what it is to have the joy and peace of fellowship with God instead of running from him in guilt and shame – what it is to find pleasure in him instead of chasing the fleeting pleasures of what he has created – we will never be truly happy.

### ***Our Great Problem***

But unfortunately, we have a massive problem. Our first father, Adam, listened to the temptation of the Serpent, disobeyed God in the Paradise of Eden, and forfeited all of the enjoyments that God had created him for. Instead of delicious fruits, he had to contend with weeds and thistles. Instead of meaning and satisfaction, he had to live a life characterized by toil, travail, and vanity, which would end in certain death. And instead of fellowship with God, and love and peace with humankind, he was overwhelmed by guilt and shame, and driven out of God's presence into the dog-eat-dog world of betrayals, hatred, violence, and prejudice that we all know today (Genesis 3:17-19).

And the problem is even greater than this: we were all in Adam when he fell, and so we have all inherited the same corrupted nature and the same curse of sorrow and despair (Psalm 51:5; Romans 5:19; 1 Corinthians 15:22). We were made to enjoy God: but now we all hate God (John 3:19-20; 8:42-45), and would rather hide from him, pretend he doesn't exist (Psalm 10:10-11; 14:1), try to satisfy him on our own terms (Genesis 4:3-7; Jeremiah 7:22-24), and make him into the sort of deity that we would prefer (Exodus 32:1-8; Romans 1:19-23). We don't like the just and holy God who will not overlook sin, so we make him into a god that will let us rebel against his

commandments and follow our own desires, and never punish us. We are immersed in a world of hurts and pains, we condemn others for doing the same things we have done, we have no mercy for those who offend us but demand mercy when we have offended others, we are hypocrites and actors, selfish and sinful, and the whole world is spiraling out of control. And in the background, in those places of the mind where we are too frightened to go, we know that there is a God whose patience will one day end, and who will judge the world in holy justice.

### ***God's Great Promise***

Even though the image of God that we were created with has been distorted, we still retain enough of it to know what God *should* have done to Adam and to all who were born into his image: he should have judged us all. If someone severely wrongs us – rapes and murders our daughters, say – we feel that it would be a great travesty just to let him go. But we have murdered and raped God's image, despised his law, spat in his face, as it were (Romans 3:10-19). Deep down, we know that this world is not right, and we know that God should not just let us go. This is why God's first response to Adam is so surprising. Instead of immediate punishment, God gave Adam an incredible promise: he said that he would send a man, born of Adam's line, to defeat the Serpent who had first tempted us to sin, rescue us from our misery, and bring us back into his presence (Genesis 3:15).

The bible is a long and complicated book, but it's easy enough to understand the basic point of it if we keep this one principle in mind: the whole bible, after this first promise in Genesis 3:15, is all about what God will do to keep that great promise without violating the holy justice of his nature. Immediately after this promise, we see the

worldwide effects of Adam's sin: from the first, the world is filled with violence, hatred, and selfishness, until God's patience runs out, and he suddenly destroys the entire world with water – but he does not forget his promise, and so he graciously rescues one man, Noah, together with his family, and assures him again that he will send his promised Savior, who will not finish his work until humankind is accomplishing its original purpose (Genesis 6-9). A little later, when the world has again become corrupt, God remembers his promise and calls out another man, Abraham, promising that through his line will come this promised Savior, and that he will overturn the worldwide curse and bring an eternal blessing to people from every nation (Genesis 12:1-3). And so throughout the rest of the Old Testament we find humanity's failures and God's faithfulness to his covenant promises. When Abraham's line is in slavery, God remembers his promise and delivers them from Egypt through his servant Moses (Exodus 1-15). When they have forsaken him and turned to their own ways, God remembers his promise and gives them a great king, David, declaring that the promised Savior will come through his line, and reign over his people forever (2 Samuel 7). But finally, after countless rebellions, God has had enough. He casts off his people, and gives them over to punishment, scattering them throughout the world. It seems as if his promise has been forgotten at last (Hosea 1:6, 9).

### ***The Fulfillment of the Promise***

But God had not forgotten his promise. So one day, when the whole world was corrupt and evil, and the cruel Roman Empire held sway over all the civilized earth, God finally sent his promised Savior, from the line of Adam, Abraham, and David (Galatians 4:4-5). But he did not then come as a glorious, conquering King. His work was different – with less pomp and fanfare, but much greater and more difficult. If

you remember our problem, you will appreciate how vast this Savior's work had to be. Not only were we deceived by the Serpent (2 Corinthians 4:3-4); not only are we blinded, corrupt, and dead in our sins (Jeremiah 13:23; Isaiah 64:6; Ephesians 2:1-3; 4:18); not only do we have to be given new life, changed in our inmost natures, re-made into God's image which we have horribly marred (Ezekiel 36:26; Colossians 2:13; Ephesians 4:22-24); but we also have to be reconciled to God (Romans 5:8-10; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19; Ephesians 2:15-18), whom we have rebelled against, and who is too just to overlook sin (Habakkuk 1:13; Exodus 34:7). Because God is holy, he has infinite and terrible wrath against our sins, which his patience and forbearance is restraining for now, but which will some day rain down with immense fury, as it did when he destroyed the world in Noah's day (Isaiah 13:9; Romans 1:18; 2:4-6; Ephesians 5:6; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9; 2 Peter 3:3-10; Revelation 6:16-17). It is great enough to be delivered from the devil; it is greater yet to be delivered from our own selves, and changed in our very natures; but who could ever deliver us from the great and holy God whose very nature demands that we be punished? What sort of Savior could that be? How can God be just, and still fulfill his promise to forgive us, pronounce us righteous, and bring us back to his presence (Romans 3:23-26)?

That is the task that Jesus came to accomplish. God's justice demands that we be condemned. His wrath against us is immense. But Jesus came to be a wrath-absorbing sacrifice for our sins (Romans 3:24-25; 1 John 2:2). He came to take our sins upon himself, stand condemned in our place, and experience the full effects of God's condemnation of us as a wicked and perverted race (Isaiah 53:4-6; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24). And so upon the cross God crushed his only beloved Son, exiled him in great fury from his presence, and satisfied his righteousness and justice (Isaiah



53:10; Matthew 27:46; Acts 4:26-28). Because Jesus was one of us, of the seed of Adam, it was fitting that he be our substitute, and take our punishment (Hebrews 2:10-18). Because he was God, his being was infinite enough to absorb all of God's infinite wrath, and still overcome by rising from the dead (Acts 2:24; Romans 1:3-4; 1 Corinthians 15:12-21). Because he was perfect and spotless, he had a sufficient righteousness to give us so that we might enjoy the reward of God's presence (Philippians 3:9; 1 Peter 2:22-24). This is the great salvation that the promised Savior accomplished: God had promised to bring back to himself a people chosen from every nation on the earth; then Jesus came down from heaven, took all of the sins of his people upon him, absorbed God's wrath against those sins, gave them his own flawless righteousness, and rose victorious from the dead, having defeated the Serpent and having won eternal life in the presence of God for all the people that God had promised to save.

### ***What That Means for Us Today***

Jesus won a great victory on the cross, and ensured the fulfillment of God's great promise to Adam. But he has not yet seen all the fruits of his great victory. Now, he has sent his Spirit into all the world to open the blinded eyes of his people (John 16:7-14), to grant them faith and repentance (Acts 5:31; 11:18; Ephesians 2:8-10), to apply the forgiveness of sins and the free gift of righteousness that he has won, and to begin to change them into his own image (2 Corinthians 3:17-18), so that they might one day inherit a new earth (Matthew 5:5), created in righteousness, where they will live as they were designed to live, glorifying God by enjoying fellowship with him and dwelling in unity with each other (Revelation 21:1-4). Some day, the full fruits of Christ's great sacrifice will be gathered from all the earth (Matthew 24:14; Revelation 5:9), and he will return to judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:31). All who have not bowed the knee

before him, crying out for his forgiveness and mercy, he will judge with all the holy wrath of God. All those who have come to him in faith, and who await his appearing with joy and hope, he will bless with all the rewards that his own perfect life deserves (2 Thessalonians 1:5-10). Today, just as in the days of Noah, the world is corrupt, and people are going about their daily business in complacency, never considering that it is only God's great forbearance that keeps the world from utter destruction. Soon, that forbearance will be ended, Jesus will return in great glory, and the wicked world will be destroyed (Matthew 24:36-39; 25:31-46). All will bow down before him (Philippians 2:9-11). Will you bow in terror and despair, only to be cast away from his presence, knowing that you will have to endure the horror of his wrath for all eternity? Or will you bow in great joy and triumph, knowing that you are saved by his coming, and made an heir of the new heavens and earth, where all will be joy and peace, because God is dwelling among men in love? *Today* is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2)! God *now* commands all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30) – and his patience will soon run out. Repent and believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31)! “For all who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved” (Romans 10:9-13).

## **What is the Gospel?**

**by John Fonville**

**Man's Misery**

Man comes to know his misery through the law of God (Rom. 3:20; 7:7-25). No man can or will come to know the forgiving grace of God freely offered in the Gospel until he has been humbled and brought to know his exceeding misery before a holy God.

God's law requires absolute perfection (Matt. 5:48). Christ, in Matthew 22:37-39, teaches us a summary of what God requires in His law:

"37 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. "

The problem is that all mankind has fallen short of God's requirement to measure up in every way to God's divine law (Rom. 3:20, 23). All men by nature and by choice hate God and their neighbor (Gen. 2:6:5; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 7:23-24; 8:7; Eph. 2:1-3; Titus 3:3). There is no one who is righteous (Isa. 64:6; Rom. 3:9-20, 23; 1 John 1:8, 10). No one's righteousness can pass God's scrutiny and stand in His judgment (Psalm 76:7; 130:3; Rev. 6:17).

Because man has willingly broken God's law, he lives under a spiritual curse, specifically, under sin and the wrath of God, and everlasting death (John 3:36; 5:24; Rom. 1:18; Rom. 5:9; Eph. 5:6; Col. 3:6; 1 Thess. 2:16; 1 Jn. 3:14; Rev. 19:15). As it is written, "For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them," (Gal. 3:10; [Deut. 27:26]).

God will not permit such disobedience and rebellion to go unpunished. For the Scriptures teach that, "no creature is hidden

from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account," (Heb. 4:13).

God is terribly angry with the sin man is born with (Ps. 51:5) as well as the sins man personally commits and thus will punish sinful man both now and in eternity (Ex. 34:7; Ps. 5:4-6; Nahum 1:2; Rom. 1:18; Eph. 5:6; Heb. 9:27).

Though God is merciful, He is also just (Ex. 34:7; Deut. 7:9-11; Ps. 5:4-6; Heb. 10:30-31). The Lord God is a holy God (Isa. 6:3; Hab. 1:12-13; Jam. 1:13). He is a consuming fire, a jealous God (Deut. 4:24; 12:29). Thus, His justice demands that sin, committed against His supreme majesty be punished with the supreme penalty, namely eternal punishment of body and soul in hell (Matt. 10:28; 25:35-46).

### **How then shall a sinful man reply to the Heavenly Judge when he calls him to account?**

Because sinful man cannot pay the debt which God's justice demands, the debt must be paid in full by another (Isa. 53:11; Rom. 8:3-4). The answer then lies in the Gospel. The Gospel is the answer to man's greatest problem.

### **Man's Deliverance**

Man comes to know his deliverance through the gospel of God (Mark 1:14; Rom. 1:1, 16).

What is the Gospel?

## An Announcement of Good News

"...I bring you good news of great joy," (Luke 2:10)!

"...at its briefest, the Gospel is a discourse (story) about Christ, that he is the Son of God and became man for us, that he died and was raised, that he has been established as Lord over all things...This is the Gospel in a nutshell," (Martin Luther, Luther's Works, 35:117-124).

In Luke 2:10, the angel announces to the shepherds, "...I bring you good news of great joy!" The term gospel literally means "good news!" It is an announcement of joyful tidings, revealed from heaven to man (Luke 2:10-11; Gal. 1:11-12).

The good news of the Gospel is that God promises and proclaims, out of His sheer free grace and mercy on account of and for the sake of Christ alone to:

\* Forgive the believer's sin and reckon him as righteous in God's sight (Matt. 26:28; Luke 24:47; Acts 5:31; 10:43; Rom. 4:4-8; 5:17; 2 Cor. 5:19-21; Eph. 1:7);

\* Deliver the believer from death (John 5:24; 8:51-52; 1 Cor. 15:54-55; Heb. 2:15; Rev. 20:6, 14), the devil (Eph. 2:2; Col. 2:15), condemnation (Rom. 8:1), and the wrath of God (Rom. 5:9; Eph. 2:3-5; 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9);

\* Raise up the believer from death, reuniting his body and soul to a blessedness in which to praise and enjoy God forever (1 Cor. 15:20, 42-46, 54; Philip. 3:21; 1 John 3:2; John 17:3; 1 Cor. 2:9).

God promises to give these benefits to all that repent and believe (Mark 1:15; John 3:16, 36; 5:24; 6:40, 47; 17:2-3; Acts 10:43; 16:31). Through the preaching of the gospel the Holy Spirit works effectually in the hearts of sinners and produces in them, faith, repentance, and

the beginning of eternal life (John 3:5; Acts 11:18; 16:14; Rom. 1:5, 16-17; 10:17; 16:26; 1 Cor. 2:10-14; 2 Cor. 3:8; Eph. 2:8; Phil. 1:29; 2 Tim. 2:25). Thus, in the Gospel God gives to us what He demands from us.

God first revealed this good news in the garden of Eden immediately after the fall of man into sin (Gen. 3:15). Afterwards, though less clearly and to fewer persons, God revealed this good news:

- \* by the Patriarchs (Gen. 12:3 [John 8:56]; 22:18; 49:10; Deut. 10:15; Num. 21:9; 24:17; 1 Cor. 10:1; Heb. 11:13);

- \* by the Prophets (Isa. 53; Jer. 23:5-6; Mic. 7:18-20; John 5:46; Acts 10:43; Romans 1:2; 10:4; 1 Peter 1:10; Heb. 1:1-2);

- \* by the shadows of sacrifices and the other ceremonies of the law (Lev. 1-7; John 5:46; Heb. 10:1-10).

- \* and in these last days (Heb. 1:2), God has more clearly and broadly revealed this good news by his only begotten Son who entered the world and became a man (Mark 16:15; Luke 2:10-11; 24:47; John 1:18, 29; 6:41; 14:6; 15:5; Acts 1:8; Rom. 10:4; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8; Gal. 4:4-5; Eph. 2:15-19; Phil. 2:6-11; Col. 2:17; 1 Timothy 2:5; Heb. 1:1-2).

## **Why was Christ's humanity necessary?**

### **Christ's Humanity**

"Behold, the Virgin shall conceive and bear a son,..." (Matt. 1:23).

The gospel declares the good news that Christ was manifested in the flesh, " 10 Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord," (Luke 2:10-11; 1 Tim. 3:16).

The eternal Son of God had to become man because sinful man cannot pay for others the debt they owe to God (Heb. 7:26-27; 1 Peter 3:18). Christ, the Mediator, had to be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14) and become a man because God's justice demands that human nature, which has sinned, must pay for its sin (Rom. 5:12, 15; 1 Cor. 15:21; Heb. 2:14-16).

## **Why was Christ's deity necessary?**

### **Christ's Deity**

"...the Word was God." (Jn. 1:1)

Yet, it was necessary that our Mediator also be God (Jn. 1:1, 18; 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Col. 1:15-19; 2:9; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:3, 8; 1 Jn. 5:20; 2 Pet. 1:1) so that by His own power, He might bear the weight of God's anger in His humanity and earn for us and restore us to righteousness and life (Isa. 53; John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:21). "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel," which means, God with us," (Matt. 1:23).

## **Why did Christ die on the cross?**

### **Christ's Death**

"Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,..." (1 Cor. 15:3b)

The gospel declares that Christ freely offered Himself as a sacrifice on the Cross in order to satisfy the just and righteous demands of

God and His law, which has been broken by sinful man (Rom. 3:25-26; 1 Peter 2:24).

The gospel declares that Jesus Christ, the Mediator, was given for sinners to set them completely free and to make them right with God (Isa. 53; Matt. 1:21-23; Mk. 10:45; Luke 2:11; 1 Tim. 2:5; 1 Cor. 1:30). On the cross, Christ, the righteous servant, "would render Himself as a guilt offering" for sinners (Isa. 53:10). He would "bear their iniquities," and intercede "for the transgressors," (Isa. 53:11-12).

And so Christ came and lived a life of perfect obedience to God (Ps. 40:8; John 8:29; 1 Peter 2:22-24) and fulfilled all righteousness (Matt. 3:15), not for His own wellbeing but for His people.

Thus, Christ was qualified as the perfect, sinless, fully righteous Mediator and Savior because as a man He could be tempted and yet because He was God could not and did not sin (John 8:46; 14:30; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:22; 3:18; 1 Jn. 2:1).

## **What is the significance of Christ's burial?**

### **Christ's Burial**

"...and that He was buried..." (1 Cor. 15:4a)

After Jesus death, He was taken down from the cross and laid in a tomb (Acts 13:29). Jesus' burial certifies the reality of His death and points forward to the reality of His resurrection.

## **How important is the bodily resurrection of Christ?**



## **Christ's Resurrection**

"...that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that He appeared..." (1 Cor. 15:4b-5a)

The gospel declares that Jesus rose bodily from the dead on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures and appeared for forty days to a host of eyewitnesses (Matt. 28:1-10; Mk. 16:1-8; Lk. 24:1-12; Jn. 20:1-10; Acts 2:24-32; 1 Cor. 15:3-4). As Peter declared, "God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it," (Acts 2:24).

The death of Christ is futile without his triumphant resurrection (1 Cor. 15:12-19). Therefore, the resurrection vindicated Christ's teaching as well as His life and death. His resurrection demonstrated that His death on the cross was an effectual sacrifice for sins. The resurrection demonstrates that Christ achieved victory over sin, death and the devil and that the good news about Him is true (Acts 2:24; 17:31; 1 Cor. 15:1-11, 20, 54-57; Col. 2:12-15; Rev. 1:18).

Christ was not raised for His own wellbeing but for the wellbeing of His people. His resurrection guarantees the believer's present forgiveness, justification and co-resurrection with Him into newness of spiritual life (1 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 4:25; 6:4-11; Eph. 2:1-10; Col. 2:12; 3:1-11; 1 Pet. 1:3).

Still further, Christ's resurrection guarantees the believer's future resurrection when Christ returns to match our spiritual co-resurrection with a bodily transformation (John 11:25-26; Phil. 3:21; 1 Cor. 15:12, 50-54; 2 Cor. 5:4; 1 Thess. 4:14). This great hope of the church will signify the final destruction of death, which is a hostile and destructive intruder into God's creation (1 Cor. 15:26, 54-56).

"25 I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die," (John 11:25-26).

## **Why is Christ's ascension important?**

### **Christ's Ascension**

"...as they were looking on, He was lifted up..." (Acts 1:9)

Forty days (Acts 1:3) after His resurrection, Christ ascended to heaven (Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:9-11; 2:34; Philip. 2:9-11) where He is now seated at the right hand of God (Eph. 1:20-21; Heb. 1:3; 10:12) presently reigning as King and Head of His church (Eph. 1:20-23; Col. 1:18; Matt. 28:18; John 5:22-23)..

Christ's ascension was the consummation of His redemptive work and thus the source of great benefits for believers:

\* Christ now intercedes for His people as their advocate before His Father applying unto them the perpetual and infinite worth of His one great sacrifice (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25-26; 10:12; 1 John 2:1-2). Thus believers may have great assurance that Christ will forever defend them, since He is reigning as their glorious Head and is exalted far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. (Eph. 1:21; Phil. 2:9; Heb. 7:26)

\* Christ sends the Holy Spirit to gather, comfort and defend His people and to seek those things, which are above, because it is there that Christ is (John 14:15-26; 16:7; Eph. 4:8; Col. 3:1-10).

\* Christ's ascension into Heaven guarantees all believers their future

glorification and eternal dwelling and reign with Christ in glory (John 12:26; 14:1-3; Rev. 5:10; Rev. 22:5).

## **When will Christ come again?**

### **Christ's Return**

"This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11)

Jesus is now in Heaven until He comes again visibly in His glorified human body to judge the living and the dead (Matt. 24:30; John 5:22, 27; Acts 1:11; Acts 10:42; 2 Tim. 4:1; 1 Pet. 4:5). He will come at the time appointed by God the Father (Acts 3:21; 1 Pet. 4:7), a time which no one knows, not even the angels of heaven nor the Son (Matt. 24:36; 25:13; 1 Thess. 5:1-2). All who have trusted in Christ alone will be raised to everlasting life and all who rejected Christ will be raised to everlasting punishment (Dan. 2:1-2; Matt. 25:31-46; Jn. 5:28-29).

How may a sinful man come to share in the benefits of the gospel and escape the judgment of God? How is a sinful man made right with God?

### **God's Gift**

Man comes to share in the benefits of the gospel through faith, which is the gift of God (Rom. 4:4-5; Eph. 2:8-9)." 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift

of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast," (Eph. 2:8-9).

No amount of good works will make a man acceptable to God (Isa. 64:6; Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:10-14; Titus 3:4-7). Paul writes,

4 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life, (Titus 3:4-7).

The gospel declares that a man receives God's righteousness and makes it his own solely by grace through the gift of faith alone in Christ alone (Rom. 3:21-28; 10:10; Gal. 2:16; 3:7-9, 14; Eph. 2:8-9; Philip. 3:8-11; 1 John 5:10-12).

"4 Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. 5 And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness...", (Rom. 4:4-5).

When a man trusts in Christ alone his sins are forgiven, he is declared just by God, and adopted into God's family as a beloved son (John 1:11-13; 3:16, 18, 36; Acts 16:30-31; Eph. 1:3-14; Rom. 4:4; 5:1).

## **God's Invitation**

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," is both Christ's invitation and promise. Jesus is a kind, gracious, merciful saving Lord. If you come, He will receive you.

Trust in Him to save you from the guilt and power of your sin (Matt. 26:28; Acts 13:38; 1 Cor. 1:8; Col. 1:14). Trust in Him to save you from His wrath and condemnation (Rom. 8:1; 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9). Trust in Him to save you from the dominion of the devil (Acts 26:18). Trust Him to give you a new heart (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:26-27; 2 Cor. 5:17). Will you trust on Christ alone for the forgiveness of your sins?

"Desperate cases are the glorious triumphs of His art of saving."

Christ will save the vilest and most wretched of sinners who come to Him for salvation. The vilest sinners are properly qualified and prepared for the gospel's design, which is to show forth the exceeding riches of grace when God pardons their sins and saves them freely (Eph. 2:5-7).

13 though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, 14 and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 15 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. 16 But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life (1 Tim. 1:13-16).

You do not have to delay. You do not have to prepare yourself to come. All that man brings to the Lord in salvation is his sin, sheer disgrace and emptiness. Christ calls you to freely believe in Him who

justifies the ungodly (Rom. 4:5). He does not require you to be godly before you believe.

*Christ came not for the healthy but for the sick (Matt. 9:12). He did not come to call the righteous but sinners (Matt. 9:13). He did not come to call the rich but the poor (i.e., those who recognize their spiritual poverty; Matt. 11:5; Mark 10:17-31; Luke 4:18).*

*Come, ye thirsty, come and welcome, God's free bounty glorify;  
True belief and true repentance, Every grace that brings you nigh.*

*Come, ye sinners, poor and need, weak and wounded, sick and sore;  
Jesus ready stands to save you, Full of pity, love and power.*

*Come ye weary, heavy laden, Lost and ruined by the fall; If you  
tarry till you're better, You will never come at all.*

*View Him prostrate in the garden; On the ground your Maker  
lies; On the bloody tree behold Him; Sinner, will this not  
suffice?*

*Lo! th' incarnate God ascended, Pleads the merit of His blood;  
Venture on Him, venture wholly, Let no other trust intrude.*

*Let not conscience make you linger, Not of fitness fondly  
dream; All the fitness He requireth is to feel your need of Him.*

Jesus has given full satisfaction to the justice of God for sinners (Rom. 3:25). Therefore, come to Christ just as you are. He will receive you when you come to Him for salvation. Those who trust in Christ will never perish (John 3:16; John 10:28). Come to Jesus and

He will not cast you out. "All that the Father gives me will come to Me, and whoever comes to Me I will never cast out," (John 6:37).

"1 Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. 2 Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. 3 Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David... 6 "Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; 7 let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon," (Isa. 55:1-3, 6-7).

"The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price," (Rev. 22:17).

What about you? Will you come? Let whosoever will, come!

## **On the Covenant of Works & Grace**

## by John Calvin

When he taught that the whole law is contained in two articles, our Lord Jesus Christ declared to us clearly enough what is the real purpose of all the commandments of the Law. The first article is that we should love the Lord, our God, with all our heart, with all our soul and all our strength. The second article is that we should love our neighbor as much as we love ourself. And he has taken this interpretation from the Law itself, for the first part is found in Deuteronomy 6:5, and we see the other in Leviticus 19:18. There, then, is the standard and pattern of a holy and righteous life, and even a most perfect picture of righteousness; so that if someone expresses the Law of God in his life, he will not lack before the Lord anything of what is required of perfection. To bear this out, the God promises to those who will have carried out his Law not only the great blessings of the present life which are referred to in Leviticus 26:3-13 and Deuteronomy 28:1-14, but also the reward of eternal life (Lev. 18:5).

On the other hand, God announces the retribution of eternal death for those who will not have accomplished by their deeds all that is commanded in this Law (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). Also Moses, having made the Law known, takes heaven and earth to witness that he has just put before the people good and evil, life and death (Deut 30:19-20). But although the Law shows the path of life, yet we have to see how it can benefit us. Of course, if our will were fully trained and disposed to obey God's will, just to know the Law would be more than enough to save us. As it is, however, our carnal and corrupt nature fights all the time, and in every way, against the Spiritual Law of God. The teaching of this Law does not improve our nature in any



way at all. so it is that this same Law (which was given for salvation if it found hearers who were good and capable of keeping it) turns into something which results in sin and death. For since we are all convicted of being transgressors of the Law, the more clearly the Law reveals to us the righteousness of God, the more clearly, on the other hand, it uncovers our unrighteousness. Consequently, the more the Law catches us going further into transgression, the heavier will be the judgment of God of which it finds us guilty. The promise of eternal life being removed, all that remains for us is the curse which, by the Law, falls on us all.

The evidence given by the Law proves the unrighteousness and transgression of all of us. Its purpose in this, however, is not that we might fall into despair nor, being totally discouraged, that we should founder in ruin. Admittedly, the Apostle testifies that we are all condemned by the Law's judgment, so that every mouth may be closed and the entire world be found guilty before God (Rom 3:19). However, he himself teaches elsewhere that God has imprisoned all men under the power of unbelief, not in order to ruin them or let them perish, but that he might have mercy on all (Rom 11:32). Having then used the Law to tell us of our weakness and impurity, the Lord comforts us through trust in his power and mercy. And it is in Christ, his Son, that he reveals himself as being benevolent and favourably disposed to us. In the Law God only appears as the rewarder of perfect righteousness - of which we are completely bereft - and, on the other hand, as the upright and strict Judge of sins, in Christ, his face is full of grace and gentleness, and shines on miserable, unworthy sinners. For this is the admirable display of his infinite love that he gave to us: he delivered up his own son for us and, in Him, opened to us all the treasures of his mercy and goodness.

Excerpt from Truth for all Time by John Calvin

## Faith and Regeneration

by C.H. Spurgeon

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A Sermon

(No. 979)

Delivered on Lord's-day Morning, March 5th, 1871

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

*In the following sermon, Spurgeon teaches with the correct biblical tension that **saving faith** is both the **duty of man** and is the **gift of God** (through regeneration). Spurgeon's doctrinal position so parallels my own convictions on the matter, that I feel the need to get many essays and sermons like these in the hands of modern evangelicals. The **highlighted** sections of his sermon are concepts that I think are particularly illuminating -JWH*

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Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ **has been born of God**, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. - 1 John 5:1

**FOR THE PREACHER** of the gospel to make full proof of his ministry will be a task requiring much divine teaching. Besides much care in the manner and spirit, he will need guidance as to his matter. One point of difficulty will be to preach the whole truth in fair

proportion, never exaggerating one doctrine, never enforcing one point, at the expense of another, never keeping back any part, nor yet allowing it undue prominence. For practical result will much depend upon an equal balance, and a right dividing of the word. In one case this matter assumes immense importance because it affects vital truths, and may lead to very serious results unless rightly attended to; I refer to the elementary facts involved in the work of Christ for us, and the operations of the Holy Spirit in us. Justification by faith is a matter about which there must be no obscurity much less equivocation; and at the same time we must distinctly and determinately insist upon it that regeneration is necessary to every soul that shall enter heaven. "Ye must be born again" is as much a truth as that clear gospel statement, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." It is to be feared that some zealous brethren have preached the doctrine of justification by faith not only so boldly and so plainly, but also so baldly and so out of all connection with other truth, that they have led men into presumptuous confidences, and have appeared to lend their countenance to a species of Antinomianism very much to be dreaded. From a dead, fruitless, inoperative faith we may earnestly pray, "Good Lord, deliver us," yet may we be unconsciously, fostering it. Moreover to stand up and cry, "Believe, believe, believe," without explaining what is to be believed, to lay the whole stress of salvation upon faith without explaining what salvation is, and showing that it means deliverance from the power as well as from the guilt of sin, may seem to a fervent revivalist to be the proper thing for the occasion, but those who have watched the result of such teaching have had grave cause to question whether as much hurt may not be done by it as good. On the other hand, it is our sincere conviction that there is equal danger in the other extreme. **We are most certain that a man must be made a new creature in Christ Jesus, or he is not saved;** but some have seen so clearly the importance of this truth that they are for

ever and always dwelling upon the great change of conversion, and its fruits, and its consequences, and they hardly appear to remember the glad tidings that **whosoever believeth on Christ Jesus hath everlasting life**. Such teachers are apt to set up so high a standard of experience, and to be so exacting as to the marks and signs of a true born child of God, that they greatly discourage sincere seekers, and fall into a species of legality from which we may again say, "Good Lord, deliver us." Never let us fail most plainly to testify to the undoubted truth that true faith in Jesus Christ saves the soul, for if we do not we shall hold in legal bondage many who ought long ago to have enjoyed peace, and to have entered into the liberty of the children of God.

It may not be easy to keep these two things in their proper position, but we must aim at it if we would be wise builders. John did so in his teaching. If you turn to the third chapter of his gospel it is very significant that while he records at length our Saviour's exposition of the new birth to Nicodemus, yet in that very same chapter he gives us what is perhaps the plainest piece of gospel in all the Scriptures: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." So, too, in the chapter before us he insists upon a man's being born of God; he brings that up again and again, but evermore does he ascribe wondrous efficacy to faith; he mentions **faith as the index of our being born again, faith as overcoming the world, faith as possessing the inward witness, faith as having eternal life**—indeed, he seems as if he could not heap honour enough upon believing, while at the same time he insists upon the grave importance of the **inward experience connected with the new birth**.

Now, if such difficulty occurs to the preacher, we need not wonder

that it also arises with the hearer, and causes him questioning. We have known many who, by hearing continually the most precious doctrine that belief in Jesus Christ is saving, have forgotten other truths, and have concluded that they were saved when they were not, have fancied they believed when as yet they were total strangers to the experience which always attends true faith. They have imagined faith to be the same thing as a presumptuous confidence of safety in Christ, not grounded upon the divine word when rightly understood, nor proved by any facts in their own souls. Whenever self-examination has been proposed to them they have avoided it as an assault upon their assurance, and when they have been urged to try themselves by gospel tests, they have defended their false peace by the notion that to raise a question about their certain salvation would be unbelief. Thus, I fear, the conceit of supposed faith in Christ has placed them in an almost hopeless position, since the warnings and admonitions of the gospel have been set aside by their fatal persuasion that it is needless to attend to them, and only necessary to cling tenaciously to the belief that all has been done long ago for us by Christ Jesus, and that godly fear and careful walking are superfluities, if not actually an offence against the gospel. On the other hand, we have known others who have received the doctrine of justification by faith as a part of their creed, and yet have not accepted it as a practical fact that the believer is saved. They so much feel that they must be renewed in the spirit of their minds, that they are always looking within themselves for evidences, and are the subjects of perpetual doubts. Their natural and frequent song is—

"Tis a point I long to know,  
Oft it causes anxious thought;  
Do I love the Lord, or no?  
Am I his, or am I not?"

These are a class of people to be much more pitied than condemned. Though I would be the very last to spread unbelief, I would be the very first to inculcate holy anxiety. It is one thing for a person to be careful to know that he is really in Christ, and quite another thing for him to doubt the promises of Christ, supposing that they are really made to him. There is a tendency in some hearts to look too much within, and spend more time studying their outward evidences and their inward feelings, than in learning the fullness, freeness, and all sufficiency of the grace of God in Christ Jesus. They too much obscure the grand evangelical truth that the believer's acceptance with God is not in himself, but in Christ Jesus, that we are cleansed through the blood of Jesus, that we are clothed in the righteousness of Jesus, and are, in a word, "accepted in the Beloved." **I earnestly long that these two doctrines may be well balanced in your souls. Only the Holy Spirit can teach you this.** This is a narrow path which the eagle's eye has not seen, and the lions whelp has not trodden. He whom the Holy Ghost shall instruct will not give way to presumption and despise the Spirit's work within, neither will he forget that salvation is of the Lord Jesus Christ, "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." The text appears to me to blend these two truths in a very delightful harmony, and we will try to speak of them, God helping us.

"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God" We shall consider this morning, first of all, ***the believing which is here intended***; and then, secondly, ***how it is a sure proof of regeneration***; and then, thirdly, dwelling for awhile upon the closing part of the verse we shall show how it ***becomes an argument for Christian love***: "Every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him."

## I. WHAT IS THE BELIEVING INTENDED IN THE TEXT?

We are persuaded, first of all, that the believing here intended is that which our Lord and his apostles exhorted men to exercise, and to which the promise of salvation is always appended in the word of God; as for instance that faith which Peter inculcated when he said to Cornelius, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive the remission of sins;" and which our Lord commanded when he came into Galilee, saying to men, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark i. 15). Certain persons have been obliged to admit that the apostles commanded, and exhorted, and besought men to believe, but they tell us the kind of believing which the apostles bade men exercise was not saving faith. Now, God forbid we should ever in our zeal to defend a favorite position, be driven to an assertion so monstrous. Can we imagine for a moment apostles with burning zeal and ardor, inspired by the Spirit of God within them, going about the world exhorting men to exercise a faith which after all would not save them? To what purpose did they run on so fruitless an errand, so tantalizing to human need, so barren of results? When our Lord bade his disciples go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, and added, "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," the faith which was to be preached was evidently none other than a saving faith, and it is frivolous to say otherwise. I must confess that I felt shocked the other day to read in a certain sermon the remark that the words of Paul to the jailor "were spoken in a conversation held at midnight under peculiar circumstances, and the evangelist who wrote them was not present at the interview." Why, had it been at high noon, and had the whole world been present, the apostle could have given no fitter answer to the question, "**What must I do to be saved?**" than the one he did give, "**Believe in the Lord Jesus**

**Christ, and thou shalt be saved."** It is, I repeat, a mere frivolity or worse, to say that the faith enjoined by the apostles was a mere human faith which does not save, and that there is no certainty that such faith saves the soul. That cause must be desperate that calls for such a defence.

**Furthermore, the faith here intended is the duty of all men.** Read the text again: "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God." It can never be less than man's duty to believe the truth; that Jesus is the Christ is the truth, and it is the duty of every man to believe it. I understand her by "believing," confidence in Christ, and it is surely the duty of men to confide in that which is worthy of confidence, and that Jesus Christ is worthy of the confidence of all men is certain, it is therefore the duty of men to confide in him.

Inasmuch as **the gospel command, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," is addressed by divine authority to every creature, it is the duty of every man so to do.** What saith John: *"This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ,"* and our Lord himself assures us, "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." I know there are **some who will deny this, and deny it upon the ground that man has not the spiritual ability to believe in Jesus, to which I reply that it is altogether an error to imagine that the measure of the sinners moral ability is the measure of his duty. There are many things which men ought to do which they have now lost the moral and spiritual, though not the physical, power to do.** A man ought to be chaste, but if he has been so long immoral that he cannot restrain his passions, he is not



thereby free from the obligation. **It is the duty of a debtor to pay his debts, but if he has been such a spendthrift that he has brought himself into hopeless poverty, he is not exonerated from his debts thereby. Every man ought to believe that which is true, but if his mind has become so depraved that he loves a lie and will not receive the truth, is he thereby excused?** If the law of God is to be lowered according to the moral condition of sinners, you would have a law graduated upon a sliding-scale to suit the degrees of human sinfulness; in fact, the worst man would be under the least law, and become consequently the least guilty. God's requirements would be a variable quantity, and, in truth, we should be under no rule at all. **The command of Christ stands good however bad men may be, and when he commands all men everywhere to repent, they are bound to repent, whether their sinfulness renders it impossible for them to be willing to so or not. In every case it is man's duty to do what God bids him.**

**At the same time, this faith, wherever it exists, is in every case, without exception, the gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit. Never yet did a man believe in Jesus with the faith here intended, except the Holy Spirit led him to do so. He has wrought all our works in us, and our faith too.** Faith is too celestial a grace to spring up in human nature till it is renewed: faith is in every believer "the gift of God." You will say to me, **"Are these two things consistent?"** I reply, **"Certainly, for they are both true."** "How consistent?" say you. "How inconsistent?" say I, and you shall have as much difficulty to prove them inconsistent as I to prove them consistent. Experience makes them consistent, if theory does not. Men are convinced by the Holy Spirit of sin—"of sin," saith Christ, "because they believe not on me;" here is one of the truths; but the selfsame hearts are taught the same

Spirit that faith is of the operation of God. (Col. ii. 2) **Brethren be willing to see both sides of the shield of truth. Rise above the babyhood which cannot believe two doctrines until it sees the connecting link.** Have you not two eyes, man? Must you needs put one of them out in order to see clearly? Is it impossible to you to use a spiritual stereoscope, and look at two views of truth until they melt into one, and that one becomes more real and actual because it is made up of two? **Many men refuse to see more than one side of a doctrine, and persistently fight against anything which is not on its very surface consistent with their own idea. In the present case I do not find it difficult to believe faith to be at the same time the duty of man and the gift of God; and if others cannot accept the two truths, I am not responsible for their rejection of them; my duty is performed when I have honestly borne witness to them.**

Hitherto we have only been clearing the way. Let us advance. The faith intended in the text evidently rests upon a person—upon Jesus. *"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God"* It is not belief about a doctrine, nor an opinion, nor a formula, but belief concerning a person. Translate the words, *"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ,"* and they stand thus: "Whosoever believeth that the Saviour is the Anointed is born of God." By which is assuredly not meant, whosoever professes to believe that he is so, for many do that whose lives prove that they are not regenerate; but, whosoever believes it to be the fact, as truly and in very deed to receive Jesus as God has set him forth and anointed him, is a regenerate man. What is meant by "Jesus is the Christ," or, Jesus is the Anointed? First, that he is the Prophet; secondly, that he is the Priest; thirdly, that he is the King of the church, for in all these three senses he is the Anointed. Now, I may ask myself this question: Do I this day believe that Jesus is the great Prophet anointed of God to

reveal to me the way of salvation? Do I accept him as my teacher and admit that he has the words of eternal life? If I so believe, I shall obey his gospel and possess eternal life. Do I accept him to be henceforth the revealer of God to my soul, the messenger of the covenant, the anointed prophet of the Most High? But he is also a priest. Now, a priest is ordained among men to offer sacrifices; do I firmly believe that Jesus was ordained to offer his one sacrifice for the sins of mankind, by the offering of which sacrifice once for all he has finished the atonement and made complete expiation? Do I accept his atonement as an atonement for me, and receive his death as an expiation upon which I rest my hope for forgiveness of all my transgressions? Do I in fact believe Jesus to be the one sole, only propitiating Priest, and accept him to act as priest for me? If so, then I have in part believed that Jesus is the Anointed. But he is also King, and if I desire to know whether I possess the right faith, I further must ask myself, "Is Jesus, who is now exalted in heaven, who once bled on the cross, is he King to me? Is his law my law? Do I desire to submit myself entirely to his government? Do I hate what he hates, and love what he loves? Do I live to praise him? Do I, as a loyal subject, desire to see his kingdom come and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven?" My dear friend, if thou canst heartily and earnestly say, "I accept Jesus Christ of Nazareth to be Prophet, Priest, and King to me, because God has anointed him to exercise those three offices; and in each of these three characters I unfeignedly trust him," then, dear friend, you have the faith of God's elect, for it is written, *"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God"*

Now we go a little further. True faith is reliance. Look at any Greek lexicon you like, and you will find that the word *pisteuein* does not merely mean to believe, but to trust, to confide in, to commit to, entrust with, and so forth; and the marrow of the meaning of faith is

confidence in, reliance upon. Let me ask, then, every professor her who professes to have faith, is your faith the faith of reliance? You give credit to certain statements, do you also place trust in the one who glorious person who alone can redeem? Have you confidence as well as credence? A creed will not save you, but reliance upon the Anointed Saviour is the way of salvation. Remember, I beseech you, that if you could be taught an orthodoxy unadulterated with error, and could learn a creed written by the pen of the Eternal God himself, yet a mere notional faith, such as men exercise when they believe in the existence of men in the moon, or nebulae in space, could not save your soul. Of this we are sure, because we see around us many who have such a faith, and yet evidently are not the children of God.

Moreover, true faith is not a flattering presumption, by which a man says, "I believe I am saved, for I have such delightful feelings, I have had a marvelous dream, I have felt very wonderful sensations;" for all such confidence may be nothing but mere assumption. Presumption, instead of being faith, is the reverse of faith; instead of being the substance of things hoped for, it is a mere mirage. Faith, is as correct as reason, and if her arguments are considered, she is as secure in her conclusions as though she drew them by mathematical rules. Beware, I pray you, of a faith which has no basis but your own fancy.

Faith, again, is not the assurance that Jesus died for me. I sometimes feel myself a little at variance with that verse—

"Just as I am—without one plea  
But that thy blood was shed for me."

It is eminently suitable for a child of God, but I am not sure as to its being the precise way for putting the matter for a sinner. **I do not believe in Jesus because I am persuaded that his blood was shed for me, but rather I discover that his blood was shed especially for me from the fact that I have been led to believe in him.** I fear me there are thousands of people who believe that Jesus died for them, who are not born of God, but rather are hardened in their sin by their groundless hopes of mercy. There is no particular efficacy in a man's assuming that Christ has died for me; for it is a mere truism, if it true as some teach, that Jesus died for everybody. **On such a theory every believer in a universal atonement would necessarily be born of God, which is very far from being the case. When the Holy Ghost leads us to rely upon the Lord Jesus, then the truth that God gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him might be saved, is opened up to our souls, and we see that for us who are believers, Jesus died with the special intent that we should be saved.** For the Holy Spirit to assure us that Jesus shed his blood for us in particular is one thing, but merely to conclude that Jesus for us on the notion that he died for everybody is as far as the east is from the west, from being real faith in Jesus Christ.

Neither is it faith for me to be confident that I am saved, for it may be the case that I am not saved, and it can never be faith to believe a lie. Many have concluded rashly that they were saved when they were still in the gall of bitterness. That was not the exhibition of confidence in Christ but the exhibition of a base presumption destructive to the last degree. To come back to where we started from, faith, in a word, is reliance upon Jesus Christ. Whether the Redeemer died in special and particular for me or not, is not the question to be raised in the first place; I find that he came into the

world to save sinners, under that general character I come to him, I find that whosoever trusteth him shall be saved, I therefore trust him, and having done so, I learn from his word that I am the object of his special love, and that I am born of God.

In my first coming to Jesus I can have no knowledge of any personal and special interest in the blood of Jesus; but since it is written, "God hath set him forth to be a propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world," I come and trust myself to that propitiation; sink or swim I cast myself on the Saviour. Great Son of God, thou hast lived and died, thou hast bled and suffered, and **made atonement for sin for all such as trust thee**, and I trust thee, I lean upon thee, I cast myself upon thee. Now, whoever has such faith as this is born of God, **he has true faith which is proof positive of the new birth**. Judge ye, therefore, whether ye have this faith or no.

Let me tarry just one minute longer over this. The true faith is set forth in Scripture by figures, and one or two of these we will mention. It was an eminent type of faith when the Hebrews father in Egypt slew the lamb and caught the warm blood in the basin, then took a bunch of hyssop and dipped it in the blood and marked the two posts of his door, and then struck a red mark across the lintel. That smearing of the door represented faith. The deliverance was wrought by the blood; and the blood availed through the householder's own personally striking it upon his door. Faith does that; it takes of the things of Christ, makes them its own, sprinkles the soul, as it were, with the precious blood, accepts the way of mercy by which the Lord passes over us and exempts his people from destruction. Faith was shown to the Jews in another way. When a beast was offered in sacrifice for sin, the priest and sometimes the representatives of the tribes or the individual laid their hands upon the victim in token that

they desired their sins to be transferred to it, that it might suffer for them as a type of the great substitute. Faith lays her hands on Jesus, desiring to receive the benefit of his substitutionary death.

A still more remarkable representation of faith was that of the healing look of the serpent-bitten Israelites. On the great standard in the midst of the camp Moses lifted up a serpent of brass; high overhead above all the tents this serpent gleamed in the sun, and whoever of all the dying host would but look to it was made to live. Looking was a very simple act, but it indicated that the person was obedient to God's command. He looked as he was bidden, and the virtue of healing came from the brazen serpent through a look. Such is faith. It is the simplest thing in the world, but it indicates a great deal more than is seen upon its surface:

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One."

To believe in Jesus is but to glance the eye of faith to him, to trust him with thy soul.

That poor woman who came behind our Saviour in the press offers us another figure of what faith is. She said, "If I may but touch the hem of his garment I shall be made whole." Taking no medicines, making no profession, and performing no ceremonies, she simply touched the ravelling of the Saviour's robe, and she was healed at once. O soul, if thou canst get into contact with Christ by simply trusting him, though that trust be ever so feeble, thou hast the faith of God's elect; thou hast the faith which is in every case the token of the new birth.

**II. We must now pass on to show that WHEREVER IT EXISTS IT IS THE PROOF OF REGENERATION.**

There never was a grain of such faith as this in the world, except in a regenerate soul, and there never will be while the world standeth. It is so according to the text, and if we had no other testimony this one passage would be quite enough to prove it. "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God." "Ah!" I hear thee say, poor soul, "the new birth is a great mystery; I do not understand it; I am afraid I am not a partaker in it." You are born again if you believe that Jesus is the Christ, if you are relying upon a crucified Saviour you are assuredly begotten again unto a lively hope. Mystery or no mystery, the new birth is yours if you are a believer. Have you never noticed that the greatest mysteries in the world reveal themselves by the simplest indications. The simplicity and apparent easiness of faith is no reason why I should not regard its existence as an infallible indication of the new birth within. How know we that the new-born child lives except by its cry? Yet a child's cry—what a simple sound it is! how readily could it be imitated! a clever workman could with pipes and strings easily deceive us; yet was there never a child's cry in the world but what it indicated the mysteries of breathing, heart-beating, blood-flowing, and all the other wonders which come with life itself. Do you see yonder person just drawn out of the river? Does she live? Yes, life is there. Why? Because the lungs still heave. But does it not seem an easy thing to make lungs heave? A pair of billows blown into them, might not that produce the motion? Ah, yes, the thing is easily imitated after a sort; but no lungs heave except where life is. Take another illustration. Go into a telegraph office at any time, and you will see certain needles moving right and left with unceasing click. Electricity is a great mystery, and you cannot see or feel it; but the operator tells you that the electric current is moving along the wire. How does he know? "I know it by the needle." How is that? I could move your needles easily. "Yes; but do not you see the needle has made two motions to the right, one to the left, and two to the right again? I am reading a



message." "But," say you, "I can see nothing in it; I could imitate the clicking and moving very easily." Yet he who is taught the art sees before him in those needles, not only electric action, but a deeper mystery still; he perceives that a mind is directing an invisible force, and speaking by means of it. Not to all, but to the initiated is it given to see the mystery hidden within the simplicity. The believer sees in the faith, which is simple as the movements of the needle, an indication that God is operating on the human mind, and the spiritual man discerns that there is an inner secret intimated thereby, which the carnal eye cannot decipher. To believe in Jesus is a better indicator of regeneration than anything else, and in no case did it ever mislead. **Faith in the living God and his Son Jesus Christ is always the result of the new birth, and can never exist except in the regenerate. Whoever has faith is a saved man.**

I beg you to follow me a little in this argument. A certain divine has lately said, "A man's act of believing is not the same as his being saved: it is only in the direction of being saved." This is tantamount to a denial that every believer in Christ is at once saved; and the inference is that a man may not conclude that he is saved because he believes in Jesus. Now, observe how opposed this is to Scripture. It is certain from the Word of God that the man who believes in Jesus is not condemned. Read John iii. 18, and many other passages. "He that believeth on Him is not condemned." Now is not every unregenerate man condemned? Is not a man who is not condemned a saved man? When you are sure on divine authority that the believer is not condemned, how in the name of everything that is rational can you deny that the believer is saved? If he is not condemned, what has he to fear? Will he not rightly conclude that being justified by faith, he has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ?

Note, secondly, that faith in the fourth verse of the chapter before us is said to "overcome the world." "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith." What, then, does faith overcome the world in persons who are not saved? How can this be possible when the apostle saith that that which overcomes the world is born of God? Read the fourth verse: "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world:" but faith overcomes the world. **therefore the man who has faith is regenerate**; and what means that but that he is saved, and that his faith is the instrument by which he achieves victories.

Further, faith accepts the witness of God, and more, he that hath faith has the witness in himself to the truth of God. Read the tenth verse of the chapter: "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." It is not said, "He that does this or feels that," but "He that believeth hath the witness in himself," **his heart bears witness to the truth of God**. Has any unsaved man an experimental witness within? Will you tell me that a man's inner experience bears witness to God's gospel and yet the man is in a lost state, or only hopeful of being saved ultimately? No, sir, it is impossible. **He that believeth has that change wrought in him which enables by his own consciousness to confirm the witness of God, and such a man must be in a state of salvation. It is not possible to say of him that he is an unsaved man.**

Again, note in this chapter, at the thirteenth verse, that wherever there is faith there is eternal life; so run the words, "these things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life." Our Lord himself, and his apostles, in several places have declared, "He that believeth on him hath everlasting life." Do not tell me that a sinner who believes in Jesus is to make an advance before he can say he is saved, that a man

who trusts Christ is only on his way to salvation, and must wait until he has used the ordinances, and has grown in grace, before he may know that he is saved. No, the moment that the sinner's trust is placed on the finished work of Jesus he is saved. Heaven and earth may pass away, but that man shall never perish. If only one second ago I trusted the Saviour I am safe; just as safe as the man who has believed in Jesus fifty years, and who has all the while walked uprightly. I do not say that the new born convert is as happy, nor as useful, nor as holy, nor as ripe for heaven, but I do say that the words, "he that believeth on him hath everlasting life," is a truth with general bearings, and relates as much to the babe in faith as does to the man who has attained to fullness of stature in Jesus Christ.

As if this chapter were written on purpose to meet the gross error that faith does not bring immediate salvation, it extols faith again and again, yea, and I may add, our Lord himself crowns faith, because faith never wears the crown, but brings all the glory to the dear Redeemer.

Now, let me say a word or two in reply to certain questions. But must not a man repent as well as believe? Reply: No man ever believed but what he repented at the same time. Faith and repentance go together. they must. If I trust Christ to save me from sin, I am at the same time repenting of sin, and my mind is changed in relation to sin, and everything else that has to do with its state. All the fruits meet for repentance are contained in faith itself. **You will never find that a man who trusts Christ remains an enemy of God, or a lover of sin. The fact that he accepts the atonement provided is proof positive that he loathes sin, and that his mind is thoroughly changed in reference to God.** Moreover, as to all the graces which are produced in the Christian afterwards, are they not all to be found in embryo in faith?

"Only believe, and you shall be save," is the cry which many sneer at, and others misunderstand; but do you know what "only believe" means? Do you know what a world of meaning lies in that word? Read that famous chapter to the Hebrews, and see what faith has done and is still able to do, and you will see that it is no trifle. Wherever there is faith in a man let it but develop itself and there will be a purging of himself from sin, a separating himself from the world, a conflict with evil, and a warring for the glory of Christ, which nothing else could produce. Faith is in itself one of the noblest of graces; it is the compendium of all virtues; and as sometimes there will lie within one single ear enough seed to make a whole garden fertile, so, within that one word "faith," there lies enough of virtue to make earth blessed; enough of grace, if the Spirit make it to grow, to turn the fallen into the perfect. Faith is not the easy and light thing men think. Far are we from ascribing salvation to the profession of a mere creed, we loathe the idea; neither do we ascribe salvation to a fond persuasion, but we do ascribe salvation to Jesus Christ, and the obtaining of it to that simple, child like confidence which lovingly casts itself into the arms of him who gave both his hands to the nail and suffered to the death for the sins of his people. He who believes, then, is saved—rest assured of that. "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God"

**III. Now what flows out of this? Love is the legitimate issue! We must love if we are begotten of God all those who are also born of God.**

It would be an insult to you if I were to prove that a brother should love his brother. Doth not nature herself teach us that? Those, then, who are born of God ought to love all those of the same household. And who are they? Why, all those who have believed that Jesus is the Christ, and are resting their hopes where we rest ours, namely, on

Christ the Anointed One of God. We are to love all such. We are to do this because we are of the family. **We believe, and therefore we have been begotten of God.** Let us act as those who are of the divine family; let us count it our privilege we are received into the household, and rejoice to perform the lovely obligations of our high position. We look around us and see many others who have believed in Jesus Christ; let us love them because they are of the same kindred. "But they are some of them unsound in doctrine, they make gross mistakes as to the Master's ordinances." We are not to love their faults, neither ought we to expect them to love ours, we are nevertheless to love their persons, for "whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God," and therefore he is one of the family, and as we love the Father who begat we are to love all those who are begotten of him. First, I love God, and therefore I desire to promote God's truth and to keep God's gospel free from taint. But then I am to love all those whom God has begotten, despite the infirmities and errors I see in them, being also myself compassed about with infirmities. Life is the reason for love, the common life which is indicated by the common faith in the dear Redeemer is to bind us to each other. I must confess, though I would pay every deference to every brother's conscientious judgment, I do not know how I could bring my soul as a child of God to refuse any man communion at my Master's table, who believed that Jesus is the Christ. I have proof in his doing so, if he be sincere (and I can only judge of that by his life), that he is born of God; and has not every child a right to come to the Father's table? I know in the olden times, parent used to make their children go without meals as a punishment, but everybody tell us now this is cruel and unwise, for it injures the child's constitution to deprive it of necessary food. There are rods in the Lord's house, and there is no need to keep disobedient children away from supper. Let them come to the Lord's table, and eat and drink with the Lord Jesus and with all his saints, in the hope

that when their constitution bestows stronger they will throw out the disease which now they labor under, and come to be obedient to the whole gospel, which saith, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

Let me beg the members of this church to exhibit mutual love to one another. Are there many feeble among you? Comfort them. Are there any who want instruction? Bring your knowledge to their help. Are there any in distress? Assist them. Are they backsliding? Restore them. "Little children, love one another," is the rule of Christ's family, may we observe it. May the love of God which has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us, reveal itself by our love to all the saints. And, remember, other sheep he has which are not yet of this fold; them also he must bring in. Let us love those who are yet to be brought in, and lovingly go forth at once to seek them; in whatever other form of service God has given us, let us with loving eyes look after our prodigal brothers, and who knows, we may bring into the family this very day some for whom there will be joy in the presence of the angels of God, because the lost one has been found. God bless and comfort you, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

**Note:** ESV Used for some texts of Scripture

## **What is the Gospel - Five Observations**

**by Andreas Köstenberger**

I recently contributed a chapter entitled “The Gospel for All Nations” to a book called *Faith Comes by Hearing: A Response to Inclusivism* (edited by Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (InterVarsity). Here are my five concluding observations:

**1. Divine, not human:** The gospel is God's saving message to a world living in darkness and a humanity lost in its sin. The gospel is not a human message, nor was its conception a function of human initiative, but its origin and its impetus derive solely from God. For this reason our role with regard to the gospel is not that of evaluation, criticism or reformulation, but that of grateful acceptance and obedience. Humans are not equal partners with God as far as the gospel message is concerned; they are rather his commissioned representatives, charged with proclaiming the gospel in the exact form in which they received it (e.g., John 17:20; 20:21; 1 Cor 15:3–4).

**2. Required, not optional:** Acceptance of the gospel is not optional for salvation but rather required, owing to pervasive human sinfulness. As the Book of Hebrews states, "people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment"; "Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time . . . to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him" (Heb 9:27–28). Apart from believing in Jesus Christ, "God's wrath remains" on people (Jn 3:36), and they are spiritually dead (Jn 5:24; Eph 2:1). People must be "born of God" (Jn 1:12; 3:3, 5; 1 Jn 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18), that is, be spiritually regenerated (Tit 3:5; 1 Pet 1:3). As Paul writes in his epistle to the Ephesians, "[a]nd you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit . . ." (Eph 1:13). Inclusion in Christ comes only by hearing and believing the gospel.

**3. Christological, not merely theological:** The gospel is not vaguely theological, as if it were amenable to various ways of salvation depending on a person's belief in a particular kind of god, or depending on the degree to which people were able to hear the gospel presented in a clear way; it is decidedly and concretely Christological, that is, centered on the salvation provided through the vicarious cross-death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence Paul is able to speak of "the gospel . . . regarding his [God's] Son . . . Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 1:2–4). Significantly, this gospel is not a New Testament novelty but was "promised beforehand through his [God's] prophets [such as Habakkuk, Rom 1:17 citing Hab 2:4] in the Holy Scriptures" (Rom 1:2). Abraham already had resurrection faith (Romans 4; Galatians 3; Heb 11:8–12).

**4. No other gospel:** The messianic motif pervading all of Scripture and centering in the Lord Jesus Christ coupled with the risen Jesus' "Great Commission" for his followers to go and disciple the nations inextricably link an understanding of the gospel as the exclusive message of salvation in Jesus Christ with the church's mandate to engage in missionary outreach. This is clear especially from the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, John, the book of Acts, and several of Paul's writings. Conversely, any messages proclaimed in the name of Christ that feature a "different gospel" or a different Christ (such as compromising his simultaneous full humanity and deity, e.g. 1 John 4:2–3) are rejected. The church must engage in missions, because "faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ" (Rom 10:17). If anyone confesses with his mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believes in his heart that God raised him from the dead, he will be saved (Rom 10:9; see also vv. 10–13).

**5. No other name but Jesus:** In light of the clear biblical passages mentioned above and in view of the strong and pervasive trajectory



of scriptural references to the gospel there is no proper foundation for arguing for salvation apart from explicit faith in Jesus Christ. Scripture makes clear that humanity is universally sinful, and that God's wrath remains on every individual who has not placed his or her trust in Jesus Christ on the basis of his substitutionary death on the cross and his subsequent resurrection. While there may be philosophical or larger theological objections to such a notion (such as the difficulty experienced by some of reconciling this notion with the love of God), while there may be commonsense concerns on the basis of human conceptions or "fairness" or other similar considerations, there can be little doubt that Scripture nowhere teaches, or easily allows the implication, that there is a way to salvation other than through explicit faith in Jesus Christ during a person's lifetime (e.g., Heb 9:27–28). In fact, this is not an obscure topic; it is the central contention of the biblical message concerning the gospel, that "[s]alvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

For Further Study, read the entire essay in *Faith Comes by Hearing*, pp. 201–19. See also my book, co-authored with Peter T. O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission* (New Studies in Biblical Theology edited by D. A. Carson; InterVarsity).

## **When the Good News Becomes Bad**

**by R. Scott Clark**

## **Introduction**

The word "Gospel" is so familiar and frequently used that it is possible to lose sight of its genuine meaning, "good news." This question is vital as we face a series of movements within our churches which seek to redefine the meaning of the Gospel. In each case we are being offered "another Gospel" (Gal 1:6). The Good News of Christ faces a threat on the order of that faced by the Galatian Christians.

## **What Happened to this Good News?**

The fathers in the early church spoke the Gospel, but their concerns tended to focus on apologetics, the Trinity, Christology, the canon of Scripture and the church. As often as not the "Gospel" message among the early fathers was that Christ had come, and salvation is available to those who trust Christ and behave themselves. This was not good news for sinners.

By the thirteenth century the Gospel of grace was understood as a progressive transformation of a person's moral life. The gospel equaled sanctification. People were thought to be morally sick and in need of an injection of a medicinal substance called grace. In this scheme, one is as justified as he is sanctified, and sanctification comes by cooperating with this medicine (grace) received in the sacraments. Their Gospel exclaimed: "salvation is available for those who cooperate with grace and obey the Law." This was more bad news for sinners. Instead of Christ's perfect righteousness earned for us, we were left with a partial righteousness worked in us.

## **The Reformation of the Good News**

In contrast, Martin Luther and John Calvin believed the Bible contained "two words": Law and Gospel.(1) "Law" describes anything in Scripture which says, "Do this and live" (Luke 10:28), while "Gospel" describes anything which says, "It is finished" (John 19:30).

### **"Do this and Live!"**

The Law is God's unbending moral will. This is why the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) 19.1 reminds us that God's Law requires "personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience" before and after the fall. This was exactly Moses' doctrine in Deut 27:26 and Paul's in Gal 3:10: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the book of the Law."

The Reformers taught that God revealed his Law to Adam in terms of a covenant of works, "the day you eat thereof you shall surely die" (Gen 2:17). The implicit promise to Adam of eternal blessedness was conditioned on his obedience as the representative of all humanity. (2) In his sin, Adam broke the covenant of works and all humanity fell with him.(3) As a result, regarding justification, the Law is bad news for sinners, accusing us that we "have grievously sinned against all the commandments of God, and have never kept any of them, and [are] still prone always to all evil" (Heidelberg Catechism (HC) 60).

### **"It is Finished!"**

The Good News is another thing however. It is the announcement that by his one act of obedience, Christ, the Second Adam, has kept the Law, fulfilled the covenant of works, and made a "new covenant" in his blood for sinners.(4) The promised Savior-King has come with

his kingdom and covenant of grace.(5) While the Law says, "do," the Gospel says, "done!" While the covenant of works says, "work," the covenant of grace says, "rest!" This is why the Gospel is such "good news," since it is about our justification earned for us by Christ and offered freely to us.(6)

According to Heidelberg Catechism 21, true faith believes that "everlasting righteousness and salvation are freely given by God merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits." Where the Law demands my perfect obedience, the Good News announces and promises that Christ has fulfilled the Law for me, cancelled the notice of debt against me and "imputes to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ, as if I had never committed nor had any sin, and had myself accomplished all the obedience which Christ has fulfilled for me; if only I accept such benefit with a believing heart" (HC 60).(7)

This is what Scripture means by Good News. In several places the noun for "Good News" refers to something which has occurred outside of me which benefits me.(8) In other places we are daily to "proclaim the Good News" of God's salvation.(9) Most famous of all such Old Testament passages is Isaiah 52:7 which says, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns'" (ESV).

What was foreshadowed in the Hebrew Scriptures bursts forth in brilliant clarity in the New Testament. The Gospel is the accomplishment of salvation for God's people in the obedient life, death, resurrection and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ.(10) Nowhere is this plainer than in 1 Cor 15:1-5. The Gospel declares that "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with

the Scriptures...." It is this "foolish" message (1 Cor 1:18) which is "the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom 1:16). The Gospel is not that we might be justified if we are good, but that I am justified because Christ was good. This is why the Gospel is good news for sinners!

## **What Happened to the Good News?**

As in Paul's day, not everyone is satisfied with the Gospel of free grace in Christ today. The early church was tempted to add conditions to the covenant of grace.<sup>(11)</sup> They said, "trust in Christ of course, but there is more to being right with God than trusting in Christ." The opponents of the Gospel wanted to redefine faith as "trusting and obeying." So Paul declared, ...we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified (Gal 2:16).

The Reformers rightly applied this passage to their controversy with the Roman church. Rome taught a Gospel of cooperation with grace. Their definition of the Gospel made our works a part of becoming right with God, which demeans Christ's finished work. In contrast, the Apostle Paul argued that the Good News declares that believers are justified now and that there is "therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:1).<sup>(12)</sup>

## **Common Misinterpretations**

Like Rome, those who offer a false "Gospel" of justification by grace through faith and obedience argue that Galatians 5:6, "faith working through love," teaches that true faith exists only to the extent that

love exists, so that one is only as justified as he is sanctified. They also appeal to James 2:24, "You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone."

Read in context, it has been plain to Protestants since the early sixteenth century that Gal 5:6 is speaking not about justification but about sanctification or the Christian life. John Calvin wrote, "...that passage is irrelevantly introduced into a question about justification, since Paul is not there considering in what respect faith or charity avails to justify a man, but what is Christian perfection..." To interpret this passage to teach justification through faith and obedience is to put us back under the Law. In the same way, James 2:24 must be read in the light of James 2:14. James is writing about the fruit or evidence of true faith. If one "says" he has true faith, but has no evidence, that sort of faith is not genuine. The issue for James is not how we are right with God but the evidence of true faith. "Justified" in James 2:24 does not mean "declared right with God," but it means that the existence of true faith is "vindicated."

### **Confusing Gospel with Church Membership**

Some argue that the Gospel is not that we have been declared right before God, but that we are members of the church. They argue that the role of faith in justification is not simply to receive Christ and rest in His righteousness, but to cooperate actively with grace to keep what we have already been given in baptism. They argue that the Bible teaches a justification which can be lost if we do not keep the law.

Reformed theology has always been covenantal, but this approach turns the covenant of grace into a covenant of works by confusing Law with Gospel. In the covenant of grace, we are justified by "faith apart from the works of the law" (Rom 3:28). If salvation must be

retained by works, how is it gracious? How can sinners ever cooperate well enough?

Salvation happens in the context of the visible church indeed, so there is no reason to juxtapose the corporate and personal, but Scripture nowhere speaks of justification in purely corporate terms. Church membership does not equal justification. Not everyone in the visible church is necessarily part of the elect. Many in the Israelite congregation did not benefit from the covenant of grace because they did not believe.(13) Though Esau was an outward member of the covenant of grace, he was not an inward member because he was not elect. Not every member of the visible congregation is actually united to Christ "head for head," as they say. Such a view would have Esau elect until he forfeited it.(14)

### **Confusing Gospel with Law**

Finally, some argue that since the Law makes promises and the Gospel requires sinners to "obey," there is no real difference between Law and Gospel.

It is true that both the Law and Gospel have promises and demands. Rom 2:16 teaches that according to Paul's "Gospel," God "judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus" and Rom 10:16 says that not all have "obeyed" the Gospel. In the latter case, however, the verb "to obey" is defined in the same verse as "to believe." In Romans 2:16, it is apparent that, as elsewhere, Paul uses "Gospel" to refer broadly to his entire message of sin and salvation, of which Christ's return and the final judgement are properly included.(15) It is important to notice that the judgement to which Paul refers in Rom 2:16 is not conditioned on my perfect and perpetual obedience to God's Law but rather refers to the sin of unbelief.

Though both Law and Gospel have commands and promises, the Law and the Gospel have different conditions. The condition of the Law (covenant of works) is perfect and perpetual obedience. The condition of the Gospel (the covenant of grace) is faith that trusts, i.e., rests in and receives the finished work of Christ. The "work of God" is to "believe in him whom he has sent" (John 6:29).

## **Conclusion**

The Good News is that Christ has obeyed the Law, satisfied God's just wrath and his righteousness is freely credited to me and received through faith alone. Scripture is clear about the Gospel and warns us very starkly about corrupting it.<sup>(16)</sup> Nevertheless, for much of Christian history, there has been confusion about the good news. It has been turned into bad news, so it must be guarded with care.<sup>(17)</sup> We are to be careful not to let anyone take us "captive by philosophy and empty deception according to the tradition of men and the basic principles of the world" (Col 2:8) especially where it touches the Good News of Christ's work for sinners.

## **Footnotes**

1 John 1:17; Rom 6:14; 11:6; 2 Cor 3:6; Gal 2:21; 5:4[back to text]

2 Heidelberg Catechism (HC) 9; WCF 7.2; Gal 3:12; Hosea 6:7 [back to text]

3 HC 6, 9; WCF 7.2; 19.1[back to text]

4 Rom 5:18, Luke 22:20[back to text]

5 Isa 52:7; Matt 4:23; Mark 1:15; HC 19[back to text]

6 Rom 10:6[back to text]

7 Rom 10:4; Col 2:14[back to text]

8 e.g. 2 Sam 4:10; 18:20, 22, 25, 27; 2 Kings 7:9[back to text]

9 e.g. Psalm 96:2[back to text]

10 Rom 16:25[back to text]



11 Gal 1:16; Col 2:4[back to text]  
12 Rom 5:1[back to text]  
13 1 Cor 10; Heb 3-4[back to text]  
14 Rom 9:11-13[back to text]  
15 e.g. Rom 11:28; 1 Cor 4:15[back to text]  
16 Gal 1:9[back to text]  
17 1 Tim 6:20[back to text]

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## **How Christ is Rightly and Properly Said to have Merited Grace and Salvation for Us.**

**by John Calvin (1509-1564)**

The following selection by John Calvin was taken from book 2, chapter 17 of The Institutes of The Christian Religion, translated into english by Henry Beveridge, 1863.

**Section One:** Christ not only the minister, but also the author and prince of salvation. Divine grace not obscured by this mode of expression. The merit of Christ not opposed to the mercy of God, but depends upon it.

A question must here be considered by way of supplement. Some men too much given to subtilty, while they admit that we obtain

salvation through Christ, will not hear of the name of merit, by which they imagine that the grace of God is obscured; and therefore insist that Christ was only the instrument or minister, not the author or leader, or prince of life, as he is designated by Peter, (Acts 3: 15.) I admit that were Christ opposed simply, and by himself, to the justice of God, there could be no room for merit, because there cannot be found in man a worth which could make God a debtor; nay, as Augustine says most truly, "The Saviour, the man Christ Jesus, is himself the brightest illustration of predestination and grace: his character as such was not procured by any antecedent merit of works or faith in his human nature. Tell me, I pray, how that man, when assumed into unity of person by the Word, co-eternal with the Father, as the only begotten Son at God, could merit this." - "Let the very fountain of grace, therefore, appear in our head, whence, according to the measure of each, it is diffused through all his members. Every man, from the commencement of his faith, becomes a Christian, by the same grace by which that man from his formation became Christ." Again, in another passage, "There is not a more striking example of predestination than the mediator himself. He who made him (without any antecedent merit in his will) of the seed of David a righteous man never to be unrighteous, also converts those who are members of his head from unrighteous into righteous" and so forth. Therefore when we treat of the merit of Christ, we do not place the beginning in him, but we ascend to the ordination of God as the primary cause, because of his mere good pleasure he appointed a Mediator to purchase salvation for us. Hence the merit of Christ is inconsiderately opposed to the mercy of God. It is a well known rule, that principal and accessory are not incompatible, and therefore there is nothing to prevent the justification of man from being the gratuitous result of the mere mercy of God, and, at the same time, to prevent the merit of Christ from intervening in subordination to this mercy. The free favour of God is as fitly

opposed to our works as is the obedience of Christ, both in their order: for Christ could not merit anything save by the good pleasure of God, but only inasmuch as he was destined to appease the wrath of God by his sacrifice, and wipe away our transgressions by his obedience: in one word, since the merit of Christ depends entirely on the grace of God, (which provided this mode of salvation for us,) the latter is no less appropriately opposed to all righteousness of men than is the former.

**Section Two:** The compatibility of the two proved by various passages of Scripture.

This distinction is found in numerous passages of Scripture: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish," (John 3: 16.) We see that the first place is assigned to the love of God as the chief cause or origin, and that faith in Christ follows as the second and more proximate cause. Should any one object that Christ is only the formal cause, he lessens his energy more than the words justify. For if we obtain justification by a faith which leans on him, the groundwork of our salvation must be sought in him. This is clearly proved by several passages: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins," (1 John 4: 10.) These words clearly demonstrate that God, in order to remove any obstacle to his love towards us, appointed the method of reconciliation in Christ. There is great force in this word "propitiation"; for in a manner which cannot be expressed, God, at the very time when he loved us, was hostile to us until reconciled in Christ. To this effect are all the following passages: "He is the propitiation for our sins;" "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell, and having made peace by the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself;" "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not

imputing their trespasses unto them;" "He has made us accepted in the Beloved," "That he might reconcile both into one body by the cross." The nature of this mystery is to be learned from the first chapter to the Ephesians, where Paul, teaching that we were chosen in Christ, at the same time adds, that we obtained grace in him. How did God begin to embrace with his favour those whom he had loved before the foundation of the world, unless in displaying his love when he was reconciled by the blood of Christ? As God is the fountain of all righteousness, he must necessarily be the enemy and judge of man so long as he is a sinner. Wherefore, the commencement of love is the bestowing of righteousness, as described by Paul: "He has made him to be sin for us who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," (2 Cor. 5: 21.) He intimates, that by the sacrifice of Christ we obtain free justification, and become pleasing to God, though we are by nature the children of wrath, and by sin estranged from him. This distinction is also noted whenever the grace of Christ is connected with the love of God, (2 Cor. 13: 13;) whence it follows, that he bestows upon us of his own which he acquired by purchase. For otherwise there would be no ground for the praise ascribed to him by the Father, that grace is his, and proceeds from him.

**Section Three:** Christ by his obedience truly merited divine grace for us.

That Christ, by his obedience, truly purchased and merited grace for us with the Father, is accurately inferred from several passages of Scripture. I take it for granted, that if Christ satisfied for our sins, if he paid the penalty due by us, if he appeased God by his obedience; in fine, if he suffered the just for the unjust, salvation was obtained for us by his righteousness; which is just equivalent to meriting. Now, Paul's testimony is, that we were reconciled, and received

reconciliation through his death, (Rom. 5: 11.) But there is no room for reconciliation unless where offence has preceded. The meaning, therefore, is, that God, to whom we were hateful through sin, was appeased by the death of his Son, and made propitious to us. And the antithesis which immediately follows is carefully to be observed, "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous," (Rom. 5: 19.) For the meaning is - As by the sin of Adam we were alienated from God and doomed to destruction, so by the obedience of Christ we are restored to his favour as if we were righteous. The future tense of the verb does not exclude present righteousness, as is apparent from the context. For he had previously said, "the free gift is of many offences unto justification."

**Section Four:** This grace obtained by the shedding of Christ's blood, and his obedience even unto death.

When we say, that grace was obtained for us by the merit of Christ, our meaning is, that we were cleansed by his blood, that his death was an expiation for sin, "His blood cleanses us from all sin." "This is my blood, which is shed for the remission of sins," (1 John 1: 7; Luke 22: 20.) If the effect of his shed blood is, that our sins are not imputed to us, it follows, that by that price the justice of God was satisfied. To the same effect are the Baptist's words, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," (John 1: 29.) For he contrasts Christ with all the sacrifices of the Law, showing that in him alone was fulfilled what these figures typified. But we know the common expression in Moses - Iniquity shall be expiated, sin shall be wiped away and forgiven. In short, we are admirably taught by the ancient figures what power and efficacy there is in Christ's death. And the Apostle, skilfully proceeding from this principle, explains the whole matter in the Epistle to the Hebrews,

showing that without shedding of blood there is no remission, (Heb. 9: 22.) From this he infers, that Christ appeared once for all to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Again, that he was offered to bear the sins of many, (Heb. 9: 12.) He had previously said, that not by the blood of goats or of heifers, but by his own blood, he had once entered into the holy of holies, having obtained eternal redemption for us. Now, when he reasons thus, "If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb. 9: 13, 14,) it is obvious that too little effect is given to the grace of Christ, unless we concede to his sacrifice the power of expiating, appeasing, and satisfying: as he shortly after adds, "For this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of his death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance," (Heb. 9: 15.) But it is especially necessary to attend to the analogy which is drawn by Paul as to his having been made a curse for us, (Gal. 3: 13.) It had been superfluous and therefore absurd, that Christ should have been burdened with a curse, had it not been in order that, by paying what others owed, he might acquire righteousness for them. There is no ambiguity in Isaiah's testimony, "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him; and with his stripes we are healed," (Is. 53: 5.) For had not Christ satisfied for our sins, he could not be said to have appeased God by taking upon himself the penalty which we had incurred. To this corresponds what follows in the same place, "for the transgression of my people was he stricken," (Is. 53: 8.) We may add the interpretation of Peter, who unequivocally declares, that he "bare our sins in his own body on the tree," (1 Pet. 2: 24,) that the whole

burden of condemnation, of which we were relieved, was laid upon him.

**Section Five:** In this way he paid our ransom.

The Apostles also plainly declare that he paid a price to ransom us from death: "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood," (Rom. 3: 24, 25.) Paul commends the grace of God, in that he gave the price of redemption in the death of Christ; and he exhorts us to flee to his blood, that having obtained righteousness, we may appear boldly before the judgement-seat of God. To the same effect are the words of Peter: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold," "but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot," (1 Pet. 1: 18,19.) The antithesis would be incongruous if he had not by this price made satisfaction for sins. For which reason, Paul says, "Ye are bought with a price." Nor could it be elsewhere said, there is "one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all," (1 Tim. 2: 5, 6,) had not the punishment which we deserved been laid upon him. Accordingly, the same Apostle declares, that "we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins," (Col. 1: 14;) as if he had said, that we are justified or acquitted before God, because that blood serves the purpose of satisfaction. With this another passage agrees, viz., that he blotted out "the handwriting of ordinances which was against us, which was contrary to us," (Col. 2: 14.) These words denote the payment or compensation which acquits us from guilt. There is great weight also in these words of Paul: "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain," (Gal. 2: 21.) For we hence infer, that it is from Christ we must seek what the Law would confer on any one who

fulfilled it; or, which is the same thing, that by the grace of Christ we obtain what God promised in the Law to our works: "If a man do, he shall live in them," (Lev. 18: 5.) This is no less clearly taught in the discourse at Antioch, when Paul declares, "That through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses," (Acts 13: 38, 39.) For if the observance of the Law is righteousness, who can deny that Christ, by taking this burden upon himself, and reconciling us to God, as if we were the observers of the Law, merited favour for us? Of the same nature is what he afterwards says to the Galatians: "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law," (Gal. 4: 4, 5.) For to what end that subjection, unless that he obtained justification for us by undertaking to perform what we were unable to pay? Hence that imputation of righteousness without works, of which Paul treats, (Rom. 4: 5,) the righteousness found in Christ alone being accepted as if it were ours. And certainly the only reason why Christ is called our "meat," (John 6: 55,) is because we find in him the substance of life. And the source of this efficacy is just that the Son of God was crucified as the price of our justification; as Paul says, Christ "has given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour," (Eph. 5: 2;) and elsewhere, he "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification," (Rom. 4: 25.) Hence it is proved not only that salvation was given us by Christ, but that on account of him the Father is now propitious to us. For it cannot be doubted that in him is completely fulfilled what God declares by Isaiah under a figure, "I will defend this city to save it for mine own sakes and for my servant David's sake," (Isaiah 37: 35.) Of this the Apostle is the best witness when he says "Your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake," (1 John 2: 12.) For although the name of Christ is not expressed, John, in his usual manner, designates him by the pronoun "He," ("autos".) In the same



sense also our Lord declares, "As the living Father has sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me," (John 6: 57.) To this corresponds the passage of Paul, "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for his sake," (Phil. 1: 29.)

**Section Six:** The presumptuous manner in which the Schoolmen handle this subject.

To inquire, as Lombard and the Schoolmen do, (Sent. Lib. 3 Dist. 18,) whether he merited for himself, is foolish curiosity. equally rash is their decision when they answer in the affirmative. How could it be necessary for the only Son of God to come down in order to acquire some new quality for himself? The exposition which God gives of his own purpose removes all doubt. The Father is not said to have consulted the advantage of his Son in his services, but to have given him up to death, and not spared him, because he loved the world, (Rom. 8.) The prophetic expressions should be observed: "To us a Son is born;" "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion: shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee," (Isaiah 9: 6; Zech. 9: 9.) It would otherwise be a cold commendation of love which Paul describes, when he says, "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," (Rom. 5: 8.) Hence, again, we infer that Christ had no regard to himself; and this he distinctly affirms, when he says, "For their sakes I sanctify myself," (John 17: 19.) He who transfers the benefit of his holiness to others, testifies that he acquires nothing for himself. And surely it is most worthy of remark, that Christ, in devoting himself entirely to our salvation, in a manner forgot himself. It is absurd to wrest the testimony of Paul to a different effect: "Wherefore God has highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name," (Phil. 2: 9.) By what services could a man merit to become the judge

of the world, the head of angels, to obtain the supreme government of God, and become the residence of that majesty of which all the virtues of men and angels cannot attain one thousandth part? The solution is easy and complete. Paul is not speaking of the cause of Christ's exaltation, but only pointing out a consequence of it by way of example to us. The meaning is not much different from that of another passage: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" (Luke 24: 26.)

## **What is The Gospel?**

## **by Zacharias Ursinus (1534-1583)**

Zacharias Ursinus was the primary author of the Heidelberg Catechism. The following text can be found in Ursinus' exposition of question and answer 19 in Ursinus' "Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism," pp. 101-106 (english translation by G.W. Williard, Columbus OH, 1852; reprinted by P & R).

### **1. What Is The Gospel?**

The term gospel signifies, 1. A joyful message, or good news. 2. The sacrifice which is offered to God for this good news. 3. The reward which is given to him who announces these joyful tidings. Here it signifies the doctrine, or joyful news of Christ manifested in the flesh; as "behold, I bring unto you good tidings of great joy, for unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2: 10, 11.)

The words epaggelia and euaggelia are of a somewhat different signification. The former denotes the promise of a mediator that was to come; the latter is the announcement of a mediator already come. This distinction, however, is not always observed; and is rather in the words than in the thing itself; for both denote the same benefits of the Messiah, so that the distinction is only in the circumstance of time, and in the manner. of his appearance, as is evident from the following declarations of Scripture: "Abraham saw my day, and was glad." "No man cometh to the Father but by me." "I am the door, by me if any," etc. "God hath appointed him head over all things to the church." "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever." (John 8: 56; 14: 6; 10: 7. Eph. 1: 22. Heb. 13: 8.)

The gospel is, therefore, the doctrine which the Son of God, our Mediator, revealed from heaven in Paradise, immediately after the fall, and which he brought from the bosom of the Eternal Father; which promises, and announces, in view of the free grace and mercy of God, to all those that repent and believe, deliverance from sin, death, condemnation, and the wrath of God; which is the same thing as to say that it promises and proclaims the remission of sin, salvation, and eternal life, by and for the sake of the Son of God, the Mediator; and is that through which the Holy Spirit works effectually in the hearts of the faithful, kindling and exciting in them, faith, repentance, and the beginning of eternal life. Or, we may, in accordance with the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth questions of the Catechism, define the gospel to be the doctrine which God revealed first in Paradise, and afterwards published by the Patriarchs and Prophets, which he was pleased to represent by the shadows of sacrifices, and the other ceremonies of the law, and which he has accomplished by his only begotten Son; teaching that the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; which is to say that he is a perfect Mediator, satisfying for the sins of the human race, restoring righteousness and eternal life to all those who by a true faith are ingrafted into him, and embrace his benefits.

The following passages of Scripture confirm this definition which we have given of the gospel: I This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day." "And that repentance and remission of sin should be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (John 6: 41. Luke 24: 47. John 1: 17.)

## **II. Has The Gospel Always Been Known in the Church, or is it a New Doctrine?**

The gospel sometimes signifies the doctrine concerning the promise of grace, and the remission of sins to be granted freely, on account of the sacrifice of the Messiah, who had not as yet come in the flesh; and then, again, it signifies the doctrine of the Messiah as already come. In the latter sense, it has not always been, but commenced with the New Testament. In the former sense, however, it has always been in the Church; for immediately after the fall it was revealed in Paradise to our first parents -- afterwards it was published by the Patriarchs, and Prophets, and was at length fully accomplished, and revealed by Christ himself. The proofs of this are the following:

1. The testimony of the Apostles. Peter says, "To him gave all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired, and searched diligently." (Acts 10: 43. 1 Pet. 1: 10.) Paul says of the gospel, "Which he had promised afore by his prophets." (Rom. 1: 2.) Christ himself says, "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me." (John 5: 46.)
2. The promises and prophecies which relate to the Messiah, establish the same thing.

This must, therefore, be carefully noticed, because God will have us know that there was, and is from the beginning to the end of the world, only one doctrine, and way of salvation through Christ, according to what is said, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and for ever." "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh to the Father but by me." "Moses wrote of me." (Heb. 13: 8. John 14: 6; 5: 46.) Does any one ask, How Moses wrote of Christ? We answer, 1. By enumerating the promises which had respect to the Messiah.

"In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." "God shall raise up a prophet," etc. "A star shall rise out of Jacob." "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah until Shiloh come." (Gen. 12: 3. Deut. 10: 15. Num. 24: 17. Gen. 49: 10.) 2. He restricted these promises to a certain family from which the Messiah was to be born; and to which the promise was afterwards more frequently referred, and spoken of. 3. The whole Levitical priesthood, and ceremonial worship, as sacrifices, oblations, the altar, the temple, and other things which Moses described, all looked forward to Christ. The kings and kingdom of the Jewish nation were types of Christ, and of his kingdom. Hence Moses wrote many things of Christ.

Objection 1. Paul declares the gospel was promised through the prophets; and Peter says that the prophets prophesied of the grace that should come unto us. Therefore the gospel has not always been. Answer: We grant that the gospel has not always been, if we understand by it the doctrine of the promise of grace as fulfilled through the manifestation of Christ in the flesh, and as it respects the clearness and evidence of this doctrine; for in ancient times the gospel was not, but was only promised by the prophets: 1. As concerning the fulfillment of those things which, in the Old Testament, were predicted of the Messiah. 2. In regard to the clearer knowledge of the promise of grace. 3. In respect to the more copious outpouring of the gifts of the Holy Spirit; that is, the gospel then was not the announcement of Christ already come, dead, risen again, and seated at the right hand of the Father, as it now is; but it was a preaching of Christ, who would at some future time come, and accomplish all these things. Nevertheless, there was a gospel, that is, there was a joyful announcement of the benefits of the Messiah that was to come, sufficient for the salvation of the ancient fathers, as it is said, "Abraham saw my day, and rejoiced." "To him gave all the

prophets witness." "Christ is the end of the law." (John 8: 56. Acts 10: 43. Rom. 10: 4.)

Objection 2. The apostle Paul says, the gospel was the mystery which was kept secret since the world began, and that in other ages it was not made known to the sons of men. (Rom. 16: 25. Eph. 3: 5.)

Answer: This objection contains an incorrect division, inasmuch as it disjoins things which ought not to be separated. For the apostle adds, in connection with the .above, as it is now; which ought not to be omitted, because it shows that in former times the gospel was also known, although less clearly, and to fewer ersons, than it now is. The objection is also weak, in affirming that to be strictly so, which was only declared such in a certain respect: for it does not follow, that it was then altogether unknown, because it is now more clearly perceived, and that by many more persons. It was known to the fathers, although not so clearly as to us. Hence the importance of the distinction between the words epaggelia and euaggelia as above expressed.

Objection 3. The law came by Moses, grace and truth by Jesus Christ. Therefore the gospel has not always been known. Answer: Grace and truth did indeed come through Christ, viz, in respect to the fulfillment of types, and the full exhibition and copious application of those things which were formerly promised in the Old Testament. But it does not follow from this, that the ancient fathers were entirely destitute of this grace: for unto them also the same grace was applied by, and on account of Christ, who would subsequently appear in the flesh, although it was given in smaller measures to them than to us. For, whatever grace and true knowledge of God has ever come to men, has come through Christ, as it is said, "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." "No man

cometh to the Father, but by me." "Without me ye can do nothing." (John 1: 18; 14: 6; 15: 5.)

But it is said, the law was by Moses; therefore the gospel was not by him. Answer: This is so declared, because it was the principal part of his, office to publish the law; yet he also taught the gospel, because he wrote and spoke of Christ, although more obscurely, as has been shown. But it was the peculiar office of Christ to publish the gospel, although he at the same time taught the law, but not principally, as did Moses: for he took away from the moral law the corruptions and glosses of false teachers -he fulfilled the ceremonial law, and abrogated it, together with the judicial law.

### **III. In What Does The Gospel Differ From The Law?**

The gospel and the law agree in this, that they are both from God, and that there is something revealed in each concerning the nature, will, and works of God. There is, however, a very great difference between them:

1. In the revelations which they contain; or, as it respects the manner in which the revelation peculiar to each is made known. The law was engraven upon the heart of man in his creation, and is therefore known to all naturally, although no other revelation were given. "The Gentiles have the work of the law written in their hearts." (Rom. 2: 15.) The gospel is not known naturally, but is divinely revealed to the Church alone through Christ, the Mediator. For no creature could have seen or hoped for that mitigation of the law concerning satisfaction for our sins through another, if the Son of God had not revealed it. "No man knoweth the Father, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee." "The Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." (Matt. 11: 27; 16: 17.)



2. In the kind of doctrine, or subject peculiar to each. The law teaches us what we ought to be, and what God requires of us, but it does not give us the ability to perform it, nor does it point out the way by which we may avoid what is forbidden. But the gospel teaches us in what manner we may be made such as the law requires: for it offers unto us the promise of grace, by having the righteousness of Christ imputed to us through faith, and that in such a way as if it were properly ours, teaching us that we are just before God, through the imputation of Christ's righteousness. The law says, "Pay what thou owest." "Do this, and live." (Matt. 18: 28. Luke 10: 28.) The gospel says, "Only believe." (Mark 5: 36.)

3. As to the promises. The law promises life to those who are righteous in themselves, or on the condition of righteousness, and perfect obedience. "He that doeth them, shall live in them." "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." (Lev. 18: 5. Matt. 19: 17.) The gospel, on the other hand, promises life to those who are justified by faith in Christ, or on the condition of the righteousness of Christ, applied unto us by faith. The law and gospel are, however, not opposed to each other in these respects: for although the law requires us to keep the commandments if we would enter into life, yet it does not exclude us from life if another perform these things for us. It does indeed propose a way of satisfaction, which is through ourselves, but it does not forbid the other, as has been shown.

4. They differ in their effects. The law, without the gospel, is the letter which killeth, and is the ministration of death: "For by the law is the knowledge of sin." "The law worketh wrath; and the letter killeth." (Rom. 3: 20; 4: 15. 2 Cor. 3: 6.) The outward preaching, and simple knowledge of what ought to be done, is known through the letter: for it declares our duty, and that righteousness which God requires; and, whilst it neither gives us the ability to perform it, nor

points out the way through which it may be attained, it finds fault with, and condemns our righteousness. But the gospel is the ministration of life, and of the Spirit, that is, it has the operations of the Spirit united with it, and quickens those that are dead in sin, because it is through the gospel that the Holy Spirit works faith and life in the elect. "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation," etc. (Rom. 1: 16.)

Objection: There is no precept, or commandment belonging to the gospel, but to the law. The preaching of repentance is a precept. Therefore the preaching of repentance does not belong to the gospel, but to the law. Answer: We deny the major, if it is taken generally; for this precept is peculiar to the gospel, which commands us to believe, to embrace the benefits of Christ, and to commence new obedience, or that righteousness which the law requires. If it be objected that the law also commands us to believe in God, we reply that it does this only in general, by requiring us to give credit to all the divine promises, precepts and denunciations, and that with a threatening of punishment, unless we do it. But the gospel commands us expressly and particularly to embrace, by faith, the promise of grace; and also exhorts us by the Holy Spirit, and by the Word, to walk worthy of our heavenly calling. This however it does only in general, not specifying any duty in particular, saying thou shalt do this, or that, but it leaves this to the law; as, on the contrary, it does not say in general, believe all the promises of God, leaving this to the law; but it says in particular, Believe this promise; fly to Christ, and thy sins shall be forgiven thee.

#### **IV. What Are The Proper Effects of the Gospel?**

The proper effects of the gospel are:

1. Faith; because "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." "The gospel is the ministration of the Spirit." "The power of God unto salvation." (Rom. 10: 17. 2 Cor. 3: 8. Rom. 1: 16.)

2. Through faith, our entire conversion to God, justification, regeneration and salvation; for through faith we receive Christ, with all his benefits.

## **V. From What Does The Truth of the Gospel Appear?**

The truth of the gospel appears:

1. From the testimony of the Holy Ghost.

2. From the prophecies which were uttered by the prophets.

3. From the fulfillment of these prophecies, which took place under the New Testament dispensation.

4. From the miracles by which the doctrine of the gospel was confirmed.

5. By the testimony of the gospel itself; because it alone shows the way of escape from sin, and ministers solid comfort to the wounded conscience.

# **The Law & The Gospel**

**Martin Luther**

The law is the Word in which God teaches and tells us what we are to do and not to do, as in the Ten commandments. Now wherever human nature is alone, without the grace of God, the Law cannot be kept, because since Adam's fall in paradise man is corrupt and has nothing but a wicked desire to sin and in his heart cannot be favorably disposed toward the Law, as we know by our own experience. For there is no one who would not rather have no Law at all, and everyone finds and feels within himself that while it is difficult to be pious and do good, it is easy to be wicked and to do evil. And this difficulty or this unwillingness to do what is good prevents us from keeping God's Law; for what is kept with dislike, difficulty, and unwillingness, rates before God as not having been kept at all. And so the Law of God convinces us by our experience that we are naturally wicked, disobedient, lovers of sin, and enemies of God's commandments.

Now from all this one of two things must follow: presumption or despair. Presumption follows when a man sets himself to fulfill the Law with works and diligently sees to it that he does what the letter of the Law asks him to do. He serves God, does not swear, honors father and mother, does not kill, does not commit adultery, and the like. Meanwhile, however, he does not observe his heart, does not note the reason why he is leading such a fine, good life, that he is merely covering the old hypocrite in his heart with such a beautiful life. For if he looked at himself aright, at his own heart, he would discover that he is doing all these things with dislike and out of compulsion; that he fears hell or seeks heaven, if not also far more insignificant matters, namely, honor, goods, health; and that he is motivated by the fear of shame or harm or diseases. In short, he would have to confess that he would rather lead a different life if the consequence of such a life did not deter him; for he would not do it merely for the sake of the Law. But because he does not see this bad

reason, he lives on in security, looks only at the works, not into the heart, and so assumes that he is keeping the Law of God well. The face of Moses is, therefore, covered for him, that is, he does not recognize the meaning of the Law--that it wasn't to be fulfilled with joyful, free, cheerful will. Just so an unchaste person, when asked why he commits the act, can only answer: Because of the pleasure I find in it. For he commits it for the sake of neither reward nor punishment, does not propose to gain anything by it or to escape any evil through it.

Such pleasure the Law would also find in us, so that when you ask a chaste person why he is chaste, he should say: Not for the sake of heaven or hell, not for the sake of honor or shame, but simply because it appears to me to be very fine, and I heartily approve of it even if it were not commanded. See, a heart such as this really loves God's Law and keeps it with pleasure. Such people love God and righteousness, fear and hate nothing but unrighteousness. But no man is thus constituted by nature. The others, however, love the reward and the benefit, fear and hate the punishment and the pain. Therefore they hate God and righteousness, love themselves and unrighteousness; they are hypocrites, shams, deceivers, liars, and boasters. Without grace all men are of this kind, but especially the self-righteous. Hence Scripture says and concludes: "All men are liars" Ps. 116:11); and again (Ps 39:5; "Every man at his best state is altogether vanity"; and (Ps 14:3) "There is none that does good, no, not one." But despair follows when a man becomes aware of the reason why he is keeping the Law and recognizes that to love God's law is impossible for him, since he finds nothing good in himself but only hatred of the good and lust for the bad. Then he recognizes that works cannot do justice to the Law. Therefore he despairs of works and disregards them. He ought to have love, but he does not find any and of and by himself can have none. The result must be a poor,

miserable, humbled spirit, a man oppressed and frightened through the Law by his conscience, which demands and requires of him what he has not a penny to pay. Yet the Law alone is of benefit to such presumptuous people, for it was given to work this knowledge and humiliation. This is it's (the Law's) proper work...

The other word of God is not Law or commandment, nor does it require anything of us; but after the first Word, that of the Law, has done this work and distressful misery and poverty have been produced in the heart, God comes and offers his lovely, living Word, and promises, pledges, and obligates himself to give grace and help, that we may get out of this misery and that all sins not only be forgiven but also blotted out and that love and delight to fulfill the law may be given besides. See, this divine promise of his grace and of the forgiveness of his is properly called Gospel. And I say again and yet again that you should never understand Gospel to mean anything but the divine promise of his grace and of the forgiveness of sin. For this is why hitherto St. Paul's epistles were not understood and cannot be understood by our adversaries even now; they do not know what Law and Gospel really are. For they consider Christ a Legislator and the Gospel nothing but the teaching of new laws. This is nothing else but locking up the gospel and obscuring everything. For "Gospel" is Greek and means "good news," because in it is proclaimed the saving doctrine of life, of the divine promise, and grace and the forgiveness of sins are offered. Therefore works do not belong to the gospel; for it is not laws but faith alone, because it is nothing whatever but the promise and offer of divine grace. He, then, who believes the Gospel receives grace and the Holy Spirit. Thereby the heart becomes glad and joyful in God and then keeps the Law gladly and freely, without the fear of punishment and without the expectation of reward; for it is sated and satisfied with that grace of God by which the law has been satisfied.

# **On Perverting the Gospel of Christ**

**by John Calvin**

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. - Gal. 1:6-8

Now we will look more deeply into the subject I touched upon this morning. I said that whereas Paul does not spare the Galatians, neither does he wish to shut the gate of salvation to them completely. He intends to bring them to repentance, and for this reason he speaks of the grace of God into which they had all been called. Yet, he does not flatter them; rather, he rebukes them for their sins. In particular, he rebukes them for their fickleness, for they had listened to deceivers who came in among them distorting the pure doctrine of the gospel. In order to make them better perceive their treachery, Paul says he marvels that they have forsaken their heavenly calling so quickly and easily. He wonders how it is that they have been led astray so swiftly, and how it is that they have remained in that state, given that they had felt and experienced the grace of God in our Lord Jesus Christ. Because he is seeking to restore them, he is not saying at the outset that they have completely turned away from the gospel, but rather that they have been overtaken by temptation through

seducers, who sought no less than to pervert the truth of God. There is only one pure gospel, as also there is only one Jesus Christ on whom it is founded. It is not for us to create the gospel anew; indeed, if we seek to add anything to the pure seed which we have received from our Lord Jesus Christ, we are destroying what God has established. This, in sum, is what Paul is teaching us in this first verse.

It might seem that Paul is being overly harsh and severe in rebuking the Galatians' weakness, seeing they had never once thought of rejecting the gospel, nor Jesus Christ who had been preached to them. But Paul pays no attention to the way they viewed the situation; he sees it as it really is — in other words, that once people turn away from the truth of God, they are rejecting Jesus Christ and cutting themselves off from him. Some people may think this strange, for many would like to mix light with darkness. Indeed, the confusion that exists in Popery is an outstanding example of this. They make many wonderful claims to the effect that they are upholding the Christian faith into which they have been baptised. But, for all this, it is clear that they have turned everything upside-down. Superstitions reign, and they practise open idolatry of a worse kind than has ever been known, even among the pagans. Any reverence for God is destroyed, since each one sets himself up as a saviour in place of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, the Papists would respond by saying that they are not apostates, and that they have not abandoned Jesus Christ. But our Lord Jesus Christ is no ghost; he cannot change according to the whims of men. In short, he cannot be separated from his church. Thus, whatever the Papists may claim, they rob Jesus Christ of all his authority. 'If there is only one mediator,' [they say], 'what about the male saints, our patrons, and the female saints, our advocates?' If we speak to them of the sacrifice by which our Lord Jesus Christ has obtained perfect justification for



all believers, once and for all, [they will say], 'Are we not supposed to say Mass every day and offer Jesus Christ again as a sacrifice to appease the wrath of God?' If we speak to them of free forgiveness of sins, [they will say], 'What about the ways in which we have made satisfaction for our own sins, and thus earned God's pity?' If we say that we can only be made good by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, and that until God transforms us, we are full of sin and rebellion, [they will say], 'What? What about our free will?' In short, they will name the name of Jesus Christ often enough, and will still give him his title of Redeemer, but they will divide his office and put it on offer so that each man may claim a share in it for himself. They also imagine that the saints and angels in paradise are their patrons, and that, therefore, they have infinite means of coming before God, for so it seems to them. Now, we may well conclude that the Holy Spirit has good reason to call them apostates; for they have forsaken Jesus Christ, and cut themselves off from him. They even misuse his name. But Jesus Christ never changes; we have seen that Paul says in 2 Corinthians that we will not find in him yes and no (2 Cor. 1:19), because he remains constant. Thus, whatever the Papists babble about Christianity, it is nothing but mere hypocrisy and lies. They falsely and wickedly use the name of the Son of God, either as a mask or as an idol.

This, then, is why Paul accuses the Galatians of having been led astray. If we ask what they had done, the answer is that they sought to observe the ceremonies of the law as if they were necessary. Yes, it is true that these ceremonies had been ordained by God. Of course; yet, they were a temporary condition for the people of old, for at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ all this had to cease. Because the Galatians were mixing old figures and the shadows of the law with the pure light of the gospel, Paul, unable to bear it, says that they have rebelled and turned away from God. But there was something

worse: namely, that they were making the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ altogether void, by believing that man can merit and acquire his own justification before God, and make himself acceptable in God's service. When these deceivers introduced this particular error of keeping to the 'former shadows', it led the Galatians to believe that they were presenting God with meritorious service. Yet, our salvation must be free, or Jesus Christ is no longer anything. We call it free salvation simply because it is given to us by God, and we come to him to be fed, with nothing but a hungry desire for what we are lacking. We should approach God as miserable beggars, if we would be justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. For if we imagine that we have one drop of merit, we will not be motivated to come to him. One of the learned ancients said, and not without reason, that we cannot receive the salvation offered to us in our Lord Jesus Christ unless we can first erase the memory of all our merits, and acknowledge that we are only full of wretchedness. Paul, therefore, was completely justified in saying that the Galatians had fallen away from Jesus Christ and from God the Father.

However, there was another problem: they had been deluded into believing what others desired them to believe. They had been subjected to a slavish bondage, which robbed them of the peace of conscience that they ought to have had in the Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, together with the reconciliation we have through his sacrificial death and passion, we must also be set free from the rigours of the law to which we were once in bondage. To explain this (as we will soon see more clearly; for here I am dismissing these matters, but we will see their wider implications shortly), you know that it says in the law that all those who do not fulfil what God commands to the last letter will be accursed (Deut. 27:26). Yet it is impossible for us to reach such perfection. Therefore, it was necessary for our Lord Jesus Christ to obtain our liberty, and to free

us from the yoke of the law, which we are unable to bear, as it says in the fifteenth chapter of Acts (Acts 15:10).

We have now seen, in effect, why Paul accuses the Galatians of rebelling, and why he calls them traitors to God and to our Lord Jesus Christ: they had robbed him of the loyalty that they had promised. By this, we too are being admonished to keep to the pure and simple doctrine of the gospel, without straying in one direction or another. For it is not enough to have the name and title of Christians, or to bear the mark of baptism: we must continue steadfast in the doctrine of the gospel. As we have said before, our Lord Jesus Christ cannot deny himself. He can only be known in the way he has been revealed to us by God the Father, our own various conceptions of him being irrelevant. The gospel shows us why he came, his office, the benefits that we receive from him and the strength that he gives us. If we do not have the pure and simple doctrine which our Lord Jesus Christ has revealed, we have nothing at all, but if we have been taught it, let us hold on to it to the very end. If we draw back, even just a little, it is nothing short of unfaithfulness. Indeed, we must remember that terrible Fall, where we, together with others, fell and became entangled with so many errors, lies and deceits of Satan, that Jesus Christ was totally unknown to us. Since God has now, in his goodness, taken us from such an abyss, let us resolve to have firm and constant faith, so that we are no longer shaken like reeds in the wind. Let us remain firmly rooted in the gospel, grounded upon the invincible power of our Lord Jesus Christ. In him all the promises of God are 'yes and amen' (2 Cor 1:20); their truth and their fulfilment is in him. Therefore, let our faith rest steadfast in these facts. This is what we must retain in our minds from Paul's teaching in this passage.

To make the Galatians even more ashamed of themselves, he speaks to them of the calling of grace. We can relate the words, 'from him that called you', as much to Jesus Christ as to God the Father, there being no great significance in this. We can, however, understand what Paul is saying. He is criticising the Galatians for their base behaviour; for they had even less excuse for going astray, considering they had experienced the goodness of God. For if God calls us, even if he summons us in order to put us to shame, we are still his creatures, and, therefore, owe him our obedience. We must always submit to his authority, whatever he decides to do with us. It is our duty to say to him: 'Here I am. What do you require of me?' Whereas, if we make excuses when God calls us, we are perverting the proper order of things. But God not only calls us to himself, he gives us all the treasures of his goodness in our Lord Jesus Christ. He gives himself willingly to us, asking of us only that we should be his own. Since God treats us with such kindness, and ravishes all our faculties with admiration for him, this should render us most unwilling to draw back. Nevertheless, if we do happen to wander to and fro after we have come to him, we will have much less excuse, and will therefore suffer a more severe and a more terrifying condemnation, as I have already suggested.

We see now why Paul mentions the grace into which the Galatians had been called. In fact, we are more guilty today than our fathers were under the law, if we fail to abide in the pure doctrine of the gospel, without swerving from it. For although God led our forefathers to salvation under the law, yet that calling was not accompanied by such open and abundant displays of the riches of his mercy as we now have in our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us examine ourselves. If God has already made his grace known to us, may this inspire and encourage us to have even greater boldness and invincible strength, so that we may continue in our calling, until we

reach the place to which he is calling us. When we compare ourselves with wretched, ignorant unbelievers, our ingratitude is all the more apparent, in that we have had fuller and nobler grace shown to us. We know that many poor souls stray far and wide. They are, however, subject to condemnation: 'For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law' (Rom. 2:12). Now, as for us, God has declared his will to us in such familiar terms, and has given us the opportunity to learn the doctrines of the gospel (if we would only apply ourselves to them); therefore, our condemnation will be even greater than theirs, if we do not make every effort to devote ourselves entirely to God, as I have already said. This makes our responsibility all the greater.

Paul adds another point here: that all this had happened so quickly. Indeed, it is terrible that the Galatians, who had been taught from the lips of the apostle, had defiled themselves during his lifetime. This made them even more blameworthy, because just three days [as it were] after receiving the gospel, they fell away by mixing false teachings with God's truth. Had they kept the faith until a good while after the death of Paul, it does not follow that this would have excused them in God's sight, if they had subsequently fallen away. For as the truth on which our faith is grounded is everlasting, although the heavens and the earth are passing away, even so our faith must endure to the very end (Luke 21:33). Our faith should not depend on the life or death of men; it should be anchored in heaven. Therefore, if we change from one day to the next, we shall have the more to answer for, and our ungratefulness will be even more pronounced. In fact, what Paul says here about the Galatians is far too much in evidence today. Those who have been taught the gospel become discontented after three years [or so] if they do not have some novelty or other, for they have 'itching ears'. Many vain people backslide because they are not content with the truth in the gospel.

They always want to be moving house [as it were], because they need some new thing to feed their foolish imaginations. Others grow dissatisfied when they see that the gospel has not brought them any of this world's goods. There are even some who turn away when they find that they may well be persecuted, and have many enemies. They will have to suffer while others prosper (or so they think). Thus, you can see how many desert our Lord Jesus Christ, not just as one generation succeeds another, but even as those who appear to be his followers turn and rebel after three, or perhaps ten years.

How closely then do we need to hold on to this teaching, since it applies to us. Let us consider the grievance Jeremiah had against the Jews. He says, in effect, 'Go to distant lands, run to the isles, observe what is done by other people. Each one keeps to his own idols', adding, 'which are yet no gods' (Jer. 2:10-11). Satan had deceived them by calling this worship, and they were so set in their ways that they could not be moved. (I hope you are as steadfast as they were, since God has revealed himself to you, and you have a full and certain knowledge of his will.) Surely, however, the same could be said of us nowadays: for we have seen how unbending the Turks [Moslems are being referred to here as "Turks" - Ed.] are! And although the wretched Jews are no better than unclean dogs, yet they are very persistent in maintaining the authority of their law. As for the Papists, their foolishness is so apparent as to make them hideous; even children could judge them. Yet for all that, they burn with such mad zeal to maintain their blasphemous practices. As for ourselves, as soon as the devil beckons with his finger, we are enticed away. It seems as if each of us is on the lookout to see if there is anything new; the slightest thing will immediately weaken us and lead us astray. There is enough sin here without going any further. We must, therefore, take heed to the accusation which is made here by the mouth of Paul against the inconstancy of those who turn away

from God, so soon after he has called them into the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

At this point, Paul states that the cause behind all this is that, 'there be some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ'. Here, Paul is asserting that anything which we may add to the gospel is nothing but mere smoke. Eventually we will discover that it is the devil who has conceived such nonsense in order to deceive miserable fools who cannot adhere to God's truth at all. 'This is nothing other than some people troubling you,' he says. It is true that this expression 'nothing other' [The Authorised Version of 1611 renders this 'not another [gospel]', thus reflecting a view different from that given in Calvin's French translation. Trans.] seems to imply that the whole matter is of no importance. However, Paul is saying that the Galatians were wrong to be troubled by those from Jerusalem and Judaea, who told them they must not separate the law from the gospel. 'No, no,' he says, 'there is only one Jesus Christ. There is only one doctrine that will lead us to him, and give us faith, through which we may obtain salvation. If we wish to have and maintain a pure knowledge of the gospel, we must realise that this is where we find perfection; those who go further are simply trouble-makers throwing everything into disarray.' This text is well worth noting. We learn from it that if our Lord has given us the privilege of being taught in his school, we must no longer have weak faith which can be blown here and there. We must have resolute determination, so that we can say, 'Here is the faith by which we are going to live and die.' We meet many who do not openly oppose the teaching of the gospel, and who even suffer us to preach the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, if we were to ask such people what they disagree with in the gospel, [their answer would be] 'Nothing!' But then, if they were to see an altar adorned with grotesque statues, sure enough, they would flock to it! They would go and hear Mass and do

all the other excesses of the Papists; it is all the same to them. And if all this is set before them as error, they still cannot see that it makes any difference. Take good note — such base behaviour reveals that they do not have faith. How? Well, this is how we can know, and even feel, if we ourselves are believers: when we have discernment about the gospel, and conclude that it is the infallible truth of God, and that it cannot lead us astray if we follow it. However, the Papists have invented a faith (as they call it) which is veiled; this suits them fine (even though the poor souls know nothing), as long as they continue to say, 'I rely on our Holy Mother Church; I hold to what she believes.' These people openly display that they have no faith, and do not know how to be saved. It is written that we can only obtain justification and salvation through faith, when we embrace Jesus Christ as the one who communicates all blessings. Therefore, if the Lord Jesus Christ is unknown, there can be no faith. Popish leaders and teachers have been bewitched by a most awful deception of Satan to speak as they do, which proves to us that they have no knowledge of God; indeed, they are following the path of reprobates.

Let us observe, then, that when Paul tells us there is no other gospel, he wants us to abide in the Lord Jesus Christ and to remain faithful to him, now that we realise the gospel has come from him, rejecting anything which is contrary to its teaching. If we have such maturity, we will be equipped to do battle with Satan, and to oppose all the various opinions that are in the world today. We will never be shaken, whatever troubles come our way; nor will we ever lack the assurance of faith. However, if we waver, we will be just like little children: if they are offered an apple in one hand, sure enough, they will run to it. If they are then offered some other pleasant thing in the other hand, they will reach for that in the same way! Having deserted the first thing, they will rally around the second. If, I say, we are as fickle as this, then it is a sure sign that we are completely unfaithful.



Know, therefore, that there must be harmony between our faith and the gospel. Having given ourselves totally to it, we will never turn aside, because we fix our faith on what is contained therein, as we have already said. Not that we can all be as well-versed as each other; for it is certain that most of those whom the Lord Jesus Christ has in his flock do not understand the tenth part of the Holy Scriptures! Yet, whatever else we do not know, we should have the following beliefs in common: that, (1) There is one God the Father, in whom we all believe, who has adopted us out of his pure mercy. (2) There is only one Jesus Christ, through whom all blessings are given to us. (3) We are made regenerate by the Holy Spirit.

Concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, we must also be aware that he is our Advocate, and that without him we cannot approach God. We would not dare to say 'our Father' unless we were members of the body of the Lord Jesus Christ —unless he spoke on our behalf as our intercessor and friend, guiding us, as it were, by the hand to bring us to God the Father. If we do not know these things, then we cannot obtain salvation. Paul accuses the Galatians of failing to recognise that there is only one gospel, which cannot be altered. He does not want them to grieve our Lord Jesus Christ, who alone is to be heeded. He also warns us of seducers, who seek to turn us from the pure simplicity of the gospel of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ. He teaches us to regard them as abhorrent, for (as we shall soon see more clearly) they pervert the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. How dreadful it is that the gospel, the foundation of our salvation, and the key that opens the gates of paradise, should be perverted! It is our only treasure. We were banished from the kingdom of heaven and could not come near to it, until God made a way, through the gospel, for us to be his people and for him to be our King, so that we can be led and governed by his authority. Inestimable treasures are contained in the gospel. God is reconciled with man; the gates of

heaven are opened to us; our Lord Jesus Christ has been given to us as our inheritance; we are made partakers of all the good things that he has bestowed upon us; and we are assured of our eternal salvation. It were better that the whole world should perish and be consumed than that this gospel should be perverted. This is what Paul says about all those who come to trouble us, after we have been so faithfully taught, and of all those who bring us little novelties, mixing in their own inventions here and there — these people turn men from the kingdom of God, and from his royal throne, so that they are no longer governed by him, and thereby the sceptre of our Lord Jesus Christ is no longer extended to them for their salvation. If God's honour, and our own salvation, is as dear to us as it ought to be, and if sharing in all the blessings of heaven is precious to us, then whenever we are approached by such scoundrels seeking to detract from the majesty of God, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and even our salvation, ought we not to shun them and cast them out as we would the most deadly plague in the world? This, in short, is what we must do: we must cling with strong affection to the gospel, and not allow anyone to corrupt it in any way. We must not let anybody confuse our minds by their claims to be bringing us an alternative view. Even if the people who speak to us have great knowledge, and are skilful, sharp-witted and very eloquent, we must reject them as abominations, people who have come to draw us away from the purity of the gospel. This is what Paul is teaching us here.

Having spoken of this, Paul then adds, that if either he, or an angel, came to preach any other gospel than that which the Galatians had already heard, they were to reject them. They must be treated as accursed people, and as devils, and be excommunicated. We see here that Paul becomes heated (in a manner of speaking), as he is seeking to promote constancy in the faith so that we will not be shaken. Yet he does not do so without good reason. For we know how fragile we

are, and not only fragile, but worse than this, we are vain and rebellious. When we are first taught from the Word of God, if we are not genuinely touched, we find it the strangest book in the world; for the teaching of the gospel is always foolishness to the human mind, as we have seen on previous occasions (1 Cor. 2:14). And the reason for this? Because we are vanity: our hearts have wandered and gone astray, our natures incline and tend to falsehood, and we almost wilfully desire to be beguiled. Because our minds are thus corrupted, we should not be surprised if we do not desire the Word of God and if it does not become a part of us. For our only activity is in rebelling against God. Although we think we are doing right, we are, in fact, blind. In short, the Scriptures do not say without cause that all men are 'vanity and leasing' (Psa. 4:2). We are in rebellion against God, pulling in the opposite direction when he calls us. God has granted us the privilege of being drawn to himself, and of realising that his truth is what we must hold to. He has so mastered us that we are no longer full of guile, but willing to be completely subject to him. Even so, the devil is still able to lead us astray at any moment, because we are so fragile and inconstant! We have seen this happen to those who were mirror-images of holiness (as it were). We have been shocked to see them change so quickly and wander from the right path. What causes this? As I have already said, even when we are in good form, we cannot remain in this state long before we travel in the opposite direction; that is, unless God works in us and strengthens us in our weakness.

This is why Paul upholds the teaching of the gospel in such a forceful way (occasion having been given him by the Galatians, who had gone astray because they had been taught to observe the ceremonies of the law). Seeing such an example and such a picture of man's great weakness and fickleness, Paul states that the truth of the gospel must supersede anything that we may devise. He also implies that we

ought not to be deceived by the knowledge, skill or eloquence of men, for even if the angels from heaven had entered our ranks, we should rather count them as devils. But this, apart from anything else, must have seemed a very strange thing to say. What! The angels from heaven! But what else is it to which he refers? His own preaching. He does not simply speak of the gospel of Christ, but of the gospel which he had preached to them. And can he be superior to the angels from heaven? Well, in the first place, we see that it is nothing to praise the gospel in a general and vague sense; you must know, its teaching. After all, there are many who will mock the folly of the Papists, but if you were to ask them the rudiments, which even little children know well, they do not know them. If one says one thing and another says something else, it is all one and the same thing to them. There is no difference; it is as if they are throwing salt, water, mustard and bitter juice together in a recipe! They will speak often enough in general terms about how we must preach the gospel, and yet they do not know what it is! In order to correct such a sin, Paul speaks of the gospel which he preached to them. By this (as I have said), he is showing us that we ought to know the substance of the doctrine which is brought to us in the name of God, so that our faith can be fully grounded upon it. Then we will not be tossed about with every wind, nor will we wander about aimlessly, changing our opinions a hundred times a day; we will persist in this doctrine until the end. This, in brief, is what we must remember.

Because Paul speaks in such bold language in defence of his teaching, this should make it all the more genuine to us. He does not speak with human arrogance or presumption, but in the name of God. Indeed, there is no question here of his boasting about himself; he proves this by saying, 'if I'. He puts himself first, as if he is saying: 'Even I myself, if I change my doctrine, or if you find I have swerved in any way, let me be regarded as a devil.' Here, Paul is showing that

he was not seeking to gain a reputation for himself, nor was he fighting for his own cause, so that people would say how intelligent, wise and gifted he was. No; he puts himself on the level of all believers and says: 'Let us all embrace the whole of our Master's teaching, which God has entrusted to us, and to which we must submit our conduct. For although I have taught you this doctrine, yet it is not mine, but it is of God, who never changes. If I change, do not be shaken, nor surprised about this, but treat me as a devil, count me accursed. As for yourselves, remain grounded in the truth that you have always known. I would rather you saw me as accursed and abominable, and even the angels from heaven also, than that you forsake the truth about the Son of God and turn away from it.' We can see from this what Paul desired: that God's truth should be revered amongst men, as it deserves to be, and that it should be esteemed in such a way, that all our senses, thoughts, desires and affections should be subdued and held captive to it. It is not lawful for any living creature to change anything in the gospel, for God has spoken by the mouth of his only Son. May he be our master indeed, and may each of us obey him without question. This is what Paul desired. But since we cannot now finish commenting on the rest, it will be reserved for next Sunday, in God's good pleasure.

Now let us fall before the majesty of our great God, acknowledging our faults, and praying that he will make us ever more conscious of them. May this lead us to a right repentance, and make us grow and increase in faith, as true sacrifices to him. Since our Lord Jesus Christ gave himself for our redemption, let us also seek to dedicate ourselves fully to him. May we be led by him to persevere, so that in life and in death we seek no other contentment or rest than to acquiesce in his good will. May we glory in nothing other than the salvation which he has purchased for us. May this grace not only be granted to us, but to all peoples and nations on earth, etc.

# **Perversions of the Gospel**

***Louis Berkhof***

In the second century the Christian religion as a new force in the world, revealing itself in the organization of the Church, had to engage in a struggle for existence. It had to guard against dangers from without and from within, had to justify its existence, and had to maintain the purity of doctrine in the face of subtle error. The very existence of the Church was threatened by State persecutions. The first persecutions were entirely Jewish, due to the fact that the Church was largely limited to Palestine, and that the Roman Government for some time considered the followers of Christ as a Jewish sect and therefore regarded their religion as a *religio licita*. But when it became apparent that Christianity laid claim to a universal character, thus endangering the State religion, and that the Christians largely disregarded the affairs of the State and refused to join in the idolatrous worship of the Romans, and particularly in their emperor worship, the Roman government inaugurated a series of persecutions which threatened the very existence of the Christian Church. At the same time Christianity had to suffer a great deal from the written attacks of some of the keenest minds of the age, such as Lucian, Porphyry, and Celsus, men of a philosophical bent of mind, who hurled their invectives against the Christian religion. Their arguments are typical of the philosophical opposition to Christianity throughout the centuries and frequently remind one of those employed by rationalistic philosophers and higher critics in the

present day. But however great these dangers from without were, there were even greater dangers which threatened the Church from within. These consisted in different types of perversions of the Gospel.

## **I. JEWISH PERVERSIONS**

There were three groups of Jewish Christians which revealed a Judaistic tendency. Traces of them are found even in the New Testament.

**[a] *The Nazarenes.*** These were Jewish Christians who adopted the tenets of the Christian religion. They used only the Hebrew Gospel of Matthew, but at the same time recognized Paul as a true apostle. In distinction from other Jewish sects they believed in the divinity and the virgin birth of Jesus. And while they bound themselves in practice to a strict observance of the law, they did not demand this of Gentile Christians. “They were”, as Seeberg says, “really Jewish Christians, whereas the two following groups were only Christian Jews.”

**[b] *The Ebionites.*** This sect really constituted the continuation of the Judaistic opponents of the Apostle Paul and was of a Pharisaic type. Its adherents refused to recognize the apostleship of Paul, whom they regarded as an apostate from the law, and demanded that all Christians should submit to the rite of circumcision. They had a Cerinthian view of Christ, which was probably due to their desire to maintain the Old Testament monotheism. Both the divinity of Christ and His virgin birth were denied. In their opinion Jesus distinguished Himself from others only by a strict observance of the Law, and was chosen to be the Messiah on account of His legal piety. He became conscious of this at the time of His baptism, when He received the Spirit, which enabled Him to perform His task, the

work, of a prophet and teacher. They were reluctant to think of Him as subject to sufferings and death.

**[c] *The Elkesaites.*** This group represented a type of Jewish Christianity marked by theosophic speculations and strict asceticism. While they rejected the virgin birth of Christ and claimed that He was born as other men, they also spoke of Him as a higher spirit or angel. They regarded Him as an incarnation of the ideal Adam, and also called Him the highest archangel. Circumcision and the sabbath were held in honour; there were repeated washings, to which a magical cleansing and reconciling meaning was ascribed; and magic and astrology were practiced among them. They had their secret doctrines respecting the observance of the law. Their movement was probably an attempt to gain general recognition for Jewish Christianity by adapting it to the syncretistic tendencies of the age. In all probability the Epistle to the Colossians and First Timothy refer to this heresy.

## **2. GENTILE PERVERSIONS: GENTILE-CHRISTIAN GNOSIS**

In Gnosticism we meet with a second perversion of Christianity. It had this in common with the Judaistic sects, that it conceived of the relationship between the Old Testament and the New, and between their respective religions, as one of opposition. Its original form was rooted in Judaism, but it ultimately developed into a strange mixture of Jewish elements, Christian doctrines, and heathen speculative thought.

**[a] *Origin of Gnosticism.*** There are indications in the New Testament that an incipient Gnosticism was already making its appearance in the days of the Apostles. There were heretical teachers even then who drew their immediate impulse from Judaism, engaged



in speculations respecting angels and spirits, and were characterized by a false dualism, leading on to asceticism on the one hand, and to an immoral libertinism on the other hand, who spiritualized the resurrection and made the Church's hope the object of derisive mockery; Col 2:18ff; I Tim 1:3-7; 4:1-3; 6:3 f; II Tim 2:14-18; Tit 1:10-16; II Pet 2:1-4; Jude 4,16; Rev 2:6, 15, 20f. There was also a tendency to religious philosophical speculation, which appeared especially in the heresy of Cerinthus, who distinguished between the human Jesus and Christ as a higher spirit which descended on him at the time of his baptism and left him again before the crucifixion. John indirectly combats this heresy in his writings, John 1:14; 20:31; I John 2:22; 4:2, 15; 5:1, 5,6; II John 7.

From the early part of the second century these errors assumed a more developed form, were openly proclaimed, and at once had an amazingly wide circulation. This can be understood only in the light of the general syncretism of the period. There was a widespread religious unrest and a surprising eagerness to absorb all possible religious ideas, and to generalize and harmonize them. Western religions had ceased to satisfy, and Eastern cults, diligently propagated by itinerant preachers, were eagerly embraced. The great aim was to gratify the thirst for deeper knowledge, the desire for mystic communion with God, and the hope of securing a sure path for the soul in its ascent to the upper world at death. It is no wonder that this tendency attached itself to Christianity, which seemed to address itself to the same task with marked success. Moreover, it found support in the claim of Christianity to be the absolute and universal religion. It may be said that Gnosticism mistakenly sought to elevate Christianity to its rightful position, that of universal religion, by adapting it to the needs of all, and by interpreting it in harmony with the wisdom of the world.

**[b] *The essential character of Gnosticism.*** Gnosticism was first of all a *speculative movement*. The speculative element was very much in the foreground. The very name *Gnostikoi*, adopted by some of its adherents, indicates that they laid claim to a deeper knowledge of divine things than could be obtained by common believers. The Gnostics grappled with some of the deeper problems of philosophy and religion, but approached them in the wrong manner and suggested solutions totally at variance with the truths of revelation. Their two greatest problems were those of absolute being and of the origin of evil, problems not of Christian but of heathen religious thought. They developed a phantastic cosmogony, in which they borrowed freely from oriental speculation, and with which they sought to combine the truths of the Gospel. Undoubtedly, they were serious in their attempts to make the Gospel acceptable to the educated and cultured classes of their day.

In spite of its speculative character, Gnosticism was also a *popular movement*. In order to sway the masses, it had to be something more than mere speculation. Therefore attempts were made in special associations to popularize the general cosmical theory by symbolic rites, mystic ceremonies, and the teaching of magic formulas. In the initiation into these associations strange formulas and rites formed an important part. These were supposed to form a necessary and effective protection against the power of sin and death, and to be a means of gaining access to the blessedness of the world to come. In reality their introduction was an attempt to transform the Gospel into a religious philosophy and into mystic wisdom. Yet Gnosticism claimed to be Christian in character. Whenever possible, it appealed to the words of Jesus explained in an allegorical way, and to a so-called secret tradition handed down from the times of the Apostles. Many received its teachings as genuine Christian truth.

Gnosticism was also a *syncretistic movement* within the sphere of Christianity. It is still a matter of discussion, whether the Gnostics were Christians in any sense of the term. According to Seeberg Gnosticism was pagan rather than Gentile Christian. It addressed itself to the solution of problems that originated in the religious thought of the heathen world, and merely gave its discussions a somewhat Christian colouring. Apparently it placed a high estimate on Jesus Christ as marking the decisive turning-point in human history, and as a teacher of absolute truth. Harnack speaks of it as “the acute Hellenizing of Christianity”, and calls the Gnostics “the first Christian theologians”. Prof. Walther is more correct, when he says that Gnosticism is “. . . a stealing of some Christian rags to cover heathen nakedness”. This corresponds with the description of Seeberg when he speaks of it as “an ethnicizing of Christianity”.

**[c] *The main teachings of Gnosticism.*** We cannot discuss the various Gnostic systems, such as those of Valentinus and Basilides, but can only briefly indicate the teachings of Gnosticism in general. A trait of dualism runs through the whole system and manifests itself in the position that there are two original principles or gods, which are opposed to each other as higher and lower, or even as good and bad. The supreme or good God is an unfathomable abyss. He interposes between Himself and finite creatures a long chain of aeons or middle beings, emanations from the divine, which together constitute the Pleroma or fullness of the divine essence. It is only through these intermediate beings that the highest God can enter into various relations with created beings. The world is not created by the good God, but is the result of, probably, a fall in the Pleroma, and is the work of a subordinate, possibly a hostile, deity. This subordinate god, is called the Demiurge, is identified with the God of the Old Testament, and is described as an inferior, limited, passionate, and vengeful being. He is contrasted with the supreme

God, the source of goodness, virtue, and truth, who revealed Himself in Christ.

The world of matter as the product of a lesser and possibly an evil god, is essentially evil. There is found in it, however, a remnant from the spirit-world, namely, the soul of man, a spark of light from the upper world of purity which in some inexplicable way became entangled in evil matter. Its deliverance can be obtained only through some intervention of the good God. A way of deliverance has been provided by the sending of a special emissary from the kingdom of light into the world of darkness. In Christian Gnosticism this emissary is regularly identified with Christ. He is variously represented, either as a celestial being appearing in a phantasmal body, or as an earthly being, with whom a higher power or spirit temporarily associated himself. Since matter is in itself evil, this higher spirit could not have an ordinary human body.

Participation in redemption, or victory over the world, was gained only through the secret rites of the Gnostic associations. Initiation into the mysteries of marriage to Christ, of peculiar baptism, of magic names, and of special anointing, by which the secret knowledge of Being was secured, formed the path of redemption. At this point Gnosticism became more and more system of religious mysteries. Men are divided into three classes: the pneumatic who constitute the elite of the Church, the psychic consisting of the ordinary Church members, and the hylic or the Gentiles. Only the first class is really capable of higher knowledge (*epignosis*) and thus obtains the highest blessedness. The second class may be saved through faith and works, but can only attain to an inferior blessedness. Those belonging to the third class are hopelessly lost.

The ethics, or moral philosophy, accompanying these views of redemption, was dominated by a false estimate of sensuousness, which resulted either in strict ascetic abstinence or in low carnality, born of the assurance that nothing could really hinder those who were favoured of heaven. There was asceticism on the one hand and libertinism on the other. The ordinary eschatology of the Church had no place in this system. The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead was not recognized. When the soul was finally released from matter, it returned to the Pleroma, and this marked the end.

**[d] *Historical significance of Gnosticism.*** Even Gnosticism, however formidable an enemy of the truth, was not able to check the onward march of Christianity. Many were indeed swept along for a time by its daring speculations or by its mystic rites, but the great body of believers was not deceived by its phantastic representations nor by its alluring promises of secret bliss. In fact, Gnosticism was short-lived. Like a meteor it lit up the sky for a moment, and then suddenly disappeared. It was overcome by the direct refutations of the Church Fathers, by the preparation and circulation of short statements of the fundamental facts of the Christian religion (Rules of Faith), and by a more rational interpretation of the New Testament and a limitation of its canon, to the exclusion of all the false Gospels, Acts, and Epistles that were in circulation. Yet it did not fail to leave a lasting impression on the Church. Some of its peculiarities were absorbed by the Church and in course of time came to fruition in the Roman Catholic Church. With its peculiar conception of the sacraments, its philosophy of a hidden God, who should be approached through intermediaries (saints, angels, Mary), its division of men into higher and lower orders, and its emphasis on asceticism.

The Church also derived actual profit from the appearance of Gnosticism, but only in an indirect way. It learned to mark off clearly the limits of divine revelation, and to determine the relation of the Old Testament to the New. Moreover, it became keenly alive to the necessity of drawing up short statements of the truth, based on current baptismal formulas, which could serve as standards of interpretation (Rules of Faith). There was also a very evident doctrinal gain. Christianity was now first conceived as a “doctrine” and as a “mystery”. The intellectual element in the Christian religion was emphasized, and this marked the real starting-point for doctrinal development. The Christian idea of God was rescued from the mythological speculations of the Gnostics. The Church came into conscious possession of the truth that God is the Supreme Being, the Creator and Upholder of the Universe, the same in the Old and in the New Testament. The doctrine of the Demiurge and his creative activity was set aside, and the dualism of the Gnostics, making matter essentially evil, was overcome. Over against the Gnostic tendency to regard Jesus Christ merely as one of the aeons, His unique character as the Son of God was emphasized, and at the same time His true humanity was defended against all kinds of docetic denials. The great facts of His life, His virgin birth, miracles, sufferings, death, and resurrection, were all maintained and set in dearer light. Moreover, the doctrine of redemption through the atoning work of Christ was put forward in opposition to the speculative vagaries of the Gnostics; and the universal receptivity of men for the Gospel of Jesus Christ was stressed in answer to Gnostic exclusiveness and pride.

# **"The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel"**

**by C.F.W. Walther**

TENTH EVENING LECTURE.

(November 28, 1884.)

The most important resolution a person can make by the almighty grace of God is to become a true Christian. Yet this resolution cannot make him truly happy and save his soul if he is not in full earnest when forming this resolution. Many thousands have resolved to quit the world body and soul and to choose the narrow path of the children of God. They did this after they had quaffed the cup of the world's joys to the dregs. Many, after learning by some sad experience the truth of that Bible passage: "Sin is a reproach to any people," Prov. 14, 34, have made up their minds to quit their sins, even their pet sins. Many thousands have been tormented with uncertainty day and night as to whether they were in a state of grace, whether they were accepted by God as His dear children, and whether their sins were forgiven. They have been filled with anguish when they asked themselves the question: "If I were to die to-day, would I be saved?" In this state of mind they have resolved to seek the grace of God and the forgiveness of their sins.

What has been the outcome? The majority of those who had formed this resolution did not carry it out. They postponed the execution days, weeks, months, years. Forming the resolution is as far as they got. Finally death overtook them, and they were lost forever.

Why was this? They were not in earnest when forming their resolution. True, God is so patient, kind, and gracious as to forgive Christians their sins of weakness and frailties daily and richly. But He does this only to those who are really in earnest about being Christians. When this earnestness is lacking, a person is not a true Christian.

Now, a situation similar to this obtains when a person resolves to become a servant of Christ, a minister of the Church of Christ and His Word. This, too, is a momentous resolution, but a gratifying one only when backed by earnest endeavor. When a person wants to become a servant of the Gospel, he must be so disposed towards his Lord Jesus Christ as to be able to say to Him: "My dear Lord Jesus, Thou art mine; therefore, I wish to be Thine. All that I possess, my body and my soul, my strength and my gifts, and all that I do, my entire life, shall be consecrated to Thee, to Thee alone. Lay on me any burden Thou pleasest, I shall gladly bear it. Lead me anywhere, through sorrow or joy, through good fortune or misfortune, through shame or honor, through favor of men or their disfavor, grant me a long life, or should I die an early death, — I shall be satisfied with anything. Lead the way, and I shall follow." That is the sentiment which our dear Paul Gerhardt has expressed in one of his hymns: —

I cleave now and forever  
To Christ, a member true;  
My Head will leave me never,  
Whate'er He passes through.  
He treads the world beneath  
His feet and conquers death  
And hell and breaks sin's thrall;  
I'm with Him through it all.



Such was the apostle's devotion from the moment when the Lord had appeared to him and had spoken to him. He relates himself that, when he had received the divine call to go and preach the Gospel of Christ among the heathen, he conferred not with flesh and blood, Gal. 1, 16, but obeyed promptly. Blessed Paul! His activity was favored with success beyond telling. And now he is with God; he has beheld his Savior face to face for more than eighteen hundred years and is praising and magnifying Him world without end.

O my dear friends, I know, you are all resolved to enter the holy ministry, in which you intend to serve Christ and His Church by preaching His saving Word. Oh, be in full earnest about it! If not, your resolution will come to naught. If God has tried to lead you to this resolve at an early time, but you refused to follow Him and stifled the voice of the Holy Spirit in your hearts, all those blessed moments of prompting from God will bear testimony against you at His throne. On the other hand, you are blessed men if you have carried out your resolution. You will never complain about the heartache and anguish and distress through which you had to pass. You will rather be full of joy on the day when the Lord will place His hand, with the nail-prints, on you and put the crown of glory on your head.

Now, then, what is your chief task when about to enter the sacred ministry? You are to proclaim to a world of sinners both Law and Gospel. You are to do this clearly, perfectly, and with a fervent spirit. This reflection leads us to the consideration of :

Thesis VI.

In the second place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when the Law is not preached in its full sternness and the Gospel not in its full

sweetness, when, on the contrary, Gospel elements are mingled with the Law and Law elements with the Gospel.

Our object is to meditate upon the distinction between Law and Gospel, and on the ever-present danger and harm of mingling the one with the other. In our last lecture we began our review of the various occasions on which this danger confronts us. However, the commingling of both doctrines occurs also when Gospel elements are mingled with the Law, and vice versa. Let us investigate what Scripture says regarding this matter. To begin with, what does it say concerning the Law? How does it show us that we must not mingle any evangelical ingredient into the Law?

The principal passage yielding us the desired information is Gal. 3, 11. 12: But that no man is justified by the Law in the sight of God, it is evident; for, The just shall live by faith. And the Law is not of faith; but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. A precious text! A person becomes righteous in the sight of God solely by faith. What conclusion must be drawn from this fact? This, that the Law cannot make any person righteous because it has not a word to say about justifying and saving faith. That information is found only in the Gospel. In other words, the Law has nothing to say about grace.

Rom. 4, 16 the apostle tells us: Therefore it [righteousness] is of faith that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the Law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all. Faith is demanded of us, not in order that there might be at least some little work that we are to do, as otherwise there would be no difference between those who go to hell and those who go to heaven. No; righteousness is of faith in order that it may be of grace. Both statements are identical. When I say: "A person becomes righteous in

the sight of God by faith," I mean to say: "He becomes righteous gratuitously, by grace, by God's making righteousness a gift to him." Nothing is demanded of the person; he is only told: "Stretch out your hand, and you have it." Just that is what faith is — reaching out the hand. Suppose a person had never heard a word concerning faith and, on being told the Gospel, would rejoice, accept it, put his confidence in it, and draw comfort from it, that person would have the true, genuine faith, although he may not have heard a word concerning faith.

No Gospel element, then, must be mingled with the Law. Any one expounding the Law shamefully perverts it by injecting into it grace, the grace, lovingkindness, and patience of God, who forgives sin. He acts like a sick-nurse, who fetches sugar to sweeten the bitter medicine, which the patient dislikes. What is the result? Why, the medicine does not take effect, and the patient remains feverish. In order that it might retain its strength the medicine should not have been sweetened. A preacher must proclaim the Law in such a manner that there remains in it nothing pleasant to lost and condemned sinners. Every sweet ingredient injected into the Law is poison; it renders this heavenly medicine ineffective, neutralizes its operation.

Matt. 5, 17-19 the Lord says: Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law till all be fulfilled. Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. When preaching the Law, you must ever bear in mind that the Law makes no concessions. That is utterly

beside the character of the Law; it only makes demands. The Law says: "You must do this; if you fail to do it, you have no recourse to the patience, lovingkindness, and longsuffering of God; you will have to go to perdition for your wrong-doing." To make this point quite plain to us, the Lord says: "Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven." That does not mean, he shall have the lowest place assigned him in heaven, but he does not belong in the kingdom of heaven at all.

Gal. 3, 10 Paul writes: For as many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are in the Book of the Law to do them. If you would direct men to do good works and for their comfort add a remark like this: "You should, indeed, be perfect; however, God does not demand the impossible from us. Do what you can in your weakness; only be sincere in your intention!" — I say, if you would speak thus, you would be preaching a damnable doctrine; for that is a shameful corruption of the Law. God never spoke like that from Sinai.

Rom. 7, 14 the same apostle writes: We know that the Law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin. When a minister preaches the Law, he must by all means bear in mind that the Law is spiritual; it works on the spirit, not on some member of the body; it is directed to the spirit in man, to his will, heart, and affections. That is the way it operates in every instance. When the Law says: "Thou shalt not kill," that sounds as if it applied only to the hand. But it applies to the heart, as we can see from the Ninth and the Tenth Commandment, which prohibit evil desires of the heart.

A sermon on the Law which you deliver from your pulpit, to be a proper preaching of the Law, must measure up to these requirements: There is to be no ranting about abominable vices that may be rampant in the congregation. Continual ranting will prove useless. People may quit the practises that have been reproved, but in two weeks they will have relapsed into their old ways. You must, indeed, testify with great earnestness against transgressions of God's commandments, but you must also tell the people: "Even if you were to quit your habitual cursing, swearing, and the like, that would not make you Christians. You might go to perdition for all that. God is concerned about the attitude of your heart." You may explain this matter with the utmost composure, but you must state it quite plainly.

Let me illustrate. You may say: "Listen; when God says: 'Thou shalt not kill,' that does not mean that you are no murderers when your hand has slain no one, when you have not assaulted any one like a highway robber, nor put his life in jeopardy. Do not think that you have kept the Fifth Commandment if you have refrained from such outward acts. By no means; the Law aims at the heart, at the spirit in man." If you say merely in passing: "The Law is spiritual," the people will not catch the drift of your speech. You must explain this matter to them quite thoroughly. If you do this, you will be handling a sharp knife that cuts into the life of people, and your hearers will go home dazed. From the effect of your preaching they will go down on their knees at home and make this self-confession: "I am not as God would have me be. I shall have to become a different person."

Rom. 3, 20 we read: By the Law is the knowledge of sin. God does not tell you to preach the Law in order thereby to make men godly. The Law makes no one godly; but when it begins to produce its proper effects, the person who is feeling its power begins to fume and

rage against God. He hates the preacher who has shouted the Law into his heart, and he feels that he cannot slip off its coils. Where this has happened, you may hear people say: "We shall never again go to that church. Why, that preacher strikes terror into my soul. I prefer to attend the services of the Rev. So-and-so. He makes you feel good. While listening to him, you discover what a good man you really are." Alas! in eternity these people will wish to take revenge on the preacher that preached them into perdition.

There was nothing pleasant, nothing comforting, at Sinai. On the previous day, Moses had announced to the people that God was going to come to them. He did come with thunder and lightning. At early dawn a terrible tempest swept up from the horizon. Finally, the mountain began to quake, and the people were thrown into a still greater fright by this trembling of the mountain. Flames of fire shot skyward; dense clouds of smoke began to form. Suddenly a loud trumpet began to blare terribly, hurling its echoes like thunderclaps through the valleys that start from the sides of mountain and causing every one to shake with dread. But the climax of this terrible phenomenon came when the people heard the voice of Jehovah reciting to them the Ten Commandments with their regular refrain of Thou shalt! Thou shalt! Thou shalt! Moreover, the Speaker tells them: "I, the Lord, thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children," etc. Ex. 20, 5. Everywhere in the camp of Israel people went to pieces from dread and fright.

Do you think that the coming of this terrible tempest just on that day was an accident? Did not Moses have to set up a barrier around the mountain already on the preceding day lest anybody approach the mountain? Did he not issue a warning to the people telling them that they would drop dead if they crossed the barrier? In the wild tumult of the next day the people understood the truth of the warning; for

no one could have come out alive from that fearful commotion. Only Moses was permitted to approach the mountain, under the protecting hand of God.

By this spectacle God has indicated to us how we are to preach the Law. True, we cannot reproduce the thunder and lightning of that day, except in a spiritual way. If we do, it will be a salutary sermon when the people sit in their pews and the preacher begins to preach the Law in its fulness and to expound its spiritual meaning. There may be many in the audience who will say to themselves, "If that man is right, I am lost."

Some, indeed, may say: "That is not the way for an evangelical minister to preach." But it certainly is; he could not be an evangelical preacher if he did not preach the Law thus. The Law must precede the preaching of the Gospel, otherwise the latter will have no effect. First comes Moses, then Christ; or: First John the Baptist, the forerunner, then Christ. At first the people will exclaim, How terrible is all this! But presently the preacher, with shining eyes, passes over to the Gospel, and then the hearts of people are cheered. They see the object of the preacher's preceding remarks: he wanted to make them see how awfully contaminated with sins they were and how sorely they needed the Gospel.

For your catechizing you must adopt the same method. When explaining the Law, do not mingle Gospel elements with your catechization, except in the conclusion. Even little children have to pass through these experiences of anguish and terror in the presence of the Law. The reason why so many imagine that they can pass for really good Christians is because their parents reared them to be self-righteous Pharisees; they never made them aware of the fact that they are poor, miserable sinners. A person may have fallen into the

most dreadful sins; but if he has been brought up properly, he says to himself when he hears the Law preached: "Surely I am an awful sinner!" A Pharisee who hears the same sermon may not repeat that confession, though he may have fallen into far greater sins.

The conversion of Pharisees is a far more difficult task than that of a person who acknowledges his sin. That was the deepest corruption of the Jews in the days of Christ, and it is that of the papists in our time. The Jews had mingled Gospel elements with the Law by telling the people: "If you do not actually slay somebody, you are not a murderer. If you do not commit manifest fornication, you are not guilty of adultery." Even concupiscence was declared a natural sensation. The papists say the same. When forced to admit that in the exposition of the Law by Christ some things are named that cannot be classified with gross acts contrary to the Law, they claim that these things are meant merely as good counsels of Christ, which may be adopted by those who strive for an exceptionally exalted place in heaven. The good works resulting from following these good counsels of Christ they call supererogatory.

In his comment on the words of Christ: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill," etc., Luther says (St. L. Ed. VII, 429 f.): "Christ takes up some of the Ten Commandments for the purpose of explaining them properly. He shows that the Pharisees and scribes, when teaching the Law, did not push their explanation and inculcation beyond the literal meaning of the commandments and made them applicable only to gross, external acts. For instance, in the Fifth Commandment (which He introduces first) they considered no more than the word kill, which they interpreted to mean actual slaying; and they allowed the people to stick to the notion that nothing else is forbidden in this commandment. Moreover, in order to escape the charge of



manslaughter for delivering a person to the magistrates to be condemned to death, as they delivered Christ to the pagan Pontius Pilate, they framed a pretty pretense for keeping their own hands from being sullied with blood: they urged their ceremonial purity and sanctity to the point of refusing to enter the governor's palace and forcing Pilate against his will to kill Jesus. John 18, 28ff. Later, still pretending perfect purity and innocence, they even rebuked the apostles for preaching Christ and charged them with the intention of bringing 'this man's blood' upon them. Acts 5, 28. They meant to say: Not we, but the heathen, killed Christ. A similar trick is recorded regarding King Saul in 1 Sam. 18, 25ff. He was nursing a grudge against David and would have liked to kill him. But since he wished to pass for a holy man, he planned to do the killing not with his own hand, but to send him against the Philistines, who, he hoped, would slay him. Thus his hand would be innocent of murder!"

What the Jews accepted of the Fifth Commandment was the more literal and crass meaning of the terms. The teachers told the people: "If you omit such and such acts, you will pass for such as have well complied with the Fifth Commandment." These famous doctors, who made their boast of the Law, had emptied the Law of its contents and retained the mere shell. Our modern rationalists are doing the same. Their aim is merely to preserve the reputation of probity in their lives, hence, not to rush into abominable vices of which any decent citizen would have to be ashamed. Upright conduct, too, is the sole object of their preaching. Even so-called Christian preachers are found to do this.

The practise of the Pharisees has been taken up by the papists. Papists and Pharisees resemble one another as closely as two eggs. The papists, when handing heretics over to the magistrates, declare: "Ecclesia non sitit sanguinem, that is, The Church does not thirst for

blood. True, many of our heretical enemies have been slain. However, it was not we who did that, but the magistrates." But if the magistrates refused to do it, they were excommunicated by the Church. Thus the papists want to wash their hands of the blood of the martyrs. But they will not succeed; some day they will have to appear before God stained with the damning witness of this blood. The case of the Jews is similar. Had they known the spiritual meaning of the Law, they would also have acknowledged: "Yes we are the ones who killed Christ; for it was we who cried, 'Crucify, crucify Him!'"

Luther proceeds: "Behold here the pretty sanctity of Pharisees, which can whitewash itself and retain the reputation of godliness, provided it does not employ its own hand for killing, though the heart is filled with wrath, hatred, and envy and conceals malignant and murderous intrigues, while the mouth spouts forth curses and blasphemies. Of the same stripe is the sanctity of our papists, who have become past masters in these tricks. To guard their sanctity against censure and not to be bound by the Word of Christ, they found a fine subterfuge in the twelve [evangelical] counsels which they extracted from the teaching of Christ. They claimed that not all that Christ had taught was of the nature of a command and a necessary requisite [for discipleship], but some of His teachings were meant as a good counsel, the following of which was left to everybody's discretion. These counsels were to be adopted by those who wished to achieve some especial merit before others. For the average person these counsels were a superfluous teaching that he could well do without. When you asked them their reason for framing these counsels from the teaching of Christ and how they proved their case, they would say: Well, you see it would be an excessive burdening of the Christian law (*nimis onerativum legis Christianae*); in other words, it would make Christianity too onerous an affair if all teachings of Christ were

to be taken as actual commands. That is what the theologians of Paris unblushingly published in the treatise they directed against me. Forsooth, here we have some smart reasoning: being kind to your neighbor and not forsaking him in distress, as you would wish that people should treat you, that is to be an over-great burden. And inasmuch as they deem it too onerous, they decree that it shall not be regarded as a command, but as a matter left to the option of such as would be glad to do it. Those, however, who are unwilling to do it are not to be burdened with it. That is the trick of directing Christ's speech, lording it over His Word and construing its meaning to suit our fancy. But He will not permit Himself to be cheated thus, nor will He revoke the verdict which He has laid down when He said: Except you have a better kind of godliness to show, heaven will be closed against you, and you will be damned; or as He expresses it in a later statement: If you say to your brother, Thou fool, you shall be in danger of hell-fire. From this we can readily gather whether He offered counsels or issued commands."

Christ says: "If any man will sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away." The papists construe these words thus: "True, Christ did say that, but His words are merely evangelical counsels. If the question is how to get to heaven, you have to keep the Law. But if your object is to climb to a high place in heaven, you must carry out these counsels."

In his *Chapters in Theology* (*Loci Theol.*, Part II, fol. 104) Chemnitz enumerates these counsels. By the way, the supererogatory works resulting from following these counsels, you know, are the treasure from which the Pope distributes his indulgences. All told, there are twelve counsels: 1. Voluntary poverty. The words of Christ: "Sell that

thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven," Matt. 19, 21, are understood by the papists as being merely a good counsel. In their view this counsel is followed by those who enter a monastery. 2. Celibacy. This counsel the papists extract from Matt. 19, 12: "There are some eunuchs which were so born from their mother's womb; and there are some eunuchs which were made eunuchs by men; and there be eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake." "Behold," they say, "our monks and nuns have adopted this good counsel." Or they put it this way: "They lead a life of chastity." 3. Unconditional obedience to the superior of an order. This good counsel, too, is followed by monks and nuns.

4. Taking revenge. It seems almost beyond belief that any one should arise in the Church and declare the divine command not to take revenge to be merely a good counsel. That amounts to saying: You might revenge yourself, but if you decline to do so, that is a splendid good work. 5. Patiently suffering insult. 6. Giving alms. 7. Refraining from swearing. 8. Avoiding opportunities to commit sin. This is awful! It is not necessary, then, to avoid all opportunities for sinning; but if you do so, you climb to the top of perfection! 9. Having a right intention in whatever you do. This would mean that, no matter what prompts you to do a good work, it is in every case a good work in the sight of God. But if you are guided by a right motive, you are an exceptionally saintly person. 10. Doing what Christ says in Matt. 23, 3: "They say and do not," and in Matt. 7, 5: "First cast out the beam out of thine own eye." 11. Not being concerned about temporal affairs. In the view of papists this, too, is merely a good counsel. 12. Admonishing a brother. Imagine, this is not to be regarded as a real duty, not being a part of the Law!

You can see what an abominable perversion of the Law has been perpetrated by the papists. Verily, they have dissipated the inmost spirit of the Law. They imagine that it would be asking too much if everybody were required to obey all these teachings of Christ. Of course, all cannot enter a cloister. If they did, who would provide bread and meat? No, indeed; that would be asking too much! Oh, what an abomination!

The Jesuits came forward with the proclamation: Heretofore the poor Christians have been unduly oppressed with moral precepts. Hence we, the Jesuits, have formed a society for relieving Christians of the most grievous moral precepts. And they actually put their plan in operation, with this happy result that according to their ethical standards the most infamous scoundrel can still be a good Christian. Their moral code is the reverse of the Decalog: a person may commit the most horrible abominations, provided he does so from a good intention. He may poison his father if he has the good intention of becoming his heir. However, this entire ethical system of the papists and Jesuits has been overthrown by the words of Christ: "Whoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire." This means that any one who fails to fulfil the Law in its spiritual meaning deserves to perish.

## **Faith and the Gospel**

***by J. Gresham Machen***

If what we have said so far be correct, there is now living a Saviour who is worthy of our trust, even Christ Jesus the Lord, and a deadly need of our souls for which we come to Him, namely, the curse of God's law, the terrible guilt of sin. But these things are not all that is needed in order that we may have faith. It is also necessary that there should be contact between the Saviour and our need. Christ is a sufficient Saviour; but what has He done, and what will He do, not merely for the men who were with Him in the days of His flesh, but for us? How is it that Christ touches our lives?

The answer which the Word of God gives to that question is perfectly specific and perfectly plain. Christ touches our lives, according to the New Testament, through the Cross. We deserved eternal death, in accordance with the curse of God's law; but the Lord Jesus, because He loved us, took upon Himself the guilt of our sins and died instead of us on Calvary. And faith consists simply in our acceptance of that wondrous gift. When we accept the gift, we are clothed, entirely without merit of our own, by the righteousness of Christ; when God looks upon us, He sees not our impurity but the spotless purity of Christ, and accepts us "as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone." That view of the Cross, it cannot be denied, runs counter to the mind of the natural man. It is not, indeed, complicated or obscure; on the contrary it is so simple that a child can understand, and what is really obscure is the manifold modern effort to explain the Cross away in such fashion as to make it more agreeable to human pride. But certainly it is mysterious, and certainly it demands for its acceptance a tremendous sense of sin and guilt. That sense of sin and guilt, that moral awakening of a soul dead in sin, is the work of the Spirit of God; without the Spirit of God no human persuasion will ever bring men to faith. But that does not mean that we should be careless about the way in which we proclaim the gospel: because the

proclamation of the message is insufficient to induce faith, it does not follow that it is unnecessary; on the contrary it is the means which the Spirit Himself graciously uses in bringing men to Christ. Every effort, therefore, should be made, with the help of God, to remove objections to this “word of the Cross” and to present it in all its gracious power.

No systematic effort can indeed here be made to deal with the objections. All that can be done is to mention one or two of them, in order that our present point, that the Cross of Christ is the special basis of Christian faith, may become plain.

In the first place, then, the view of the Cross which has just been outlined is often belittled as being merely a “theory of the atonement.” We can have the fact of the atonement, it is said, no matter what particular theory of it we hold, and indeed even without holding any particular theory of it at all. So this substitutionary view, it is said, is after all only one theory among many.

This objection is based upon a mistaken view of the distinction between fact and theory, and upon a somewhat ambiguous use of the word “theory.” What is; meant by a “theory”? Undoubtedly the word often has rather an unfavorable sound; and the use of it in the present connection might seem to imply that the view of the atonement which is designated as a “theory” is a mere effort of man to explain in his own way what God has given. But might not God have revealed the “theory” of a thing just as truly as the thing itself; might He not Himself have given the explanation when He gave the thing? In that case the explanation just as much as the thing itself comes to us with a divine authority, and it is impossible to accept one without accepting the other.

We have not yet, however, quite gotten to the heart of the matter. Men say that they accept the fact of the atonement without accepting the substitutionary theory of it, and indeed without being sure of any theory of it at all. The trouble with this attitude is that the moment we say “atonement” we have already overstepped the line that separates fact from theory; an “atonement” even in the most general and most indefinite sense that could conceivably be given to the word, cannot possibly be a mere fact, but is a fact as explained by its purpose and results. If we say that an event was an “atonement” for sin or an “atonement” in the sense of an establishment of harmony between God and man, we have done more than designate the mere external event. What we have really done is to designate the event with an explanation of its meaning. So the atonement wrought by Christ can never be a bare fact, in the sense with which we are now dealing. The bare fact is simply the death of a Jew upon a cross in the first century of our era, and that bare fact is entirely without value to anyone; what gives it its value is the explanation of it as a means by which sinful man was brought into the presence of God. It is impossible for us to obtain the slightest benefit from a mere contemplation of the death of Christ; all the benefit comes from our knowledge of the meaning of that death, or in other words (if the term be used in a high sense) from our “theory” of it. If, therefore, we speak of the bare “fact” of the atonement, as distinguished from the “theory” of it, we are indulging in a misleading use of words; the bare fact is the death, and the moment we say “atonement” we have committed ourselves to a theory. The important thing, then, is, since we must have some theory, that the particular theory that we hold shall be correct.

But, it may be said, might not God really have accomplished some wonderful thing by the death of Christ without revealing to us, except in the most general terms, what it was? Might He not have told us



simply that our salvation depends upon the death of Christ without at all telling us why that is so? We answer that He certainly might have done so; but the question is whether He has actually done so. There are many things which He might conceivably have done and yet has not actually done. Conceivably, for example, He might have saved us by placing us in a condition of unconsciousness and then awakening us to a new life in which sin should have no place. But it is perfectly plain that as a matter of fact He has not done so; and even we, with our poor finite intelligence, may perhaps see that His way is better than that. So it is perfectly conceivable that He might have saved us by the death of Christ without revealing to us how He did so; in that case we should have to prostrate ourselves before a crucifix with an understanding far lower than that which is found in the lowest forms of Roman Catholic piety. He might conceivably have treated us thus. But, thank God, He has not done so; thank God He has been pleased, in His infinite grace, to deal with us- not as with sticks and stones, but as with persons; thank God He has been pleased to reveal to us in the Cross of Christ a meaning that stills the despairing voice of conscience and puts in our hearts a song of joy that shall resound to His praise so long as eternity endures.

That richness of meaning is found only in the blessed doctrine that upon the Cross the Lord took our place, that He offered Himself “a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us to God.” There are indeed other ways of contemplating the Cross, and they should certainly not be neglected by the Christian man. But it is a sad and fatal mistake to treat those other ways as though they lay on the same plane with this one fundamental way; in reality the other “theories” of the atonement lose all their meaning unless they are taken in connection with this one blessed “theory.” When taken with this way of looking upon the Cross, the other ways are full of helpfulness to the Christian man; but without it they lead only to

confusion and despair. Thus the Cross of Christ is certainly a noble example of self-sacrifice; but if it be only a noble example of self-sacrifice, it has no comfort for burdened souls; it certainly shows how God hates sin; but if it does nothing but show how God hates sin, it only deepens our despair; it certainly exhibits the love of God, but if it does nothing but exhibit the love of God it is a mere meaningless exhibition which seems unworthy of God. Many things are taught us by the Cross; but the other things are taught us only if the really central meaning is preserved, the central meaning upon which all the rest depends. On the cross the penalty of our sins was paid; it is as though we ourselves had died in fulfillment of the just curse of the law; the handwriting of ordinances that was against us was wiped out; and henceforth we have an entirely new life in the full favor of God.

There is, however, another objection to this “word of the Cross.” The objection comes from those who place faith in a person in opposition to acceptance of a doctrine, especially a doctrine that is based upon what happened long ago. Can we not, it is said, trust Christ as a present Saviour without accepting a doctrine that explains the death that He died in the first century of our era? This question, in one form or another, is often asked, and it is often answered in the affirmative. Indeed, the doctrinal message about Christ is often represented as a barrier that needs to be done away in order that we may have Christ Himself; faith in a doctrine should be removed, it is said, in order that faith in a Person may remain.

Whatever estimate may finally be made of this way of thinking, it must at any rate be admitted at the start that it involves a complete break with the primitive Christian Church. If any one thing must be clear to the historian, it is that Christianity at the beginning was founded squarely upon an account of things that had happened,

upon a piece of news, or in other words, upon a “gospel.” The matter is particularly clear in the summary which Paul in I Cor. xv. 3-7 gives of the primitive Jerusalem tradition: “How that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.” The earliest Christian Church in Jerusalem clearly was founded not merely upon what always was true but upon things that had happened, not merely upon eternal truths of religion but upon historical facts. The historical facts upon which it was founded were, moreover, not bare facts but facts that had a meaning; it was not only said that “Christ died” — that would be (at least if the word “Christ” were taken as a mere proper name and not in the full, lofty signification of “Messiah”) a bare fact — but it was said “Christ died for our sins,” and that was a fact with the meaning of the fact — in other words it was a doctrine.

This passage is of course not isolated in the New Testament teaching, but is merely a summary of what is really the presupposition of the whole. Certainly the grounding of Christianity upon historical facts, upon events as distinguished from mere eternal principles, cannot be regarded as a point in which the apostolic Church was in contradiction to the teaching which Jesus Himself gave in the days of His flesh, but finds its justification in the words which Jesus uttered. Of course if Jesus really, as the New Testament books all represent, came — to use the language of a certain distinguished preacher — not primarily to say something but to do something, and if that something was done by His death and resurrection, then it is natural that the full explanation of what was done could not be given until the death and resurrection had occurred. It is a great mistake, therefore, to regard the Sermon on the Mount as somehow more sacred or more necessary to the nurture of the Christian life than, for example, the eighth chapter of Romans. But although the full

explanation of redemption could not be given until the redeeming event had taken place, yet our Lord did, by way of prophecy, even in the days of His flesh, point forward to what was to come. He did point forward to catastrophic events by which salvation was to be given to men; all efforts to eliminate this element in His teaching about the Kingdom of God have failed. During Jesus' earthly ministry the redeeming work which the Old Testament prophets had predicted was still in the future; to the apostolic Church it was in the past: but both Jesus and the apostolic Church did proclaim, the one by way of prophecy, the other by way of historical testimony, an event upon which the hopes of believers were based.

Thus the notion that insistence upon the message of redemption through the death and resurrection of our Lord places a barrier between ourselves and Him was not shared by the earliest Christian Church; on the contrary, in the apostolic age that message was regarded as the source of all light and joy. And in the present instance, as in so many other instances, it can be shown that the apostles (and our Lord Himself) were right. The truth is that the whole opposition between faith in a person and acceptance of a message about the person must be given up. It is based, as we have already seen, upon a false psychology; a person cannot be trusted without acceptance of the facts about the person. But in the case of Jesus the notion is particularly false; for it is just the message about Jesus, the message that sets forth his Cross and resurrection, that brings us into contact with Him. Without that message He would be forever remote — a great Person, but one with whom we could have no communion — but through that message He comes to be our Saviour. True communion with Christ comes not when a man merely says, in contemplating the Cross, "This was a righteous man," or "This was a son of God," but when he says with tears of gratitude and joy, "He loved me and gave Himself for me."

There is a wonderful clause in the Westminster *Shorter Catechism* which puts the true state of the case in classic form. "Faith in Jesus Christ," says the Catechism, "is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation, *as He is offered to us in the gospel.*" In that last clause, "as He is offered to us in the gospel," we have the centre and core of the whole matter. The Lord Jesus Christ does us no good, no matter how great He may be, unless He is offered to us; and as a matter of fact He is offered to us in the good news of His redeeming work. There are other conceivable ways in which He might have been offered to us; but this has the advantage of being God's way. And I rather think that in the long run we may •come to see that God's way is best.

At the beginning, it is true, there may be much that we cannot understand; there are things about the way of salvation that we may at first have to take in the fullest sense "on faith." The greatest offence of all, perhaps, is the wondrous simplicity of the gospel, which is so different from the plans which we on our part had made. Like Naaman the Syrian we are surprised when our rich fees and our letters of introduction are spurned, when all our efforts to save ourselves by our own character or our own good works are counted as not of the slightest avail. "Are not Abana and Phar-par, rivers of Damascus," we say, "better than all the waters of Israel?" Are not our own efforts to put into operation the "principles of Jesus," or to "make Christ Master" by our own efforts in our lives, better than this strange message of the Cross? But like Naaman we may find, if we put away our pride, if we are willing to take God at His word, if we confess that His way is best, that our flesh, so foul with sin, may come again like the flesh of a little child and we may be clean.

And then will be revealed to us the fuller wonders of salvation; then, as the years go by, we shall come to understand ever more and more

the glory of the Cross. It may seem strange at first that Christ should be offered to us not in some other way, but so specifically in this way; but as we grow in knowledge and in grace we shall come to see with increasing fullness that no way could possibly be better than this. Christ is offered to us not in general, but “in the gospel”; but in the gospel there is included all that the heart of man can wish.

We ought never, therefore, to set present communion with Christ, as so many are doing, in opposition to the gospel; we ought never to say that we are interested in what Christ does for us now, but are not so much interested in what He did long ago. Do you know what soon happens when men talk in that way? The answer is only too plain. They soon lose all contact with the real Christ; what they call “Christ” in the soul soon comes to have little to do with the actual person, Jesus of Nazareth; their religion would really remain essentially the same if scientific history should prove that such a person as Jesus never lived. In other words, they soon came to substitute the imaginings of their own hearts for what God has revealed; they substitute mysticism for Christianity as the religion of their souls.

That danger should be avoided by the Christian man with all his might and main. God has given us an anchor for our souls; He has anchored us to Himself by the message of the Cross. Let us never cast that anchor off; let us never weaken our connection with the events upon which our faith is based. Such dependence upon the past will never prevent us from having present communion with Christ; our communion with Him will be as inward, as intimate, as untrammelled by any barriers of sense, as the communion of which the mystics boast; but unlike the communion of the mystics it will be communion not with the imaginings of our own hearts, but with the real Saviour Jesus Christ. The gospel of redemption through the Cross and resurrection of Christ is not a barrier between us and

Christ, but it is the blessed tie, by which, with the cords of His love. He has bound us forever to Him.

Acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ, as He is offered to us in the gospel of His redeeming work, is saving faith. Despairing of any salvation to be obtained by our own efforts, we simply trust in Him to save us; we say no longer, as we contemplate the Cross, merely “He saved others” or “He saved the world” or “He saved the Church”; but we say, every one of us, by the strange individualizing power of faith, “He loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*.” When a man once says that, in his heart and not merely with his lips, then no matter what his guilt may be, no matter how far he is beyond any human pale, no matter how little opportunity he has for making good the evil that he has done, he is a ransomed soul, a child of God forever.

At this point, a question may perhaps be asked. We have said that saving faith is acceptance of Christ, not merely in general, but as He is offered to us in the gospel. How much, then, of the gospel, it may be asked, does a man need to accept in order that he may be saved; what, to put it baldly, are the minimum doctrinal requirements in order that a man may be a Christian? That is a question which, in one form or another, I am often asked; but it is also a question which I have never answered, and which I have not the slightest intention of answering now. Indeed it is a question which I think no human being can answer. Who can presume to say for certain what is the condition of another man’s soul; who can presume to say whether the other man’s attitude toward Christ, which he can express but badly in words, is an attitude of saving faith or not? This is one of the things which must surely be left to God.

There is indeed a certain reason why it is natural to ask the question to which we have just referred; it is natural because of the existence

of a visible Church. The visible Church should strive to receive, into a communion for prayer and fellowship and labor, as many as possible of those who are united to Christ in saving faith, and it should strive to exclude as many as possible of those who are not so united to Him. If it does not practise exclusion as well as inclusion, it will soon come to stand for nothing at all, but will be merged in the life of the world; it will soon become like salt that has lost its savour, fit only to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men.

In order, therefore, that the purity of the Church may be preserved, a confession of faith in Christ must be required of all those who would become Church members. But what kind of confession must it be? I for my part think that it ought to be not merely a verbal confession, but a credible confession. One of the very greatest evils of present-day religious life, it seems to me, is the reception into the Church of persons who merely repeat a form of words such as "I accept Christ as my personal Saviour," without giving the slightest evidence to show that they know what such words mean. As a consequence of this practice, hosts of persons are being received into the Church on the basis, as has been well said, of nothing more than a vague admiration for the moral character of Jesus, or else on the basis of a vague purpose of engaging in humanitarian work. One such person within the Church does more harm to the cause of Christ, I for my part believe, than ten such persons outside; and the whole practice ought to be radically changed. The truth is that the ecclesiastical currency in our day has been sadly debased; Church membership, as well as Church office, no longer means what it ought to mean. In view of such a situation, we ought, I think, to have reality at least; instead of comforting ourselves with columns of church statistics, we ought to face the facts; we ought to recall this paper currency and get back to a standard of gold.



To that end, it should, I think, be made much harder than it now is to enter the Church: the confession of faith that is required should be a credible confession; and if it becomes evident upon examination that a candidate has no notion of what he is doing, he should be advised to enter upon a course of instruction before he becomes a member of the Church. Such a course of instruction, moreover, should be conducted not by comparatively untrained laymen, but ordinarily by the ministers; the excellent institution of the catechetical class should be generally revived. Those churches, like the Lutheran bodies in America, which have maintained that institution, have profited enormously by its employment; and their example deserves to be generally followed.

After all, however, such inquiries into the state of the souls of men and women and children who desire to enter into the Church must be regarded as at the best very rough and altogether provisional. Certainly requirements for Church membership should be distinguished in the sharpest possible way from requirements for the ministry. The confusion of these two things in the ecclesiastical discussions of the past few years has resulted in great injustice to us who are called conservatives in the Church. We have been represented sometimes as though we were requiring an acceptance of the infallibility of Scripture or of the confession of faith of our Church from those who desire to become Church members, whereas in point of fact we have been requiring these things only from candidates for ordination. Surely there is a very important distinction here. Many persons — to take a secular example — can be admitted to an educational institution as students who yet are not qualified for a position in the faculty. Similarly many persons can be admitted to Church membership who yet ought not to be admitted to the ministry; they are qualified to learn, but not qualified to teach; they should not be allowed to stand forth as accredited teachers with

the official endorsement of the Church. This analogy, it is true, does not by any means altogether hold: the Church is not, we think, merely an educational institution, but the visible representative in the world of the body of Christ; and its members are not merely seekers after God, but those who have already found; they are not merely interested in Christ, but are united to Christ by the regenerating act of the Spirit of God. Nevertheless, although the analogy does not fully hold, it does hold far enough to illustrate what we mean. There is a wide margin of difference between qualifications for Church membership and qualifications for office — especially the teaching office that we call the ministry. Many a man, with feeble, struggling belief, torn by many doubts, may be admitted into the fellowship of the Church and of the sacraments; it would be heartless to deprive him of the comfort which such fellowship affords; to such persons the Church freely extends its nurture to the end that they may be led into ever fuller knowledge and ever firmer faith. But to admit such persons to the ministry would be a crime against Christ's little ones, who look to the ministry for an assured word as to the way by which they shall be saved. It is not, however, even such persons to whom chiefly we have reference when we advocate today a greater care in admitting men to the ministry. It is not men who are struggling with doubts and difficulties about the gospel to whose admission we chiefly object, but men who are perfectly satisfied with another gospel; it is not men of ill-assured faith, but men of assured unbelief.

Even with regard to Church membership, as distinguished from the ministry, there is, as we have seen, a limit beyond which exclusion must certainly be practised; not only a desire to enter the Church should be required but also some knowledge of what entering the Church means, not only a confession of faith but a reasonably credible confession. But the point that we are now making is that

such requirements ought clearly to be recognized as provisional; they do not determine a man's standing before God, but they only determine, with the best judgment that God has given to feeble and ignorant men, a man's standing in the visible Church. That is one reason why we must refuse to answer, in any definite and formal way, the question as to the minimum doctrinal requirements that are necessary in order that a man may be a Christian.

There is, however, also another reason. The other reason is that the very asking of the question often betokens an unfortunate attitude with regard to Christian truth. For our part we have not much sympathy with the present widespread desire of finding some greatest common denominator which shall unite men of different Christian bodies; for such a greatest common denominator is often found to be very small indeed. Some men seem to devote most of their energies to the task of seeing just how little of Christian truth they can get along with. For our part, we regard it as a perilous business; we prefer, instead of seeing how little of Christian truth we can get along with, to see just how much of Christian truth we can obtain. We ought to search the Scriptures reverently and thoughtfully and pray God that he may lead us into an ever fuller understanding of the truth that can make us wise unto salvation. There is no virtue whatever in ignorance, but much virtue in a knowledge of what God has revealed.

## **The Uses of the Gospel and the Law**

***by John Colquhoun***

The gospel, in its strict and proper sense, is of great and manifold use to both sinners and to saints.

### ***Section 1. The Principal Uses of the Gospel***

The gospel in its strict acceptation is, in the hand of the Holy Spirit, of special use:

1. To reveal Christ and God in Him as reconciled, and as reconciling sinners of mankind to Himself. The great use of the gospel is to make Christ known to lost sinners as the only and the all-sufficient Savior; to reveal Him to them in His infinitely glorious person as God-man and Mediator; in His surety-righteousness for their justification before God; in His immeasurable fullness of the Spirit for their sanctification and consolation, and in His saving offices and endearing relations to all who believe in Him. It serves to represent to them how Jesus has loved them, what He has done and suffered for them, and what blessings of salvation He has purchased for them and is ready to dispense to them (1 Corinthians 1:24 and 2:2; 1 Timothy 3:16). It is of use also to reveal to them God as reconciled in the Son, and as reconciling elect sinners to Himself (2 Corinthians 4:3-6 and 5:18-20). Hence the manifold doctrines, offers, and promises of the gospel are in Scripture called “the manifold wisdom of God” (Ephesians 3:10). They clearly show that God has devised the scheme of our redemption with such astonishing wisdom; that our salvation is all of grace and all of merit, all of mercy and all of justice; that our iniquities are forgiven, and yet the punishment due for them is inflicted; that the ungodly who believe are justified and yet ungodliness is condemned; and that salvation is freely bestowed and, after all, the demands of law and justice are fully answered.

2. It is the gospel which also discloses to sinners the covenant of grace into which the Father, and the Son as last Adam, with the

infinite approbation of the Holy Spirit, have entered for the salvation of such sinners as believe. Sinful men cannot be otherwise saved than by being enabled to take hold of that everlasting covenant by faith as to come into the bond of it. This, however, they cannot do unless they are made so to know it as to discern spiritually the reality, glory, and suitableness of it to their miserable condition as lost sinners. But it is the gospel only, coming to them “in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,” that reveals this gracious covenant to them, and that shows them how they may be so instated in it as to possess and enjoy the blessings of salvation. They could never, according to the plan established in the counsel of peace, have known that eternal contract but by the revelation of it in the everlasting gospel. It is by the gospel, accompanied with the illuminating influences of His Holy Spirit, that the Lord Jesus, the Messenger of the covenant, shows elect sinners His covenant (Psalm 25:14).

3. It serves, likewise, the highly important purpose of revealing to sinners their warrant to trust in Christ Jesus for complete salvation. In the blessed gospel, Christ, and God in Christ, are freely offered to sinful men, and men are graciously invited as sinners to receive the offer and to entrust the whole affair of their salvation to Christ, and to God in Him (John 6:32; Isaiah 55:1-4). By the gospel, they are informed that the Lord Jesus offers Himself with all the inestimable blessings of the everlasting covenant to them, and that He graciously invites and urges them as sinners to accept Him as their all-sufficient Savior, and to place the confidence of their hearts in Him for salvation from sin and wrath. Were they to not know that a divine warrant is thereby afforded them to receive and trust in the Savior for their salvation, it would be as great presumption in any of them as it would be in a fallen angel to attempt trusting that He would save him. But by the declarations, offers, calls, and promises of the word

of grace, an ample warrant is afforded them as sinners of mankind to trust in the divine Savior, and so to take possession of His great salvation. And it is by the gospel, accompanied by the illuminating grace of the Holy Spirit, that their warrant is revealed, that their full right of access to the compassionate Savior is disclosed to them, and that He manifests Himself to be so near them as to be within their reach (Romans 10:6-8). Oh, how great is the importance and utility of the gracious offers and invitations of the blessed gospel to convinced and despondent sinners! By these, under the illuminating influences of the adorable Spirit, they see that it is lawful and warrantable for them to come as sinners, and to entrust, with humble and strong confidence, the eternal salvation of their souls to the Lord Jesus.

4. The gospel is the means which the Holy Spirit employs for communicating the grace of Christ to elect sinners, in order to produce that change of their state and of their nature to which they have been chosen. It is by means of the gospel that, in the moment of regeneration, the Spirit of Christ and His grace enter and take possession of the hearts of God's elect. Sinners who are born again "are born not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever" (1 Peter 1:23). Hence the Psalmist, directing his speech to the Messiah, says, "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion; rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power" (Psalm 110:2-3). The gospel, accordingly, is called "the spirit which giveth life" (2 Corinthians 3:6), "the grace of God that bringeth salvation" (Titus 2:11), and "the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16). By the gospel, God exerts the exceeding greatness of His power in quickening and converting sinners to Himself. It is by means of it that He enlightens their minds, renews their wills, rectifies and sanctifies their affections, and so makes them partakers

of a new and holy nature. Hence the Apostle Paul calls it “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus,” which made him “free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:2).

5. The gospel is also the instrument by which the Holy Spirit implants the principle and habit of true faith in the hearts of elect sinners. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17). The Spirit renders the reading and, especially, the hearing of the gospel effectual means of working faith in the hearts of sinners, by which they believe with application the gracious offers of Christ, and of His righteousness and fullness, and trust in Him for salvation to themselves in particular. It is by means of the gospel, which the Apostle Paul calls “the word of faith” (Romans 10:8), that the Spirit of Christ implants and increases precious faith in the souls of His elect (John 20:31). Is it then the believer’s desire that he may make swift progress in the habit and exercise of that living faith by which he gives glory to God and receives grace and glory from Him? Let him, in humble reliance on the promise, and on the Spirit of faith, read, hear, and meditate frequently on the glorious gospel.

6. It is by means of the gospel that the Holy Spirit continues to apply Christ, with His righteousness and fullness, to the hearts of believers for increasing their sanctification and consolation. They are said in Scripture to be “sanctified through the truth” (John 17: 17-19), to be clean through the word which Christ has spoken to them (John 15:3), and to have their hearts purified by faith (Acts 15:9). The Apostle Paul presented this prayer for the saints at Ephesus: “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye may be filled with all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:17-19). And he informed them that they were “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets” (Ephesians 2:20-22). It is in proportion, then, as the saints are enabled to believe with application to themselves the offers and

promises of the gospel, and to trust in Jesus Christ for salvation, that they advance in holiness and comfort. And it is in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, that they all come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13).

7. The gospel is a means of increasing the knowledge, of restraining the depravity, and of reforming the external conduct of many unregenerate sinners; and so of qualifying them for being, in various respects, serviceable to the people of God around them. It is often a means, under the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit, of rendering many unregenerate men less hurtful and more useful to the saints of God than otherwise they would be. As the gospel is a special means of the renewing influences of the Spirit in holy men, so is it of His restraining influence on hypocrites and wicked men (Matthew 13:20-22; 2 Peter 2:20; Hebrews 6:4-5). Now this restraining or providential influence is of inexpressible importance to the saints. For as no saint could continue to live in communion with Christ and with other saints without sanctifying grace, and that daily communicated to him, so neither could he live among sinners unless restraining influences were afforded to them. He ought, therefore, in a very high degree, to esteem and love the gospel not only because it is the means of special grace to himself, but because it is the vehicle of common influence to the unregenerate around him.

8. Last, it is by means of the gospel that the glory of Christ, and of God in Him, is manifested to men and angels. It is in and by the gospel that the brightest displays “of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” are graciously afforded (2 Corinthians 4:4-7). In the gospel, as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord Jesus, and of all the divine perfections, as harmonizing and mingling their refulgent beams in the redemption of sinners by Him, is seen, contemplated,



and adored (2 Corinthians 3:18). It is the gospel strictly taken that, under the illuminating influences of the blessed Spirit, serves to discover to the eye of faith “the glory of the only begotten of the Father, the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person.” There the glory of the great Redeemer’s person and work shines forth in the view of holy angels and redeemed men with the most resplendent luster. Hence the gospel is called “the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Corinthians 4:4), and “the glorious gospel of the blessed God” (1 Timothy 1:11). While the Lord affords far more illustrious displays of His infinite glory in redemption than in any other of His works, all the transcendent displays of it in redemption which He makes are in and by the gospel.

### ***Section 2. The Uses of the Moral Law in its Subsistence to the Gospel***

The law, both as a covenant of works and as a rule of life, is, in the hand of the Holy Spirit, of special use, and that both to sinners and to saints. Though righteousness and eternal life cannot, since the Fall, be obtained by a man’s own obedience to the moral law, because “by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Galatians 2:16), yet it is of manifold use to men. “The law is good,” says the Apostle Paul, “if a man use it lawfully” (1 Timothy 1:8), that is, if he uses it suitably, to the design for which it is given him, and to the state in which he is, either as an unbeliever or as a believer — or, in other words, if he improves it as a covenant for urging him to receive Jesus Christ, and improve it as a rule for directing him how to walk in Christ.

The law is of use to men in general:

1. To reveal to them the holy nature and will of God, or to show them the infinite holiness and rectitude of His nature and will. Jehovah said to the Israelites in the wilderness, “I am the Lord your God; ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy” (Leviticus 11:44). “The law is holy,” says the Apostle Paul, “and the commandment holy, and just, and good” (Romans 7:12).

2. It serves to inform them of their duty to God, to themselves, and to others around them; and to oblige them, by His sovereign authority, to perform it. “He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God” (Micah 6:8)?

3. It is of use, likewise, to restrain men from much sin. By its peremptory commands and awful threatenings, it serves in some measure to keep them in awe, and to frighten them from committing many external acts of sin in which they otherwise would freely indulge themselves. It is of use, by its terrible denunciations, to curb those who, destitute of every good principle, would rush forward to all manner of sin, and to deter them, through fear of punishment, from many gross enormities. In this view, it serves as a curb to hold sinners within the limits of external decency, and to prevent the world from becoming a scene of robbery and blood. Accordingly our apostle says, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers, and murderers of mothers (1 Timothy 1:9-10).

4. The law conduces also to excite and encourage sinners to the practice of virtue, from the consideration that even the external resemblance of true virtue will often be rewarded with exemption from many outward calamities, and with the possession of many

outward advantages (Isaiah 1:19). Nay, it tends to impel sinners to virtuous actions, even from the consideration that, in the event of their performance of them, and afterward of their dying in an unregenerate state, their punishment in hell will be more tolerable than if they had not performed them. Although sinners cannot, by their obedience to the law, procure for themselves a title to heaven; yea, and though they should never be driven by the law from themselves to Christ for righteousness and salvation, but should die under condemnation; yet the more external obedience they yield to the law, the lighter will their punishment be (Luke 12:47-48). They cannot, by their obedience to the law, merit even the lowest place in heaven; but they can by it obtain for themselves an exemption from the lowest place in hell.

5. Moreover, it is of special use to convince sinners of their sinfulness and misery, and also of their utter inability by any righteousness and strength of their own, to recover themselves from their state of sin and misery. “What things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the works of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:19-20). And again, “But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment, might become exceeding sinful” (Romans 7:13). The precepts of the law serve to convince men of their sins of omission, and the prohibitions of it to convince them of their sins of commission. There are various evils which men would never have known to be sins unless the holy law of God had revealed the sinfulness of them. Accordingly our apostle says, “I had not known sin but by the law: for I had not known lust except the law had said, ‘Thou shalt not covet’ “ (Romans 7:7). While the precepts of the law are of use to convince sinners of the reality and sinfulness of their

sins, the threatenings of it are employed to discover to them the tremendous wrath and curse of God due to them for their transgressions (Galatians 3:10). And by disclosing to them the deep depravity of their nature, the precepts and threatenings of the law serve, in the hand of the Spirit, to convince them of their utter inability to recover themselves, and so to humble them under a painful sense of their sinfulness and misery (Romans 3:9).

6. Last, the law serves to show them their extreme need of Christ, and of His righteousness and salvation. “Wherefore then serveth the law?” asks our apostle, “It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made” (Galatians 3:19). It awakens their consciences to a conviction of their guilt, and to a dread of everlasting punishment, and so discovers to them their absolute need of Christ and His perfect righteousness for their justification in the sight of God (Galatians 3:24; Romans 10:4). Thus the moral law is of use to men in general.

7. It is of special use to unregenerate sinners. Under the awakening influences of the Holy Spirit, it serves as a covenant of works to convince them of sin, and to show them that as they are sinners, and so cannot perform perfect obedience to entitle them to life, it is absolutely impossible for them ever to attain to justification and salvation by their own performances. “By the deeds of the law,” says the Apostle Paul, “there shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20). “I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died” (Romans 7:9).

It reveals the wrath of God against them for their innumerable transgressions of it, and so impresses them with fear of eternal punishment. “The law worketh wrath” (Romans 4:15). It condemns

every sinner who is under it to death in all its direful extent, and so it awakens his conscience to expect infinite and insupportable wrath as the just recompense of disobedience to its righteous precepts. Hence the law, in this point of view, is called “the ministration of condemnation” (2 Corinthians 3:7). Thus, as a scourge, it troubles and torments the consciences of impenitent sinners, and renders them uneasy in a course of sin.

The law is of use, likewise, to urge or drive them to Jesus Christ, the only Savior of lost sinners. Seeing it is the means of convincing sinners of their sinfulness, misery, and utter inability to recover themselves, it drives them from confidence in themselves to the Lord Jesus for righteousness and strength. And thus it is their “schoolmaster to bring them unto Christ, that they may be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24). By demanding perfect holiness of nature, perfect obedience of life, and complete satisfaction for sin, which none of the children of Adam is able to afford, the law shuts them up to see their need of Christ, who has fully answered all these demands for those who believe in Him (Romans 10:4). It serves as a looking glass in which they may contemplate the exceeding sinfulness, and demerit of their sins in order that, despairing of life by their own works, they may be necessitated to flee speedily to Jesus Christ, who has fulfilled a perfect righteousness for their justification.

It serves, at the same time, to convince them that they have those characters of sinfulness and misery under which the offers and invitations of the gospel are addressed to men. The offers and calls of the gospel are addressed to men as unjust, ungodly, as sinners, enemies, and persons without strength; as lost, dead in trespasses and sins, simple ones, scorners, fools, stout-hearted and far from righteousness; as backsliders and prisoners, as laboring and heavy laden, thirsting for happiness of any kind, spending their money for

that which is not bread, and their labor for that which satisfies not, disobedient, gainsaying, and rebellious. Now the law, under the illuminating influences of the Holy Spirit, is of use to show sinners that these are their very characters, and therefore that they are the very persons to whom the Savior is offered, and whom are invited and commanded to receive Him with His righteousness and salvation. In this view, it is eminently subservient to the gospel.

Last, the law serves to render those of them inexcusable who, turning a deaf ear to its dictates respecting their sinfulness and misery, refuse to accept the offer of a Savior, and of salvation by Him (Romans 1:20 with 2:15). And it not only leaves all who reject the divine Redeemer without excuse and under its dreadful curse, but it dooms them to greater, to redoubled condemnation. “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” (John 3:36). “He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know Him that hath said, ‘Vengeance belongeth unto Me. I will recompense,’ saith the Lord” (Hebrews 10:28-30).

8. The law is of special use, likewise, to regenerate persons or true believers, and that both as a covenant of works and as a rule of duty.

In its covenant form, it serves to show them what Christ, the second Adam, did and suffered in their stead. By requiring from all who are under it perfect holiness of nature and perfect obedience of life, with complete satisfaction for sin, as the conditions of eternal life, it teaches believers what the Lord Jesus, in the greatness of His

astonishing love, condescended to become, to do, and to suffer for them. They may see in it as in a glass that He did infinitely more for them than any mere man or angel could ever have done (Romans 8:3-4; Philippians 2:8; Galatians 3:13-14). Thus the law, in subservience to the gospel, teaches believers indirectly what the gospel teaches them in direct terms. It is of use also to show them under what infinite obligations they lie to the Lord Jesus for having fulfilled all the righteousness of it in their stead, Though they are not under the law in its covenant form to be either justified or condemned by it, yet it is of special use to them how much they are bound to love and serve Christ who, by obeying the precepts, and enduring the penalties of it in their stead, has brought in everlasting righteousness for their justification. And so it is a means of exciting their gratitude to Christ, and also to God, who so loved them as to send Him to answer all its demands for them (2 Corinthians 9:15; Colossians 1:12-14).

The law as a rule of life is also of great use to believers. For although, as I already observed, they are not under it as a covenant of works, either to be justified by it for their obedience or to be condemned by it for their disobedience, yet they are under it as the rule of their new obedience, and they count it their exalted privilege and pleasure to be so (1 Corinthians 9:21). Now in this point of view, it serves, under the illuminating influences of the Holy Spirit:

(1) To show them how far they are from perfection of holiness. In order to render them more humble and contrite, to cause them to renounce, in a higher degree, all confidence in their own wisdom, righteousness, and strength, and to trust constantly and only in the Lord Jesus for all their salvation, the law discovers to them the sin that dwells in them, and that cleaves to all their thoughts, words, and actions. It is of great use to teach them the need that they have to be

more humble, penitent, and holy. And so it serves, in a high degree, to promote their sanctification, and their desire to attain perfection of holiness (Philippians 3:10-14; Romans 7:22-24). As it requires them to be holy in a perfect degree (Matthew 5:48), it shows them that their want of perfect conformity to it is, every moment, their sin, and that they ought continually to press on toward perfection, and long for heaven, where their holiness and happiness will be perfect (2 Corinthians 5:2-4; Philippians 1:23).

(2) It serves, under the witnessing of the Spirit, to evidence to their consciences the reality of their sanctification. The holy law serves as a touchstone by which believers may try, and so discover, their begun conformity to the image of the Son of God, the first-born among many brethren. Comparing their hearts and lives with that standard, they sometimes perceive that, though they are far from having a perfection of the degrees, yet they have a perfection of the parts of sanctification; and so the law as a rule conduces, in the hand of the Holy Spirit, to promote their comfort as well as their holiness. “Our rejoicing is this,” says an apostle, “the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world” (2 Corinthians 1:12). As a covenant of works, the law is the instrument of the Spirit, as a spirit of bondage, for convincing and alarming secure sinners; but as a rule of life in the hand of the blessed Mediator, it is a means employed by the Spirit, as a Spirit of adoption, for comforting and encouraging true saints. Their habitual desire and endeavor from faith and love, and for the glory of God, to keep all the commandments of it are a good evidence to them that they are the children of God, and are conformed to the image of His Son.



(3) It is of great use to show believers what duty they owe to their God and Redeemer, and to direct them how to perform it. Christ, whom the Father has given for a leader and commander to the people, gives to believers that law to be the rule of their obedience, to inform them what grateful service, what holy obedience, they owe to Him, and to God in Him, and to direct them in the course of their obedience. Accordingly, the holy Psalmist says, “Through Thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:104-105). The law as a rule directs them how to express their gratitude to the Lord Jesus for fulfilling it for them in its covenant form (Romans 8:3-5). It enjoins them to show their love and thankfulness to Him by a growing conformity of heart and life to it as the rule of their obedience (John 14:15; 1 Timothy 1:5; Romans 12:1-2). While it shows them what is good and what is evil, what they ought to do and what they ought to forbear, it guides them in the exercise of their graces and in the performance of their duties. No sooner does the law as a covenant urge men to Christ for deliverance from the dominion of it in that form than Christ leads them back to the law as a rule for the regulation of their heart and conduct, in order that they may express their gratitude to Him for His perfect obedience to it as a covenant in their stead, by their stead, by their sincere obedience to it as a rule (John 14:15).

(4) Finally, it serves the highly important purpose of binding or obliging the saints to all their various duties. The law as a rule of life to believers comes invested with infinite authority, and therefore lays them under infinite obligations, even to perfect obedience. Seeing they do not cease to be creatures by becoming new creatures, they are, and ever will be, obliged to yield personal obedience to the moral law as a rule of life, and that by the sovereign authority of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, their Creator. But this divine authority,

as was hinted above, issues to them from the Lord Jesus, the great Mediator, who has created as well as redeemed them, and who has “all the fullness of the Godhead, dwelling in Him bodily.” They therefore receive the law at His mouth. And surely the law can lose nothing of its original authority by being conveyed to them in such a glorious channel as the hand of Christ: for not only is He Himself God over all, but all the sovereignty and authority of the infinitely glorious Godhead are in Him as Mediator (Exodus 23:21). The Lord Jesus, therefore, instead of dissolving or in the smallest degree weakening the moral law, greatly strengthens the original obligation of it ( *Confession of Faith* XIX:V). Indeed, it is only to God as in Christ, only according to the law as in the hand of Christ, and only by a real believer in Christ that the smallest acceptable obedience can be performed. The law as a rule in the hand of Christ, then, is of special utility to believers inasmuch as it shows them how high their obligations are to the love and practice of holiness. And thus it eminently subserves the gospel, that “doctrine which is according to godliness.”

From the foregoing detail it will be obvious to the devout reader that the law as a covenant is of standing use in the effectual vocation of sinners to Christ. The Holy Spirit makes the offers and calls of the gospel effectual to no sinner without setting home the law as a covenant of works to their minds and consciences. Sinners may be drawn to the Savior by a discovery of His redeeming love (Hosea 11:4), and so may be effectually called without legal terrors; but no man is persuaded and enabled to come to Him without a true conviction of sin and of the want of righteousness. But it is by the law in its covenant form that sinners are convinced of sin, and of their need of a perfect righteousness to free them from eternal death. Thus the law is of standing use to them to show them their extreme need of the compassionate Savior, and of His perfect righteousness, and so

to “break up the fallow ground” of their hearts. In this way, the fiery law continues, by the almighty agency of the Spirit, to subserve the merciful design of the blessed gospel.

Hence we may also learn how much conviction of sin and of righteousness by the law is requisite to true conversion. Such a measure of it in adult persons is necessary as will suffice to make them sensible that they are sinners in heart and in life; that they are already undone, and that their misery under the curse of the law is inexpressible; that they have no righteousness to answer the just demands of the broken law; and that they are so dead in sin as to be totally unable to save themselves, or so much as to prepare themselves for salvation. Such a measure as this is requisite because, without it, they would not see their absolute need of the Lord Jesus to save them either from their sin or their misery, nor would they desire above all things a personal interest in Him and His great salvation. Not that it is requisite as a federal condition of their being graciously received by Christ, but only as an excitement to urge them to flee speedily for refuge to Him.

From what has been said, we may also infer that a minister of the gospel may often preach the law to his hearers and yet not deserve to be called a legal preacher. He cannot preach the gospel faithfully and successfully unless he preaches the law in subservience to it. If he is a faithful and able minister of the New Testament, he will preach the law as a covenant of works, and will press it upon the consciences of secure sinners and self-righteous formalists. He will denounce the tremendous curse of it on those who continue under it, and who rely securely on their own works for a title to eternal life in order to tear away every pillow of carnal security on which they repose themselves, and to show them the vanity of every lying refuge. In proportion also as he is faithful, satisfaction for sin as well as perfect

obedience? Or does it demand from every unregenerate sinner perfection of suffering as well as of doing? Then, though a descendant of fallen Adam could say that he never had, in his own person, transgressed the law, and that he would to the end of his life “continue in all things which are written in it, to do them,” yet even this perfect obedience of his would not suffice to fulfil the law, and so to entitle him to eternal life according to the covenant of works. For the law as a covenant would still demand from him full satisfaction for the sin that he committed in the first Adam: and satisfaction for sin cannot be given by obeying the precept, but by suffering the penalty of the law in that form. Ever since the fall, the law and the justice of God demand not only full payment of the original debt of perfect obedience, but complete payment, likewise, of the debt of infinite satisfaction for the offense given by sin to the infinite Majesty of heaven (Genesis 2:17). Nay, in the order of law and justice, the debt of full satisfaction ought to be discharged previous to that of perfect obedience. The infinitely righteous Jehovah will first be pacified by a complete satisfaction to His justice for the infinite insult offered to His glorious Majesty by transgression before He can consistently, with the honor of His character and government, be pleased with any degree of obedience from the sinner. If a sinner, then, hopes for eternal life on the ground of his own righteousness, he must first give infinite satisfaction for all his innumerable crimes, and then begin and complete a course of perfect obedience as the condition of life. He must first of all make complete satisfaction to the penalty of the righteous law before his obedience to the precept can be acceptable to God.

But is this possible? Is it possible for one who is to continue through all eternity to be a sinner as well as a sufferer? Is it possible for a sinner, first, to endure the whole of infinite punishment or eternal wrath, and after endless torments shall have been completely

endured to return, and, under the dominion of sin, to perform perfect obedience as the condition of eternal life? Oh, that self-righteous and secure sinners would consider before it is too late how impossible it will be for them ever to obtain eternal life by their own righteousness; and that they would, by faith, submit themselves to the righteousness of Jesus Christ by which He has magnified the law and made it honorable!

Moreover, it appears from what has been said that when our apostle asserts, in his epistles to the Romans and Galatians, that no man can be justified before God by the works of the law, he does not mean the law merely as promulgated from Sinai, or the law of Moses as such; for those churches consisted chiefly of Gentile converts who had no concern with the law of Moses merely as such. Before their conversion they were heathens; they were under the law not as delivered from Sinai, but as the law of nature and as a covenant of works made with Adam, and with them in him. As therefore no Jews can be justified by the works of the moral law as a covenant displayed on Mount Sinai, so no Gentiles can be justified by the works of the moral law as a covenant made with Adam. They among the Gentiles who have been redeemed are said to have been redeemed from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:13), that is, of the moral law in its covenant form as given to Adam.

Once more, is it by the law as a covenant that sinners are convinced of misery as well as of sin? Then how great is the misery, and how intolerable will the punishment be, especially of those under the gospel who obstinately continue in their unbelief and impenitence! While the violated law continues in all its binding force against them, their condemnation will be inconceivably more dreadful than if they had never heard the gracious offers of the gospel. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved

darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19). “Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder” (Luke 20:18). Impenitent sinners under the gospel shall be punished not only for their innumerable transgressions of the law, but for hating and stifling their convictions of sin and misery by it; and their punishment for condemning and rejecting the great Redeemer offered to them in the gospel will be far more tremendous and intolerable than if they had never heard of His name.

No punishment of sinners will be as dreadful as that of those who hear of an only Savior and yet refuse to believe in Him. Suppose that He is offered, and that sinners reject the gracious offer a thousand times; they are a thousand times greater sinners than they were when He began to be offered to them — and according to the greatness of their sin will their punishment be. Oh, that the secure sinner under the gospel would now begin to consider the heinousness of his sin, and the horrible depth of the misery which awaits him in the place of torment! You are under the law as a broken covenant, and obnoxious to its dreadful curse. You believe not on the Son of God for His salvation, and therefore the wrath of God abides on you.

Can you imagine that the omniscient and righteous Judge of all the earth will take no notice of you; or that He who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and who cannot look on iniquity but with infinite abhorrence will suffer you to sin against Him with impunity? Oh, how inexpressibly dreadful will your condition be if you remain asleep in your sinfulness and misery till everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels, awakens you! Alarmed by the terrors of the fiery law, let your heart be won to the compassionate Savior by the mild accents of the blessed gospel. In the glorious gospel, Jesus, with

His meritorious righteousness and His great salvation, is freely, wholly, and particularly offered to you as a lost sinner of mankind; and the unlimited and authentic offer affords you a right to receive and trust in Him for complete salvation. Oh, do not any longer despise this unspeakable, this inestimably precious gift! Come to the Lord Jesus, and He will in no wise cast you out. Believe in the dear Redeemer and you shall never perish, but have eternal life.

## **The Establishment of the Law by the Gospel**

**by John Colquhoun**

Although in the preceding chapter I have anticipated some of the thoughts which will be expressed here, yet the subject of this chapter is of such inexpressible importance that I cannot forbear considering it by itself. After the Apostle Paul had, in the third chapter of his epistle to the Romans, asserted and proved that all mankind are sinners, and that the justification of believing sinners in the sight of God is utterly unattainable by their own righteousness, and is entirely founded on the surety-righteousness of Jesus Christ, imputed by grace and received by faith; he has in the following words obviated an objection which he foresaw would be made to that fundamental doctrine: “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law” (Romans 3:31). One of the objections then made, and still urged, by the enemies of the gospel against the doctrine of a sinner’s free justification for the

righteousness of Christ received by faith is that it derogates from the honor and obligation of the law, nay, that it annuls or abrogates the law. “Do we then,” says he, by asserting that a man is justified by faith only, and not by the works of the law, “make void,” or nullify the obligation of the moral law? With deep abhorrence of such an insinuation, he replies, “God forbid”; far be it from us; on the contrary, we, by that doctrine, “do establish the law.”

It is as if he had said, “We are so far from making void or annulling the law through faith that we thereby establish and make it stand in all its force.” By the law here, the apostle cannot mean the ceremonial law; for by the word of faith as preached by the apostles of Christ this was made void, but the moral law, and that both as a covenant of works and as a rule of life. By faith, in this place, the apostle seems to mean both the doctrine of faith and the grace of faith. The doctrine of faith is the gospel strictly taken as distinguished from the law. The grace of faith is that grace of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of regenerate persons by the exercise of which they receive that doctrine, and the righteousness and salvation exhibited in it.

It will be proper here, in order to prevent mistakes concerning what is afterwards to be advanced, to remark that to make the law void is so to abrogate, abolish, or set it aside as to prevent it from being any longer binding on the conscience. It is to annul the divine authority and obligation of its precepts and penalties. The moral law, as the law of the infinitely glorious Jehovah, is enforced by all His sovereign and immutable authority. His infinite authority enforces every precept of it, and lays every rational creature under the firmest obligations possible to yield perfect obedience to it. Now to make this law void is to set aside its high authority and obligation, or to decline the authority and dissolve the obligation of its righteous precepts.



Not that any man can do this effectually, but his attempting either directly or indirectly to do it is as criminal as if he could accomplish his design. To make it void is also to attempt setting aside the perfection, spirituality, and great extent of it. A man may be said to make void the law when he practically declares that the perfection, spirituality, and vast extent of it are not to be regarded, or when he puts it off as a covenant with imperfect and even with carnal, selfish, superficial, and partial obedience. Every sinner is guilty of this who goes about to establish his own righteousness in order to his justification; or endeavors to satisfy the law with imperfect instead of perfect obedience; with carnal instead of spiritual performances, and with partial instead of universal obedience.

To make the law void is likewise to invalidate the perpetuity of it. Not that any sinner has it in his power effectually to do this — for the moral law continues to be of immutable and eternal obligation upon all who are under it — but he attempts to abolish the perpetuity of it, with respect to himself, by persuading himself that although it originally obliged him to perform perfect obedience, yet now, in consequence of the mediation of Christ, it obliges him to yield such obedience no longer (Jude 4), and by presuming to satisfy the requirements of it as a covenant with sincere instead of perfect obedience, as if it ceased to require perfection of obedience any longer. Moreover, when sinners under the curse of it labor to persuade themselves that it cannot now exact from them perfect and perpetual obedience on pain of its tremendous curse, or when they stifle their convictions and try to keep their consciences easy under the condemning sentence of it, they do what they can to make it void. In few words, they may be said to make the law void when they deliberately set aside any of the uses of it. Though it cannot, since the entrance of sin into the world, justify sinners on the ground of their own obedience to it, yet, as was observed above, it is of standing use

to sinners as well as to saints. Now if sinners set aside any of its uses, or refuse to “use it lawfully,” they thereby treat it with contempt, as if it was useless and insignificant. It is in these ways especially that self-righteous men attempt to make void the law of God.

I shall now endeavor to show that all true believers, through faith, not only do not make void the moral law, but on the contrary establish it or make it stand in all its force. To establish the law is, as was hinted above, to make all the infinite authority and obligation of it stand firm, or to place them on their original and immovable basis, and instead of invalidating to confirm or strengthen them. Believers, then, by faith, that is, by the doctrine and the grace of faith, establish the law.

In the first place, by the doctrine of faith, they do not make the law void, but establish it, and that both as a covenant of works and as a rule of life.

1. By the doctrine of faith, or the gospel strictly taken, all true believers and faithful ministers of the Word, establish the law as it is a covenant of works. For, in the first place, it is the doctrine of faith that shows men how firm and irreversible the law as a covenant is, and how infinitely concerned the glorious Majesty of heaven is for the stability and honor of that holy law. According to that doctrine, He will save no transgressors of it but upon condition of His only begotten Son’s being their Surety, and of His answering completely all the demands of it in their stead. He will not save them from the full execution of its righteous and awful penalty but upon Christ’s enduring it for them, nor account them righteous and entitled to eternal life but upon His performing as their substitute the perfect obedience which it requires as the condition of life. Thus, by the doctrine of faith, the sovereign authority of the law in its covenant

form is acknowledged and declared; its infinite obligation on sinners of mankind is confirmed; and its honor is completely secured.

Second, according to the doctrines of grace in general, and to the doctrine of a sinner's justification by faith without the works of the law in particular, the law in that form is, as has been already said, of standing use to convince sinners of their sin and misery, to discover to them their need of a better righteousness than their own, and so to render Christ and His perfect righteousness precious to such as believe. A sinner must be convinced by the law that justification on the footing of his own obedience is absolutely impossible before he will listen to what the gospel says of Christ and His righteousness (Romans 7:9). Accordingly, the Spirit of God does not lead a man to Christ by the gospel without first convincing him of sin and of his want of righteousness by the law.

Third, by that doctrine we are informed that the law received a complete answer to all its high demands by the unsinning obedience and satisfactory death of the Lord Jesus, the Surety of elect sinners. We are thereby instructed that He came into the world "not to destroy, but to fulfil the law" (Matthew 5:17), and that He "is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth" (Romans 10:4). According to the doctrine of faith, the law as a covenant receives from our divine Surety all the obedience and satisfaction which it can demand. He, in the room, and as the representative of an elect world, fulfilled all the righteousness of it (Matthew 3:15). He yielded to it perfect holiness of human nature, perfect obedience of life, and complete satisfaction for sin; and from His divine nature, united to the human in His infinitely glorious person, His whole righteousness has derived such infinite value as to be strictly meritorious of eternal life for His spiritual seed. According to that doctrine, the law in its federal form is far more honored by the

righteousness of the second Adam than it was dishonored by the disobedience of the first. It is represented as honored not only by a perfect righteousness, but by the righteousness of God, the righteousness of Him who is God as well as man. In proportion to the stupendous humiliation of the Son of God, who stooped so low as to become subject to a law which was adapted only to creatures who as such are infinitely beneath Him, is the honor done to the precept and penalty of that law by His obeying the one and His enduring the other. It required only a human righteousness, but it is infinitely honored with one which is divine (2 Corinthians 5:21; Isaiah 42:21). Now by this consummate, transcendently-glorious righteousness which is revealed in the gospel, the sovereign authority and high obligation of the law are most illustriously displayed and most firmly established.

2. By the doctrine of faith, the law is also established as rule of life to believers. According to this doctrine, it is established in the hand of the Son of God, the glorious Mediator, whom the eternal Father “hath given for a Commander to the people” (Isaiah 55:4), and has set as His King and Lawgiver “upon His holy hill of Zion” (Psalm 2:6). In the hand of the adorable Mediator, the sovereign authority of the law, as the instrument of government in his spiritual kingdom and as the rule of duty in His holy covenant, is confirmed; and the high obligation of it is not only confirmed, but increased. Although believers are, in their justification, delivered from the law as a covenant of works (Romans 7:4-6), yet according to the gospel they are represented as “being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ” (1 Corinthians 9:21; Galatians 6:2). In the doctrine of faith, the eternal obligation of the law on them is declared; obedience to it is enforced by the strongest motives, and represented as performed under the best influences, from the best principles, and for the best ends. According to that doctrine, all believers are bound by infinite

authority to obey; they are enabled sincerely to obey; they are constrained by redeeming love to obey; they resolve and delight in dependence on promised grace, to obey; and they cannot but obey the law as a rule of duty. The love of Christ, as revealed in the gospel, urges them; the blood of Christ redeems them; the Spirit of Christ enables them; and the exceeding great and precious promises of Christ encourage them to obey and yield spiritual and acceptable obedience. The holy law as a rule is written on their hearts, and therefore they consent unto it that it is good, and delight in it after the inward man. While they do not obey it for life, but from life, they account obedience to it not only their duty, but their privilege and their pleasure. Thus, according to the doctrine of faith, they present, in the hand of faith, perfect righteousness to the law as a covenant of works; and they perform, as the fruit of faith, sincere obedience to it as a rule of duty. And so effectually do they, by the doctrine of faith establish the law as a rule of duty that they never account their obedience to any of the precepts of it sincere and acceptable but in proportion as their performance of it flows from the unfeigned faith of that doctrine. In their view, nothing is obedience to it but what proceeds from evangelical principles, and is excited by evangelical motives.

In the last place, by the grace of faith also, believers establish the law, and that both as a covenant of works and as a rule of life.

1. By the grace of faith, they do not make void the law, but on the contrary they establish it as it is a covenant of works. Sinners who are destitute of, the grace of faith have such mean, disparaging notions of the holy law as to offer to it, in answer to its demand of perfect obedience as the condition of life, with their own partial, superficial, and polluted works instead of the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. But true believers have such high and honorable

sentiments of the authority and obligation, as well as of the perfection, spirituality, and vast extent, of the divine law in its federal form, as to receive and present, in the hand of faith, to it the consummate and glorious righteousness of their adorable Surety. Instead of making void the law, they, by the habit and exercise of their holy faith, consult in the most effectual manner the stability and honor of its precepts and penalties. Instead of presuming to put it off as a covenant with their own mean and imperfect performances, they, by the exercise of their faith, appropriate and present to it the infinitely perfect and meritorious righteousness of their divine Redeemer as the only ground of their security from eternal death, and of their title to eternal life. By faith they receive and exhibit to it Christ's holiness of human nature and obedience of life in answer to its demand of perfect obedience as the condition of life, and His suffering of death in answer to its demand of infinite satisfaction for sin. Thus, by the habit and exercise of their faith, they recognize and assert the sovereign authority and high obligation of it as a covenant; and so they establish and make it honorable in that form. By presenting to it the only righteousness which can fully satisfy its just demands, they practically assert the divine and immutable authority of it as well as the equity and reasonableness of its demands. "Surely shall one say, 'In the Lord have I righteousness and strength; even to Him shall men come. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory'" (Isaiah 45:24-25). "I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine only" (Psalm 71:16). "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. . . that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Philippians 3:8-9). "The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness' sake; He will magnify the law and make it honorable" (Isaiah 42:21).

2. By the grace of faith, believers do not make void the law, but establish it likewise as a rule of life. Instead of setting it aside as the rule of duty, faith makes it stand in all its binding force. By the habit and exercise of their faith, the saints not only believe that the authority of the law in the hand of the glorious Mediator is infinite, immutable, and eternal, and that the obligation which it lays on them even to perfect obedience is firm and unalterable; but they derive from the fullness of Christ continual supplies of grace to enable them to perform sincere and increasing obedience to all the commands of it. By the exercise of faith, they receive from His fullness that conformity of heart to the holy law, which is perfect in parts, and that conformity both of heart and of life to it, which will afterwards be perfect in degrees. And when they shall attain perfect conformity, or ability to yield perfect obedience to it in the mansions of glory, this they shall attain as the end of their faith, as the completion of that eternal salvation which they receive by faith. All acceptable obedience to the law in the hand of Christ must be the obedience of faith, obedience springing from vital union with Him by faith as the principle of it, and performed in consequence of grace derived by faith from His overflowing fullness. As it is believers, and they only, who are under the law as a rule in the hand of the Mediator, so it is they, and they only, who are enabled to perform that sincere, holy obedience which flows from faith working by love. That faith is neither a true nor a living faith which is not accompanied with sincere and universal obedience to the law of Christ; and that obedience is neither sincere, nor universal nor acceptable to God which does not proceed from the habit and exercise of a living faith (Hebrews 11:6).

Till a man has saving faith implanted in his heart by the omnipotent agency of the Holy Spirit, he can do nothing but transgress the commandments of God's holy law (Proverbs 21:4). He can trample

upon the authority and despise the obligation of it, but he cannot, either in principle or in practice, establish it. It is only they who are justified and sanctified by the instrumentality of faith who begin and advance in such holy obedience as honors and establishes the law as a rule of duty. We may as soon suppose that a living man can be without vital acts as that a man who is by faith vitally united to Christ can live without yielding such obedience to His law. When that living faith which works by love is implanted and increased in his heart, vital motions and acts of spiritual obedience cannot but follow. Such a man will not only account it a privilege and a pleasure to yield sincere obedience to the law as the rule of his duty in time, but will rejoice in the cheering prospect of being able to honor it with perfect obedience through eternity. He delights in it after the inward man, and therefore he rejoices in the hope that, by the grace of his adorable Redeemer, he shall be eternally bound *by* it and eternally conformed to it.

Thus it is evident that true believers and faithful ministers of the gospel do not, either by the doctrine or the grace of faith, make void the law of God; but on the contrary they establish it, and that both as a covenant of works and as a rule of life.

From what has been said, we may learn what reason we have highly to esteem the divine law. The establishment of this holy law, both by the doctrine and the grace of faith, has entered deeply, into the wonderful plan of our redemption by Jesus Christ. That amazing scheme has been so devised as to secure, in the most effectual and astonishing manner, the stability and honor of the law as well as the manifested glory of the sovereign Lawgiver. As the ultimate end which God has proposed to Himself in our redemption is the glory of His infinite perfections, so His chief subordinate end, as the righteous Governor of the universe, is the honor of His holy law.



Such is the inestimable value that Jehovah the Father sets upon His righteous law that, rather than suffer the honor of it to be in the least obscured, He would expose His only begotten, His infinitely dear Son, to the deepest abasement, the most direful anguish, and the most ignominious and tormenting death. He would have His only Son, in the human nature, to live a holy and righteous life, under the curse of His law — this was in order to answer its demand of perfect obedience as the condition of life — and to endure the infinite execution of that curse, due to His elect for sin, so as to be brought to the dust of death in order to answer its demand of infinite satisfaction for sin. The Lord Jesus, according to the everlasting covenant made with Him, must submit to all this humiliation, service, and suffering so that the honor of the divine law might be vindicated, and the sovereign authority of it established. Ought not we, then, to regard the law of God with the highest esteem and veneration, and to tremble at the most distant thought of ever disobeying any of its holy commands?

Is the law established by the gospel? Surely the gospel, then, cannot have the smallest tendency to licentiousness, either in principle or in practice. If it tends to establish the sovereign authority of the divine law it cannot, surely, at the same time, tend to weaken or set aside that authority. The gospel, when it is accompanied with the demonstration of the Spirit of God, and is received in the love of it, not only excites the believer to obey the law as a rule of duty, but it is the only doctrine that can excite and dispose him to yield to it voluntary and sincere obedience. It not only establishes the law, but it is the only doctrine that infinite wisdom employs to establish it, the only “doctrine, which is according to godliness.” It is true that this heavenly doctrine which God has made the city of refuge for guilty sinners is, by many, alas, made a sanctuary for sin, and so is wickedly abused to licentiousness. But it is one thing to view the gospel in

itself, and in its genuine tendency, and another to consider it as it is perversely abused by wicked men (Romans 3:8). The immediate principle of all acceptable obedience to the law as a rule of life is supreme love to God; but we cannot love God supremely unless we first know and believe His love to us as it is exhibited in the blessed gospel. “We love Him,” says the Apostle John, “because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). As the sun cannot be without light and heat, so the faith of Christ and of redeeming love as offered to us in the gospel, cannot be without that love to Christ and to God in Him which “is the fulfilling of the law” (Romans 13:10).

The second Adam’s perfect holiness of human nature, and obedience of life to the precept of the law as a covenant, are as necessary to the justification of sinners as is His suffering of its penalty. The doctrine of justification by faith establishes the law, the whole law, the honor of the precept as well as that of the penal sanction. But this it could not do if it did not represent the righteousness of Jesus Christ as consisting in His active obedience as well as in His passive. Active obedience, strictly speaking, cannot be said to satisfy vindictive justice for sin. And, on the other hand, suffering for punishment gives right and title unto nothing, it only satisfies for something; nor does it deserve any reward, as John Owen mentions in his work on justification. Christ’s satisfaction for sin could not render His perfect obedience to the precept unnecessary; nor could His perfect obedience make His satisfaction for sin by suffering the penalty unnecessary, because it was not of the same kind. The one is that which answers the law’s demand of perfect obedience as the ground of title to eternal life; the other is that which answers its demand of complete satisfaction to divine justice for sin. The meritorious obedience of Christ to the precept could not satisfy the penal sanction; and the sufferings and death of Christ, could not satisfy the precept of the law. The commandment of the law as a covenant

requires doing for life; the curse of that law demands dying as the punishment of sin. These, though they are never to be separated as grounds of justification, yet are carefully to be distinguished. The perfect obedience of Christ is as necessary to entitle believers to eternal life as His suffering of death is to secure them from eternal death. His satisfaction for sin, applied by faith, renders them innocent or guiltless of death; and His obedience makes them righteous or worthy of life (Romans 5:19). As the latter, then, is as necessary to complete their justification, according to the gospel, as the former, so it is as requisite as the former to establish the honor of the law.

It is evident also from the foregoing particulars that the righteousness of Christ which is revealed in the gospel, and which is presented in the hand of faith to the law as a covenant, is not only the meritorious cause, but the matter of our justification before God, and in the eye of the law. It is right, indeed, to call it the meritorious cause of justification; but this is not sufficient: it is also the matter of it. Many pharisaic professors of religion have admitted that the righteousness of Christ is the meritorious cause of justification; that is, as they understand the phrase, that Christ, by His righteousness, has merited that our own obedience should justify us. It is not enough, then, to say that His consummate righteousness is the meritorious cause, but also that it is the matter of our justification; the very righteousness for which, or on account of which, we are justified. The righteousness of our divine Surety, received by faith, and according to the doctrine of faith, imputed to us is that which justifies, that which is the immediate and the only ground of justification, and that only in which it can be safe, consistently with the authority and honor of the law, to stand before the dreadful tribunal of the omniscient and righteous Judge of the world.

The divine law is established and honored more in the salvation of one sinner than in the damnation of all the sons of men. In the justification and salvation of a believing sinner, both the precept and the penalty of the law are established and honored; but in the damnation of unbelievers it is the penal sanction only that is honored. The holy precept will never, in their case, be honored with obedience, far less with perfect obedience. The convinced and alarmed sinner who wishes to believe in the Lord Jesus may, for his encouragement, warrantably and successfully plead that at the throne of grace.

Is the holy law as a rule of life put into the reader's mind and written on his heart? Then it rejoices his heart. "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart" (Psalm 19:8). The Apostle Paul accordingly says, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (Romans 7:22). When a man is justified and, as an evidence of that, is sanctified, he rejoices to think that the law as a covenant is honored and established by the righteousness which his faith receives for his justification, and that the law as a rule is established by the grace which his faith derives from Christ for his sanctification. He rejoices to reflect that as the law is established forever, so it is holy, just, and good. Instead of wishing that it were less extensive or spiritual or strict, he rejoices that every command, and even every threatening, are what they are. He meditates on the holy commandments of God with delight, and takes pleasure in hearing them explained to him and enforced upon him. Nothing, perhaps, is a surer symptom of reigning hypocrisy in a man than to take pleasure in hearing the promises and blessings of the gospel preached to him, but to disrelish all such discourses as, even by evangelical motives, enforce the duties of the law upon him. It is only the man who is secretly resolved not to perform all his duties who commonly is unwilling to hear of them.

What has been said may serve to suggest to us how deep and inveterate the depravity of human nature is. Unregenerate men either suspect that the law is made void if it is asserted that a man is justified by faith without the works of it, or they suppose that good works are unnecessary. The spirit which is in them is either that of the pharisee or that of the libertine. They are ready to conclude that, if they are not to be justified on the ground of their own obedience to the law, the authority of the law is annulled (Galatians 3:19), or that, if their works are to form no part of their righteousness for justification, they need not perform good works at all. They choose to be at liberty either to establish their own righteousness in the affair of justification, or to continue secure in the love and practice of sin; either to expect justification by the law as a covenant, or to trample upon the authority of the law as a rule. They either quarrel with the gospel, as if it made void the law, or dishonor the law, as if it was an enemy to the gospel. To leave the self-righteous man no works of his own to boast of is too humbling to be endured. It appears strange to him that he himself should do nothing to merit his justification. Whenever he reads or hears that justification is by faith only, without the deeds of the law, he is disposed to count it a licentious doctrine. He can see no necessity for his obedience but to merit divine favor and eternal life by it. And no sooner does a man, under the dominion of enmity to God and His law, pretend to be justified without his own works than he neglects good works, as if they were wholly unnecessary. Thus, unregenerate men reveal their inveterate enmity both against the law and the gospel of God.

Was it requisite that the Lord Jesus, in order to repair the honor of the law, should, as the Surety of elect sinners, endure the full execution of its condemning sentence due to them for sin? We may hence see what a malignant, detestable, and horrible thing sin is. How exceeding sinful, how infinitely displeasing to the Lord, and

how injurious to the honor of His righteous law must it be, when even His own dear Son must suffer infinite punishment, and that without the smallest abatement, in order to satisfy His justice and vindicate the honor of His law! How inconceivably detestable must it be to the holy Lord God, seeing He chose rather that His only begotten Son should endure all the tremendous punishment of it than that it should pass unpunished! Should not we, then, learn to abhor, to repent of, and to forsake all manner of sin?

Is it by the doctrine and the grace of faith that we establish the law? Then it is plain that they who transform the gospel or doctrine of faith into a new law requiring faith, repentance, and sincere obedience as the proper conditions of salvation thereby make void the law. By substituting sincere faith and sincere obedience in place of perfect obedience as grounds of title to justification, they make void the law as a covenant; and by inventing what they call “gospel precepts,” requiring sincerity only in place of those old and immutable precepts which require of believers perfect obedience, they invalidate the authority of the law as a rule. By asserting that Christ has satisfied for the breach of the old law of works, and has procured and given a new law, a remedial law, or a law of milder terms than the old, suited to our fallen state and accepting sincere obedience instead of that perfect obedience which the old law required; that Christ has, by His death, obtained that our sincere obedience to this remedial law should be accepted for a gospel righteousness, and that we are truly justified before God by gospel works. The act of faith as the principle of all sincere obedience is our righteousness, which entitles us to justification and eternal life. And the act of faith is our justifying righteousness not as it receives the righteousness of Jesus Christ, but as it is our obedience to that new law.

By these assertions, I say, they set aside the obligation of the moral law and so make it void. Though such men have usually been called “legalists,” yet, perhaps, they may, with more propriety, be termed “antinomians,” or “enemies to the authority and honor of the divine law (see Charles Simeon’s *Helps to Composition*). They undermine, as was already hinted, the whole authority and honor of it, both as a covenant of works and as a rule of life. Reader, the moment you rely on your faith and obedience for a title to justification before God, you thereby rob the law as a covenant, both of its commanding and condemning power; and no sooner do you satisfy yourself with yielding merely sincere obedience, instead of pressing on to perfection, than you invalidate the high obligation of the law as a rule of duty.

Finally it may hence also be inferred that it is the first duty of every unregenerate sinner to come to Jesus Christ, and to trust cordially in Him for deliverance from the law as a covenant, and for ability to perform acceptable obedience to the law as a rule. Be assured, o secure sinner, that you cannot otherwise be delivered from the law as a covenant of works than by union with the second Adam, and communion with Him in His righteousness; and that without deliverance from the dominion of the law as a covenant you cannot be saved from the guilt and dominion of sin. “The strength of sin is the law” (1 Corinthians 15:56). Now it is absolutely impossible for you ever to attain union with Christ, and communion with Him in His righteousness, otherwise than by a true and living faith. “The righteousness of God,” of Him who is God in our nature, “is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe” (Romans 3:22). Believe then in the Lord Jesus, that by means of faith you may be found in Him and be justified in Him. Trust in Him who is “Jehovah our Righteousness” for justification and complete salvation. Receive the gift of His glorious righteousness and, as a

guilty sinner, rely upon it for all your title to justification before God. Present it in the hand of faith as your justifying righteousness, to the law as a covenant of works in answer to its just demands of perfect obedience, and of complete satisfaction for sin. So shall you, by faith, establish the law as it is a covenant of works.

Trust in Christ also for grace and strength to perform sincere obedience to the law as a rule of life. Rely on His consummate righteousness for all your title to sanctification and glorification; trust in Him with all your heart for sufficient supplies of sanctifying and comforting grace to enable you to yield acceptable obedience to the law as a rule, and to press on toward perfection of obedience. And by this obedience of faith you will establish His law as a rule of duty. By well doing, you will put to silence the ignorance of such foolish men as presume to say that the doctrine and faith of the gospel are unfriendly to the interests of true morality.

This reminds me of what Theodorus long ago replied to Philocles, who was often hinting that he preached doctrines which tended to licentiousness because he enlarged diligently and frequently upon faith in Jesus Christ: "I preach salvation by Jesus Christ," said Theodorus; "and give me leave to ask, whether you know what salvation by Christ means?" Philocles began to blush, and would have declined an answer.

"No," said Theodorus, "you must permit me to insist upon a reply. Because if it is a right one, it will justify me and my conduct; if it is a wrong one, it will prove that you blame you know not what, and that you have more reason to inform yourself than to censure others."

This disconcerted him still more, upon which Theodorus proceeded. "Salvation by Jesus Christ means not only a deliverance from the guilt, but also from the power of sin. `He gave Himself for us, that



He might redeem us from all iniquity and redeem us from our vain conversation,' as well as deliver us from the wrath to come. Go now, Philocles, and tell the world that, by teaching these doctrines, I promote the cause of licentiousness. And you will be just as rational, just as candid, just as true, as if you should affirm that the firemen, by running the engine and pouring in water, burnt your house to the ground, and laid your furniture in ashes."

Indeed, both the doctrine and the grace of faith, are evidently, yea, and designedly injurious to heathen morality as well as pharisaic righteousness. But with regard to true morality, which forms a necessary part of godliness or evangelical holiness, instead of being, in the smallest degree, injurious to this, they directly tend to it; yea, and they are the necessary, the fundamental principles of it. Sooner might fire be without heat, and a solid body be without weight, than a true faith of the gospel be without evangelical holiness.

## **What is the Gospel?**

**By Lorraine Boettner**

**Edited by Steve Pribble**

The Gospel is the good news about the great salvation purchased by Jesus Christ, by which He reconciled sinful men to a holy God. The purpose of this booklet is to set forth, in plain language and in terms easily understood, the basic differences between the Calvinistic (Reformed) and Arminian understanding of the Gospel, and to show what the Bible teaches concerning these subjects. An accurate understanding is crucial; the harmony that exists between the

various doctrines of the Christian faith is such that error in regard to any one of them produces more or less distortion in all the others.

There are in reality only two types of religious thought: the religion of faith, and the religion of works. The author is convinced that what has been known in church history as Calvinism is the purest and most consistent embodiment of the religion of faith, while that which has been known as Arminianism has been diluted to a dangerous degree by the religion of works and is therefore an inconsistent and unstable form of Christianity. In other words, Christianity comes to its fullest and purest expression in the Reformed faith.

In the early part of the fifth century these two types of religious thought came into direct conflict in a remarkably clear contrast in the teaching of two theologians, Augustine and Pelagius. Augustine pointed men to God as the source of all true spiritual wisdom and strength, while Pelagius threw men back on themselves and said that they were able in their own strength to do all that God commanded (otherwise God would not command it). Arminianism is a compromise between these two systems; while in its more evangelical form (as in early Wesleyanism) it approaches the religion of faith, it nevertheless does contain serious elements of error.

At present, practically all the historic churches are being attacked from within by unbelief. Many of them have already succumbed, and almost invariably the line of descent has been from Calvinism to Arminianism, from Arminianism to liberalism, and then to Unitarianism. The history of liberalism and Unitarianism shows that they deteriorate into a social gospel that is too weak to sustain itself. The author is convinced that the future of Christianity is bound up with that system of theology historically called Calvinism. Where the God-centered principles of Calvinism have been abandoned, there

has been a strong tendency downward into the depths of man-centered naturalism or secularism. Some have argued convincingly that there is no consistent stopping place between Calvinism and atheism.

## **1. The Sovereignty of God**

The basic principle of Calvinism is the sovereignty of God. This represents the purpose of the triune God as absolute and unconditional, independent of the whole finite creation, and originating solely in the eternal counsel of His will. He appoints the course of nature and directs the course of history down to the minutest details. His decrees, therefore, are eternal, unchangeable, holy, wise and sovereign. They are represented in the Bible as being the basis of the divine foreknowledge of all future events, and not conditioned by that foreknowledge or by anything originating in the events themselves.

Every thinking person readily sees that some sovereignty rules his life. He was not asked whether or not he would have existence, when or what or where he would be born, whether in the twentieth century or before the flood, whether male or female, white or black, whether in the United States, or China, or Africa. All those things were sovereignly decided for him before he had any existence. It has been recognized by Christians in all ages that God is the Creator and Ruler of the world, and that as such He is the ultimate source of all power. Hence, nothing can come to pass apart from His sovereign will; otherwise, He would not be truly God. When the thoughtful person dwells on this truth, he finds that it involves considerations which establish the Calvinistic and disprove the Arminian position.

By virtue of the fact that God has created everything that exists, He is the absolute Owner and final Disposer of all that He has made. He

exerts not merely a general influence but actually rules in the affairs of men (Ac. 4:24-28). Even the nations are as the small dust of the balance when compared with His greatness (Isa. 40:12-17). Amid all the apparent defeats and inconsistencies found in human society, God is actually controlling all things in undisturbed majesty. Even the sinful actions of men can occur only by His permission and with the strength that He gives the creature. Since His permission is not unwilling but willing, all that comes to pass (including even the sinful actions and ultimate destiny of men) must be, in some sense, in accordance with what He has eternally purposed and decreed. To the proportion that this is denied, God is excluded from the government of the world, and man is left with only a finite God. Naturally some problems arise, which in man's present state of knowledge are not able fully to be explained. But that is not a sufficient reason for rejecting what the Scriptures and the plain dictates of reason affirm to be true.

Is God not able to convert a sinner when He pleases? Cannot the Almighty, the omnipotent Ruler of heaven and earth, change the character of the creatures He has made? He changed the water into wine at Cana and converted Saul on the road to Damascus. The leper said, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean" (Mt. 8:2)—and at a word his leprosy was cleansed! Do not believe that God cannot control the human will or regenerate a soul when He pleases. He is as able to cleanse the soul as the body. If He chose, He could raise up such a flood of Christian ministers, missionaries and workers of various kinds, and could so work through His Holy Spirit, that the entire world would be converted in a very short time. If He had purposed to save all men, He could have sent hosts of angels to instruct them and to do supernatural works on the earth. He could have worked marvelously in the heart of every person, so that no one would have been lost.

Since evil exists only by His permission, He could, if He chose, blot it out of existence. His power in this respect was shown, for instance, in the work of the destroying angel who in one night slew all the firstborn of the Egyptians (Ex. 12:29) and in another night slew 185,000 of the Assyrian army (2 Kgs. 19:35). It was shown when the earth opened and swallowed up Korah and his rebellious allies (Num. 16:31-35), and when King Herod was smitten and died a horrible death (Ac. 12:23). The Most High God's dominion is "an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (Dan. 4:34-35).

All of this brings out the basic principle of the Reformed faith: the sovereignty of God. God created this world in which man dwells. He owns it and is running it according to His own sovereign good pleasure. God has lost none of His power, and it is highly dishonoring to Him to suppose that He is struggling along with the human race, doing the best He can to persuade men to do right, but unable to accomplish His eternal, unchangeable, holy, wise, and sovereign purpose.

Any system which teaches that the serious intentions of God can in some cases be defeated, and that man (who is not only a creature but a sinful creature) can exercise veto power over the plans of Almighty God, is in striking contrast to the biblical idea of His immeasurable exaltation by which He is removed from all the weaknesses of humanity. That the plans of men are not always executed is due to a lack of power, or lack of wisdom, or both. But since God is unlimited in these and in all other resources, no unforeseen emergencies can arise. To Him, the causes for change have no existence. To assume

that His plan fails and that He strives to no effect is to reduce Him to the level of His creatures and make Him no God at all.

## **2. Man's Totally Helpless Condition**

The first and perhaps most serious error of the Arminian writers is that they do not give sufficient importance to the sinful rebellion and spiritual separation of the human race from God, that occurred in the fall of Adam. Some neglect it altogether, while for others it seems to be a faraway event that has little influence in the lives of people today. But unless the Bible-believing Christian insists on the reality of that spiritual separation from God, and the totally disastrous effect that it had on the entire human race, he shall never be able properly to appreciate his real condition or desperate need of a redeemer.

Perhaps it will help to realize more clearly what fallen man's condition really is, if it is compared with that of the fallen angels. Angels were created before man, and each angel was placed on test as an individual, personal, moral being. This apparently was a pure test of obedience, as was that of Adam. Some of the angels stood their test (for reasons fully known only to God) and as a result were then confirmed in a state of perfect angelic holiness; these are now the elect angels in heaven (1 Tim. 5:21). But others fell and are now the demons mentioned in the Scriptures (the devil apparently being the one of highest rank among those who fell). Jude wrote that the "angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, [God] hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (v. 6). Furthermore, "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment" (2 Pet. 2:4). The devil and the demons are totally alienated from God, totally given over to sin, without any hope of redemption. Their fate is

described by Christ as that of being cast into “everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mt. 25:41).

There is no redemption for fallen angels. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews says, “For verily not to angels doth he give help, but he giveth help to the seed of Abraham” (2:16). Their fate is fixed and certain. For men and for angels, endless punishment is the penalty for endless sinning against God. Some would try to make God appear unjust, as though He inflicts endless punishment for sins committed only in this life. But lost men and lost angels (or demons) are endlessly in rebellion against God, and they endlessly receive punishment for that rebellion.

When God created man a moral creature, He proceeded on a different plan than He did with the angelic order. Instead of creating all men at one time and placing them on test individually, He created one man with a physical body, from whom the entire human race would descend, and who (because of his union with all those who would come after him) could be appointed as the legal or federal head and representative of the entire human race. If he stood the test, he and all his descendants would be confirmed in holiness and established in a state of perpetual creaturely bliss (as were the holy angels). But if he fell (as did the fallen angels), he and all his posterity would be subject to eternal punishment. It was as if God said, “This time, if sin is to enter, let it enter by one man, so that redemption also can be provided by one Man.”

Therefore, Adam, in his representative capacity, was placed on a test of pure human obedience. The penalty of disobedience was clearly set before him: “And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the

knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:16-17).

Hence, the clearly-declared penalty for sin was death: exactly the same penalty that had been inflicted on the angels who fell. As with angels, it was purely a test of whether or not man would be an obedient and appreciative subject in the kingdom of heaven. It was a perfectly fair, simple test, clearly set forth, very much in Adam’s favor, for which he would have no excuse if he disobeyed.

But — tragedy of tragedies — Adam fell, and the entire human race fell representatively in him. The consequences of his sin are all comprehended under the term “death” in its widest sense. It was primarily spiritual death (or separation from God) that had been threatened (Adam did not die physically until 930 years after he fell). But he was spiritually estranged from God and died spiritually the very instant he sinned; from that instant his life became an unceasing march to the grave. Man in this life has not gone as far in the ways of sin as have the devil and the demons, for he still receives many blessings through common grace — health, wealth, family and friends, the beauties of nature — and he still is surrounded with many restraining influences. But he is on his way. If not checked, man would eventually become as totally evil as the demons. In his fallen state he fears God, tries to flee from Him, and literally hates Him (as do the demons). If left to himself he would remain forever in that condition because, “There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God” (Rom. 3:10-11). Nothing, absolutely nothing but a mighty supernatural act on the part of God, can rescue him from that condition. Hence, if man is to be rescued, God must take the initiative; He must pay the penalty for him, must cleanse him from his guilt, and so reinstate him in holiness and righteousness.



That is precisely what God does! He sovereignly picks up a man out of the kingdom of Satan and places him in the kingdom of heaven. These are the elect that are referred to some 25 times in Scripture: “But for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened” (Mt. 24:22); “Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God” (1 Thess. 1:4); “The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded” (Rom. 11:7); “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect?” (Rom. 8:33). There are many more such references.

The Bible teaches that God has rescued a multitude of the human race from the penalty of their sins. In order to perform that work, Christ, the second Person of the trinity, took upon Himself human nature (through the miracle of the virgin birth) and was born into the human race as any normal child is born. God thus became incarnate, became one of us. Jesus lived a perfectly sinless life among men as the representative of His people, placed Himself under His own law, and suffered in His own Person the penalty that God had prescribed for sin. In His sinless life He perfectly kept the law of God that Adam had broken and so earned perfect righteousness for His people and the right for them to enter heaven. What He suffered as a Person of infinite value and dignity was a just equivalent of what His people would have suffered in an eternity in hell. In this manner He freed His people from the law of sin and death. As the fruits of that redemptive work are applied to those who have been given to the Son by the Father, they are said to be regenerated by the Holy Spirit, that is, made alive spiritually, or born again.

Paul expresses this broad truth in the epistle to the Romans when he says, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.... But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and

the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.... Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Rom. 5:12-19).

Unless one sees that contrast between the first and the second Adam, he will never understand the Christian system. Writing to the saints that were at Ephesus, Paul said, "And you hath he quickened [made alive], who were dead in trespasses and sins." The Ephesian Christians "...were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:1-10).

In Christian theology there are three separate and distinct acts of imputation. In the first place, Adam's sin is imputed to all his descendants (that is, judicially set to their account, so that they are held responsible for it and suffer the consequences of it). This is commonly known as the doctrine of original sin. In the second place (and in precisely the same manner) the believer's sin is imputed to Christ, so that the innocent Savior suffers the consequences of it. And in the third place, Christ's righteousness is imputed to the believer and secures for him entrance into heaven. Adam's

descendants, of course, are no more personally guilty of Adam's sin than Christ is personally guilty of His people's sin, or that His people are personally meritorious because of His righteousness. In each case it is a judicial transaction. The sinner receives salvation from Christ in precisely the same way that he receives condemnation and ruin from Adam. In each case the result follows because of the close official union which exists between the persons involved. To reject any one of these three steps is to reject an essential part of the Christian system.

Thus there is a strict parallel between Adam and Christ in the matter of salvation. In the above passages Paul piles one phrase upon another, stressing the fact that mankind is not merely sick or spiritually disinclined but spiritually dead. Christ emphatically taught, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (Jn. 3:3). Again He said, "Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word" (Jn. 8:43). The unregenerate man cannot see the kingdom of God nor hear in any spiritually discerning way the words spoken concerning it; much less can he get into it. Had the righteous been left to themselves, they, like the fallen angels, would never have turned to God.

A spiritually dead person can no more give himself spiritual life than a physically dead person can give himself physical life; that requires a supernatural act on the part of God. The sinner gets into the family of God in precisely the same way that he gets into his human family: by being born into it. By that supernatural act, God Himself (through His Holy Spirit) sovereignly takes him out of the kingdom of Satan and places him in His spiritual kingdom by a spiritual rebirth.

Having once been born into the kingdom of God, the redeemed sinner can never become unborn. Since it took a supernatural act to

bring him into a state of spiritual life, it would take another such act to take him out of that state. Hence the absolute certainty that those who have been regenerated (and therefore have become truly Christian) will never lose their salvation but will be providentially kept by the power of God through all the trials and difficulties of this life and brought into the heavenly kingdom. “He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (Jn. 5:24). “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand” (Jn. 10:27-29). This is known as the doctrine of eternal security, or the perseverance of the saints.

This gift of eternal life is not conferred upon all men but only upon those whom God chooses. This does not mean that any who want to be saved are excluded, for the invitation is, “whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17). The fact is that a spiritually dead person cannot will to come. “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw [literally, drag] him” (Jn. 6:44). Only those who are quickened (made spiritually alive) by the Holy Spirit ever have that will or desire; these are the elect. But in contrast with these, there is another group that may be called the non-elect. Concerning them, Floyd Hamilton very appropriately wrote: “All that God does is to let them alone and allow them to go their own way without interference. It is their nature to be evil, and God simply has foreordained to leave that nature unchanged. The picture often painted by opponents of Calvinism, of a cruel God refusing to save all who want to be saved, is a gross caricature. God saves all who want to

be saved, but no one whose nature has not been changed wants to be saved.”

### **3. Christ's atonement**

It is not revealed why God does not save all mankind, when all were equally undeserving, and when the sacrifice on Calvary was that of a Person of infinite value, amply sufficient to save all men, had God so desired it. The Scriptures do show that not all will be saved; however, it must be remembered that the atonement, which was worked out at an enormous cost to God Himself, is God's own property; He is at liberty to make whatever use of it He chooses. No man has any claim to any part of it. The Bible teaches repeatedly that salvation is by grace. Grace is favor shown to the undeserving — even to the ill-deserving. If any part of man's salvation were due to his own good works, then indeed there would be a difference in men, and those who had responded to the gracious offer could justly point the finger of scorn at the lost and say, “You had the same chance that I had. I accepted, but you refused; therefore, you have no excuse.” But no! God has so arranged this system that those who are saved can only be eternally grateful that God has saved them. It is not for man to ask why God does as He does, for the Scripture declares: “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he hath called...” (Rom. 9:20-24).

Only the Calvinist seems to take the fall of man seriously. A proper evaluation of the fall and man's present hopeless condition is the missing element in so much of today's thinking, teaching and preaching. Arminianism seriously errs in assuming that man has sufficient ability to turn to God, if only he will. The Calvinist insists that man is not merely sick or indisposed or just needing the right incentive; he is spiritually dead. The atonement of Christ does not merely make salvation an abstract possibility (such that all men can turn to God if they will). The Calvinist holds that the atonement was an objective work, accomplished in history, which removed all legal barriers against those to whom it was to be applied. It is followed by the work of the Holy Spirit subjectively applying the merits of that atonement to the hearts of those for whom it was divinely intended.

Here, again, is one of the most important verses in Scripture concerning the matter of salvation: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (Jn. 6:44). Another like it is, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (Jn. 6:37). The Apostle Paul wrote, "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 Cor. 2:14).

How does God cause the elect to exercise faith? The answer is that in regeneration the Holy Spirit subdues man's heart to Himself and imparts a new nature which loves righteousness and hates sin. He does not force man against his will but makes him lovingly and spontaneously obedient to God's will. When the Lord appeared to the hardened persecutor Saul as he was on the way to Damascus, he immediately became obedient to God's will. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power" (Ps. 110:3). God gives His people the will to come! That act on God's part, in the subconscious nature of

the person, is known as regeneration, the new birth, or being born again. When a man is given a new nature, he reacts according to that nature. He exercises faith and does good works characteristic of repentance as naturally as the grape vine produces grapes. Whereas sin was previously his natural element, now holiness becomes his natural element (though not all at once, for he still has remnants of the old nature clinging to him; and as long as he remains in this world he still is in a sinful environment). But as his new nature is free to express itself, he grows in righteousness; he enjoys reading God's Word, praying and having fellowship with other Christians.

One must choose between an atonement of high efficiency which is perfectly accomplished, and an atonement of wide extension which is imperfectly accomplished; one cannot have both. If one had both one would have universal salvation. The Arminian extends the atonement so widely that, so far as its actual effect is concerned, it has practically no value other than as an example of unselfish service. Dr. B. B. Warfield used a very simple illustration to present this truth. He said that the atonement is like pie dough: the wider you roll it, the thinner it becomes. The Arminian, in making it apply to all men, reduces its effectiveness to such an extent that it becomes practically no atonement at all.

Furthermore, for God to have laid the sins of all men on Christ would mean that, as regards the lost, He would be punishing their sins twice: once in Christ, and then again in themselves. Certainly that would be unjust! If Christ paid their debt, they are free, and the Holy Spirit will invariably bring them to faith and repentance. If the atonement were truly unlimited, it would mean that Christ died for multitudes whose fate had already been determined, who were already in hell at the time Christ suffered. If the atonement merely nullified the sentence that was against man (so as to give him a new

chance if he would exercise faith and obedience), it would mean that God was placing him on test again, as his ancestor Adam. But that kind of test was tried and had its outcome long ago, even in a far more favorable environment. Carried to its logical conclusion, the theory of unlimited atonement leads to absurdity.

Christ's suffering in His human nature, as He hung on the cross those six hours, was not primarily physical but mental and spiritual. When He cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mt. 27:46), He was literally suffering the pangs of hell. For that is essentially what hell is: separation from the comfortable presence of God, separation from everything that is good and desirable. Such suffering is beyond man's comprehension. But since Christ suffered as a divine-human Person, His suffering was a just equivalent for all that His people would have suffered in an eternity in hell.

As a matter of fact, the redeemed man gains more through redemption in Christ than he lost through the fall of Adam. For in the incarnation God literally came into the human race and took human nature upon Himself, which nature Christ in His glorified body will retain forever. Evidently He will be the only Person of the Godhead that the redeemed will see in heaven. Peter says that those who have obtained like precious faith now are "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4); Paul says that believers are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17). Think of that: partakers of the divine nature, joint-heirs with Christ! What greater blessing could God possibly confer upon sinful men? As such redeemed men are superior to the angels, for angels are designated in Scripture only as God's messengers, His servants.

Ultimately the Arminian is faced with precisely the same problem as the Calvinist: that broader problem as to why a God of infinite



holiness and power permits sin at all. In his present state of knowledge the theologian can give only a partial answer. But the Calvinist faces up to that problem and acknowledges the scriptural doctrine that all men had their fair and favorable chance in Adam. God now graciously saves some of the fallen race while leaving others to go their own chosen sinful way, manifesting His justice in their punishment. But having admitted foreknowledge, the Arminianism has no explanation as to why God purposefully and deliberately creates those He knows will be lost, those who will spend eternity in hell.

As regards the problem of evil, the Calvinist can say that God created this world as a theater in which He would display His glory, His marvelous attributes for all His creatures to see and admire: His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth. How does God manifest His justice?

God's justice demands that goodness must be rewarded and sin punished. It is just as necessary that sin be punished as it is that goodness be rewarded; God would be unjust if He failed to do either. He created men and angels not as robots who would automatically produce good works as a machine produces bolts or tin cans (but deserves no rewards) but as free moral agents, in His own image, capable (in Adam before the fall) of choosing between good and evil. He manifests His justice toward those whom He purposed in grace to save, by rewarding them for the good works that are found in Christ their Savior and credited to them, confirming them in holiness, and admitting them into heaven. He manifests His justice toward those whom He purposed to bypass because of their willing continuance in sin.

Likewise, if sin had been excluded, there could have been no adequate revelation of God's most glorious attributes — grace, mercy, love and holiness — displayed in His redemption of sinners. The angels in heaven earned salvation through a covenant of works by keeping God's law. Like Adam, they had been promised certain rewards if they obeyed. They did obey and were confirmed in holiness. They do not experience salvation by grace. There is an old hymn which says, "When I sing redemption's story, the angels will fold their wings and listen." So it will be in the ultimate contrast between men and angels.

Hence the explanation of sin is that God permits it but controls and overrules it for His own glory. If sin had been excluded from the creation, those glorious attributes could never have been adequately displayed before His intelligent universe of men and angels, but for the most part would have remained forever hidden in the depths of the divine nature.

#### **4. God's Foreknowledge**

The evangelical Arminian acknowledges that God has foreknowledge and is able to predict future events. But if God foreknows any future event, that event is as fixed and certain as if foreordained. Foreknowledge implies certainty, and certainty implies foreordination. The evangelical Arminian does not deny that there is such a thing as election to salvation, for he cannot get rid of the words "elect" and "election," which occur some twenty-five times in the New Testament. But he tries to destroy the force of these words by saying that election is based on foreknowledge: that God looks down the broad avenue of the future and sees those who will respond to His gracious offer, and so elects them.

But in acknowledging foreknowledge, the Arminian makes a fatal concession; figuratively speaking, he cuts his own throat. Why? For the simple reason that as God foresees those who will be saved, He also sees those who will be lost! Why, then, does He create those who will be lost? Certainly He is not under any obligation to create them; there is no power outside Himself forcing Him to do so. If He wants all men to be saved and is earnestly trying to save all men, He could at least refrain from creating those who, if created, certainly will be lost. The Arminian cannot consistently hold to the foreknowledge of God and yet deny the doctrines of election and predestination.

The question persists: Why does God create those He knows will go to hell? It would be mere foolishness for Him to wish to save or try to save those He knows will be lost! That would be for Him to work at cross-purposes with Himself. Even man has better sense than to try to do what he knows he will not do or cannot do. The Arminian has no alternative but to deny the foreknowledge of God, and then he is left with only a limited, ignorant, finite God who in reality is not God at all, in the true sense of that word. If election is based on foreknowledge, it is so meaningless that it is more confusing than enlightening. For even as regards the elect, what sense is there for God to elect those whom He knows are going to elect themselves? That would be just plain nonsense.

## **5. The Universalistic Passages**

Probably the most plausible defense for Arminianism is found in the universalistic passages in Scripture. Three of the most quoted are: "...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). "...Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all..." (1 Tim. 2:5-6). In regard to

these verses it must be borne in mind that (as we have said earlier) God is the absolute sovereign Ruler of heaven and earth, and man is never to think of Him as wishing or striving to do what He knows He will not do. For Him to do otherwise would be for Him to act foolishly. Since Scripture teaches that some men are going to be lost (e.g., Mt. 25:46), Peter cannot mean that God is earnestly wishing or striving to save all individual men. For if it were His will that every individual of mankind should be saved, then not one soul could be lost. As Paul said, “For who hath resisted his will?” (Rom. 9:19).

These verses simply teach that God is benevolent and does not delight in the sufferings of His creatures, any more than a human father delights in the punishment that he sometimes must inflict upon his son. The word will is used in different senses in Scripture (as in everyday conversation). It is sometimes used in the sense of “desire” or “purpose.” A righteous judge does not will (desire) that anyone should be hanged or sentenced to prison, yet he wills (pronounces sentence) that the guilty person shall be punished. In the same sense, for sufficient reason a man may will to have a limb removed (or an eye taken out), even though he certainly does not desire it.

Arminians insist that in 2 Peter 3:9 the words “any” and “all” refer to all mankind without exception. But it is important, first of all, to see to whom those words were addressed. The epistle is addressed not to mankind at large but to Christians: “...to them that have obtained like precious faith with us” (2 Pet. 1:1). At the beginning of this very chapter Peter addressed those to whom he was writing as “beloved” (3:1). An examination of the verse as a whole, and not merely at the last half, reveals that it is not primarily a salvation verse at all but a second-coming verse! It begins by saying, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise [singular].” What promise? “The promise of

his coming” (v. 4). The reference is to Christ’s second coming when He will come for judgment, and the wicked will perish in the lake of fire. The verse has reference to a limited group. It says that the Lord is “longsuffering to us-ward”; that is, to His elect, many of whom had not yet been regenerated and who therefore had not yet come to repentance. Hence verse 9 may quite properly be read as follows: “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise as some count slackness, but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any of us should perish, but that all of us should come to repentance.”

What about 1 Timothy 2:4-6, “Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth... Who gave himself a ransom for all”? It must be noted that “all” is used in various senses. Oftentimes it means not all men without exception but all men without distinction: Jews and Gentiles, bond and free, men and women, rich and poor. In this context it is clearly used in that sense. Through many centuries the Jews had been, with few exceptions, the exclusive recipients of God’s saving grace. They had become the most intensely nationalistic and intolerant people in the world. Instead of recognizing their position as that of God’s representatives to all the people of the world, they had kept those blessings to themselves. Even the early Christians for a time were inclined to appropriate the mission of the Messiah only for themselves. The salvation of the Gentiles was a mystery that had not been known in other ages (Eph. 4:6; Col. 1:27). So rigid was the pharisaic exclusivism that the Gentiles were regarded as “unclean,” “common,” “sinners of the Gentiles” — even “dogs.” It was not lawful for a Jew to keep company with or have any dealings with a Gentile (Jn. 4:9, Ac. 10:28, 11:3). After an orthodox Jew had been out in the marketplace where he had come in contact with Gentiles, he was regarded as unclean (Mk. 7:4). After Peter preached to the Roman centurion Cornelius and the others who were gathered at his house, he was severely taken to task

by the church in Jerusalem. One can almost hear the gasp of wonder when, after Peter told them what had happened, they said, “Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life” (Ac. 11:18) — that is, not to every individual in the world but to Jews and Gentiles alike. Used in this sense the word “all” has no reference to individuals but simply to mankind in general.

When it was said of John the Baptist that “there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins” (Mk. 1:5), it is obvious that not every individual did so respond. After Peter and John had healed the lame man at the door of the temple it is said that “all men glorified God for that which was done” (Ac. 4:21). Jesus told his disciples that they would be “hated of all men” for His name’s sake (Lk. 21:17). Thus, when Jesus said, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (Jn. 12:32), He certainly did not mean that every individual of mankind would be so drawn. What He did mean was that Jews and Gentiles, men of all nations and races, would be drawn to Him—and it is evident that this is what is actually happening.

In 1 Corinthians 15:22 it says, “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.” This verse is often quoted by Arminians to prove unlimited or universal atonement. This verse is from Paul’s famous resurrection chapter, and the context makes it clear that he is not talking about life in this age (whether physical or spiritual) but about the resurrection life. Christ is the first to enter the resurrection life; then, when He comes, His people also enter into their resurrection life. What Paul says is that at that time a glorious resurrection life will become a reality, not for all mankind, but for all those who are in Christ. This point is illustrated by the well-known fact that the race fell in Adam, who acted as its federal head and

representative. What Paul says, in effect, is this: “For as all born in Adam die, so also all born again in Christ shall be made alive.” This verse, therefore, refers not to something past, nor to something present, but to something future; it has no special bearing at all on the Calvinist-Arminian controversy.

Two other verses that also are often quoted in defense of Arminianism are: “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Rev. 3:20); and “...whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17). This general invitation is extended to all men. It may be (and often is) the means the Holy Spirit uses to arouse in certain individuals the desire for salvation, as He puts forth His supernatural power to regenerate them. But these verses, taken by themselves, are silent about the truth that fallen man is spiritually dead and totally unable to respond to the invitation, as are the fallen angels or demons. Fallen man is as dead spiritually as Lazarus was dead physically until Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth!” He is as dead spiritually as the Pharisee Nicodemus, to whom Jesus said, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (Jn. 3:3). Christ said to the Pharisees, “Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word” (Jn. 8:43). Apart from divine assistance, no one can hear the invitation or put forth the will to come to Christ.

The declaration that Christ died for all is made clearer by the song that the redeemed sing before the throne of the Lamb: “Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” (Rev. 5:9). Oftentimes the word all must be understood to mean all the elect, all His Church, all those whom the Father has given to the Son (as when Christ says, “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me” [Jn. 6:37]), but not all men

universally and every man individually. The redeemed host will be made up of men from all classes and conditions of life: princes and peasants, rich and poor, bond and free, male and female, Jews and Gentiles, men of all nations and races. That is the true universalism of Scripture.

## **6. The Two Systems Contrasted**

It is the author's conviction that Christianity comes to its fullest expression in the Reformed faith. The great advantage of the Reformed faith is that in the framework of the five points of Calvinism it sets forth clearly what the Bible teaches concerning the way of salvation. Only when these truths are seen as a unit and in relation to each other can one really understand or appreciate the Christian system in all its strength and beauty. The reason that so many Christians have only a weak faith, and that so many churches present only a rather superficial form of Christianity, is that they never really see the system in its logical consistency. It is not enough for the professing Christian to know that God loves him and that his sins have been forgiven; he should know how and why his redemption has been accomplished and how it has been made effective. This is set forth systematically in the five points of Calvinism.

Historically the five points of Calvinism have been held by the Presbyterian and Reformed churches and by many Baptists, while the substance of the five points of Arminianism has been held by the Methodist and Lutheran churches and also by many Baptists. The five points of Calvinism may be more easily remembered if they are associated with the word T-U-L-I-P:

**T - Total inability**



**U - Unconditional election**

**L - Limited atonement**

**I - Irresistible (efficacious) grace**

**P - Perseverance of the saints**

The following material (taken from Romans: An Interpretive Outline, by David N. Steele and Curtis Thomas) contrasts the five points of Calvinism with the five points of Arminianism in a particularly clear and concise form. It is also included as an appendix in The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination, by the present writer. (Each of these books is published by Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Phillipsburg, N.J.)

### **The Five Points of Arminianism**

1. Free-will or human ability. Although human nature was seriously affected by the fall, man has not been left in a state of total spiritual helplessness. God graciously enables every sinner to repent and believe but does not interfere with man's freedom. Each sinner possesses a free will, and his eternal destiny depends on how he uses it. Man's freedom consists in his ability to choose good over evil in spiritual matters; his will is not enslaved to his sinful nature. The sinner has the power to either cooperate with God's Spirit and be regenerated or resist God's grace and perish. The lost sinner needs the Spirit's assistance but he does not have to be regenerated by the Spirit before he can believe, for faith is man's act and precedes the new birth. Faith is the sinner's gift to God; it is man's contribution to salvation.

2. Conditional election. God's choice of certain individuals unto salvation before the foundation of the world was based upon His foreseeing that they would respond to His call. He selected only those whom He knew would of themselves freely believe the Gospel. Election therefore was determined by or conditioned upon what man would do. The faith which God foresaw, and upon which He based His choice, was not given to the sinner by God (it was not created by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit) but resulted solely from man's will. It was left entirely up to man as to who would believe and therefore as to who would be elected unto salvation. God chose those whom He knew would, of their own free will, choose Christ. Thus the sinner's choice of Christ — not God's choice of the sinner — is the ultimate cause of salvation.

3. Universal redemption or general atonement. Christ's redeeming work made it possible for everyone to be saved but did not actually secure the salvation of anyone. Although Christ died for all men and for every man, only those who believe on Him are saved. His death enabled God to pardon sinners on the condition that they believe, but it did not actually put away anyone's sins. Christ's redemption becomes effective only if man chooses to accept it.

4. The Holy Spirit can be effectually resisted. The Spirit calls inwardly all those who are called outwardly by the gospel invitation. He does all that He can to bring every sinner to salvation. But inasmuch as man is free, he can successfully resist the Spirit's call. The Spirit cannot regenerate the sinner until he believes; faith (which is man's contribution) precedes and makes possible the new birth. Thus, man's free will limits the Spirit in the application of Christ's saving work. The Holy Spirit can only draw to Christ those who allow Him to have His way with them. Until the sinner

responds, the Spirit cannot give life. God's grace, therefore, is not invincible; it can be — and often is — resisted and thwarted by man.

5. Falling from grace. Those who believe and are truly saved can lose their salvation by failing to keep up their faith, etc. All Arminians have not been agreed on this point; some have held that believers are eternally secure in Christ, that once a sinner is regenerated, he can never be lost.

According to Arminianism, salvation is accomplished through the combined efforts of God (who takes the initiative) and man (who must respond); man's response being the determining factor. God has provided salvation for everyone, but His provision becomes effective only for those who, of their own free will, choose to cooperate with Him and accept His offer of grace. At the crucial point, man's will plays a decisive role; thus man, not God, determines who will be recipients of the gift of salvation.

### **The Five Points of Calvinism**

1. Total inability or total depravity. Because of the fall, man is unable of himself to savingly believe the Gospel. The sinner is dead, blind and deaf to the things of God; his heart is deceitful and desperately corrupt. His will is not free; it is in bondage to his evil nature; therefore, he will not—indeed he cannot—choose good over evil in the spiritual realm. Consequently it takes much more than the Spirit's assistance to bring a sinner to Christ—it takes regeneration, by which the Spirit makes the sinner alive and gives him a new nature. Faith is not something man contributes to salvation but is itself a part of God's gift of salvation; it is God's gift to the sinner, not the sinner's gift to God.

2. Unconditional election. God's choice of certain individuals unto salvation before the foundation of the world rested solely in His own sovereign will. His choice of particular sinners was not based on any foreseen response of obedience on their part, such as faith, repentance, etc. On the contrary, God gives faith and repentance to each individual whom He selected. These acts are the result, not the cause, of God's choice. Election therefore was not determined by or conditioned upon any virtuous quality or act foreseen in man. Those whom God sovereignly elected He brings through the power of the Spirit to a willing acceptance of Christ. Thus God's choice of the sinner — not the sinner's choice of Christ — is the ultimate cause of salvation.

3. Particular redemption or limited atonement. Christ's redeeming work was intended to save the elect only, and actually secured salvation for them. His death was the substitutionary endurance of the penalty of sin in the place of certain specified sinners. In addition to putting away the sins of His people, Christ's redemption secured everything necessary for their salvation; including faith which unites them to Him. The gift of faith is infallibly applied by the Spirit to all for whom Christ died, therefore guaranteeing their salvation.

4. The efficacious call of the Spirit or irresistible grace. In addition to the outward general call to salvation (which is made to everyone who hears the Gospel), the Holy Spirit extends to the elect a special inward call that inevitably brings them to salvation. The external call (which is made to all without distinction) can be—and often is — rejected; whereas the internal call (which is made only to the elect) cannot be rejected; it always results in conversion. By means of this special call, the Spirit irresistibly draws sinners to Christ. He is not limited in His work of applying salvation by man's will, nor is He dependent upon man's cooperation for success. The Spirit graciously

causes the elect sinner to cooperate, to believe, to repent, to come freely and willingly to Christ. God's grace, therefore, is invincible; it never fails to result in the salvation of those to whom it is extended.

5. Perseverance of the saints. All who are chosen by God, redeemed by Christ, and given faith by the Spirit are eternally saved. They are kept in faith by the power of Almighty God and thus persevere to the end.

According to Calvinism, salvation is accomplished by the almighty power of the triune God: the Father chose a people, the Son died for them, the Holy Spirit makes Christ's death effective by bringing the elect to faith and repentance, thereby causing them to willingly obey the Gospel. The entire process (election, redemption, regeneration) is the work of God and is by grace alone. Thus God, not man, determines who will be the recipients of the gift of salvation. This is the biblical Gospel.

If you have never bowed the knee to the Lord Jesus Christ, then call upon Him today to save you. Scripture offers this hope: "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy" (Mic. 7:18). Cast yourself upon God's mercy, seeking Him with all your heart, putting your full confidence and trust in Jesus Christ alone for your salvation. "Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed" (Rom. 10:11).

# **The Law of Works, The Law of Faith and the Law of Christ**

**by Edward Fisher**

**with Must-Read Footnotes by Thomas  
Boston**

**EVANGELISTA, a Minister of the Gospel.**

**NOMIST, a Legalist.**

**ANTINOMISTA, an Antinomian.**

**NEOPHYTUS, a Young Christian.**

Sect. 1. Differences about the Law.—2. A threefold Law.

**Nomista.** Sir, my neighbour, Neophytus and I having lately had some conference with this our friend and acquaintance, Antinomista, about some points of religion, wherein he, differing from us both, at last said he would be contented to be judged by our minister: therefore, have we made bold to come unto you, all three of us, to pray you to hear us, and judge of our differences.

**Evan.** You are all of you very welcome to me; and if you please to let me hear what your differences are, I will tell you what I think.

**SECT. 1.**—Nom. The truth is, sir, he and I differ in very many things; but more especially *about the law*: for I say, the law ought to be a rule of life to a believer; and he says, it ought not.

**Neo.** And surely, sir, the greatest difference betwixt him and me, is this;—he would persuade me to believe in Christ; and bids me rejoice

in the Lord, and live merrily, though I feel never so many corruptions in my heart, yea, though I be never so sinful in my life; the which I cannot do, nor, I think, ought to do; but rather to fear, and sorrow, and lament for my sins.

**Ant.** The truth is, sir, the greatest difference betwixt my friend Nomista and me, is about the law; and therefore that is the greatest matter we come to you about.

**Evan.** I remember the Apostle Paul willeth Titus to "avoid contentions and strivings about the law, because they are unprofitable and vain," (Titus 3:9); and so I fear yours have been.

**Nom.** Sir, for my own part, I hold it very meet, that every true Christian should be very zealous for the holy law of God; especially now, when a company of these Antinomians do set themselves against it, and do what they can quite to abolish it, and utterly to root it out of the church: surely, sir, I think it not meet they should live in a Christian commonwealth.

**Evan.** I pray you, neighbour Nomista, be not so hot, neither let us have such unchristian-like expressions amongst us; but let us reason together in love, and with the spirit of meekness, (1 Cor 4:21), as Christians ought to do. I confess with the apostle, "It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing," (Gal 4:18). But yet, as the same apostle said of the Jews, so I fear I may say of some Christians, that "they are zealous of the law," (Acts 21:20); yea, some would be doctors of the law, and yet neither understand "what they say, nor whereof they affirm," (1 Tim 1:7).

**Nom.** Sir, I make no doubt but that I both know what I say, and whereof I affirm, when I say and affirm that the holy law of God

ought to be a rule of life to a believer; for I dare pawn my soul on the truth of it.

**Evan.** But what law do you mean?

**Nom.** Why, sir, what law do you think I mean? Are there any more laws than one?

**SECT. 2.**—Evan. Yea, in the Scriptures there is mention made of divers laws, but they may all be comprised under these three, viz.—the law of works, the law of faith, and the law of Christ;

[1](#) (Rom 3:27, Gal 6:2); and, therefore, I pray you, tell me, when you say the law ought to be a rule of life to a believer, which of these three laws you mean.

**Nom.** Sir, I know not the difference betwixt them; but this I know, that the law of the ten commandments, commonly called the *moral law*, ought to be a rule of life to a believer.

**Evan.** But the law of the ten commandments, or moral law may be either said to be the matter of the law of works, or the matter of the law of Christ: and therefore I pray you to tell me, in whether of these senses you conceive it ought to be a rule of life to a believer?

**Nom.** Sir, I must confess, I do not know what you mean by this distinction; but this I know, that God requires that every Christian should frame and lead his life according to the ten commandments; the which if he do, then may he expect the blessing of God both upon his own soul and body; and if he do not, then can he expect nothing else but his wrath and curse upon them both.

**Evan.** The truth is, Nomista, the law of the ten commandments, as it is the matter of the law of works, ought not to be a rule of life to a



believer. But in thus saying, you have affirmed that it ought; and therefore therein you have erred from the truth. And now, Antinomista, that I may also know your judgment, when you say the law ought not to be a rule of life to a believer, pray tell me what law do you mean?

**Ant.** Why, I mean the law of the ten commandments.

**Evan.** But whether do you mean that law, as it is the matter of the law of works, or as it is the matter of the law of Christ?

**Ant.** Surely, sir, I do conceive, that the ten commandments are no way to be a rule of life to a believer; for Christ hath delivered him from them.

**Evan.** But the truth is, the law of the ten commandments, as it is the matter of the law of Christ, ought to be a rule of life to a believer;

2 and therefore you having affirmed the contrary, have therein also erred from the truth.

**Nom.** The truth is, sir, I must confess I never took any notice of this threefold law, which, it seems, is mentioned in the New Testament.

**Ant.** And I must confess, if I took any notice of them, I never understood them.

**Evan.** Well, give me leave to tell you, that so far as any man comes short of the true knowledge of this threefold law,

3 so far he comes short both of the true knowledge of God and of himself; and therefore I wish you both to consider of it.

**Nom.** Sir, if it be so, you may do well to be a means to inform us, and help us to the true knowledge of this threefold law; and therefore, I pray you, first tell us what is meant by the law of works.

**Footnotes:**

[1] These terms [*The Law of Works, The Law of Faith and the Law of Christ*] are scriptural, as appears from the whole texts quoted by our author, namely, (Rom 3:27), "Where is boasting then? it is excluded. By what law? of works? nay: but by the law of faith."—(Gal 6:2), "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." By the law of works is meant the law of the ten commandments, as the covenant of works. By the law of faith, the gospel, or covenant of grace; for justification being the point upon which the apostle there states the opposition betwixt these two laws, it is evident that the former only is the law that doth not exclude boasting; and that the latter only is it, by which a sinner is justified in a way that doth exclude boasting. By the law of Christ, is meant the same law of the ten commandments, as a rule of life, in the hand of a Mediator, to believers already justified, and not any one command of the law only; for "bearing one another's burdens" is a "fulfilling of the law of Christ," as it is a loving one another: but, according to the Scripture, that love is not a fulfilling of one command only, but of the whole law of the ten commands, (Rom 13:8-10).—"He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." It is a fulfilling of the second table directly, and of the first table indirectly and consequentially: therefore, by the law of Christ is meant, not one command only, but the whole law.

The law of works is the law to be done, that one may be saved; the law of faith is the law to be believed, that one may be saved; the law of Christ is the law of the Saviour, binding his saved people to all the duties of obedience, (Gal 3:12, Acts 16:31).

The term *law* is not here used univocally; for the law of faith is neither in the Scripture sense, nor in the sense of our author, a law, properly so called. The apostle uses that phrase only in imitation of the Jews' manner of speaking, who had the law continually in their mouths. But since the promise of the gospel proposed to faith, is called in Scripture "the law of faith," our author was sufficiently warranted to call it so too. So the law of faith is not a proper preceptive law.

The law of works, and the law of Christ, are in substance but one law, even the law of the ten commandments—the moral law—that law which was from the beginning, continuing still the same in its own nature, but vested with different forms. And since that law is perfect, and sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of it, whatever form it be vested with, whether as the law of works or as the law of Christ, all commands of God unto men must needs be comprehended under it, and particularly the command to repent, common to all mankind, pagans not excepted, who doubtless are obliged, as well as others, to turn from sin unto God; as also the command to believe in Christ, binding all to whom the gospel revelation comes, though, in the meantime, this law stands under different forms to those who are in a state of union with Christ by faith, and to those who are not so. The law of Christ is not a new, proper, preceptive law, but the old, proper, preceptive law, which was from the beginning, under a new accidental form.

The distinction between the law of works and the law of faith cannot be controverted, since the apostle doth so clearly distinguish them, (Rom 3:27).

The distinction between the law of works and the law of Christ, as above explained according to the Scriptures, and the mind of our author, is the same in effect with that of the law, as a covenant of works, and as a rule of life to believers, and ought to be admitted, (Westm. Confess. chap. 19, art. 6). For, (1.) Believers are not under, but dead to the law of works, (Rom 6:14), "For ye are not under the law, but under grace."—(7:4), "Wherefore my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead."—(1 Cor 9:21), "Being not without law to God, but under the law of Christ." Some copies read here "of God," and "of Christ"; which I mention, not out of any regard to that different reading, but that upon the occasion thereof the sense is owned by the learned to be the same either way. To be under the law to God is, without question, to be under the law of God; whatever it may be judged to import more, it can import no less; therefore to be under the law to Christ, is to be under the law of Christ. This text gives a plain and decisive answer to the question, "How is the believer under the law of God?" namely, as he is under the law to Christ. (2.) The law of Christ is an "easy yoke," and a "light burden," (Matt 11:30); but the law of works, to a sinner, is an insupportable burden, requiring works as the condition of justification and acceptance with God, as is clear from the whole of the apostle's reasoning, (Rom 3). [and therefore it is called the law of works, for otherwise the law of Christ requires works too,] and cursing "every one that continues not in all things written in it to do them," (Gal 3:10). The apostle assures us, that "what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law," (Rom 3:19). The duties of the law of works, as such, are, as I conceive, called by

our Lord himself, "heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne," (Matt 23:4).—"For they," viz: the Scribes and Pharisees, "bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers." These heavy burdens were not human traditions, and rites devised by men; for Christ would not have commanded the observing and doing of these, as in this case he did, (verse 3), "Whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do"; neither were they the Mosaic rites and ceremonies, which were not then abrogated, for the Scribes and Pharisees were so far from not moving these burdens with one of their own fingers, that the whole of their religion was confined to them, namely to the rites and ceremonies of Moses' law, and those of their own devising. But the duties of the moral law they laid on others, binding them on with the tie of the law of works, yet made no conscience of them in their own practice: the which duties, nevertheless, our Lord Jesus commanded to be observed and done.

"He who hath believed on Jesus Christ, [though he be freed from the curse of the law,] is not freed from the command and obedience of the law, but tied thereunto by a new obligation, and a new command from Christ. Which new command from Christ importeth help to obey the command."—Practical Use of Saving Knowledge, title, The Third Warrant to Believe, fig. 5.

What this distinction amounts to is, that thereby a difference is constituted betwixt the ten commandments as coming from an absolute God out of Christ unto sinners, and the same ten commandments as coming from God in Christ unto them; a difference which the children of God, assisting their consciences before him to "receive the law at his mouth," will value as their life, however they disagree about it in words and manner of expression. But that the original indispensable obligation of the law of the ten

commandments is in any measure weakened by the believer's taking it as the law of Christ, and not as the law of works; or that the sovereign authority of God the Creator, which is inseparable from it for the ages of eternity, in what channel soever it be conveyed unto men, is thereby laid aside,—will appear utterly groundless, upon an impartial consideration of the matter. For is not our Lord Jesus Christ, equally with the Father and the Holy Spirit, JEHOVAH, the Sovereign, Supreme, Most High God, Creator of the world? (Isa 47:4, Jer 23:6, with Psa 83:18, John 1:3, Rev 3:14). Is not the same [or sovereign authority] of God in Christ? (Exo 23:21). Is not he in the Father, and the Father in him? (John 14:11). Nay, doth not all the fullness of the Godhead dwell in him? (Col 2:9). How, then, can the original obligation of the law of the ten commandments, arising from the authority of the Creator, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be weakened by its being issued unto the believer from and by that blessed channel, the Lord Jesus Christ?

As for the distinction betwixt the law of faith and the law of Christ, the latter is subordinated unto the former. All men by nature are under the law of works; but taking the benefit of the law of faith, by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, they are set free from the law of works, and brought under the law of Christ.—(Matt 11:28,29), "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden—take my yoke upon you."

[2] The law of the ten commandments, being the natural law, was written on Adam's heart on his creation; while as yet it was neither the law of works, nor the law of Christ, in the sense wherein these terms are used in Scripture, and by our author. But after man was created, and put into the garden, this natural law, having made man liable to fall away from God, a threatening of eternal death in case of disobedience, had also a promise of eternal life annexed to it in case

of obedience; in virtue of while he, having done his work, might thereupon plead and demand the reward of eternal life. Thus it became the law of works, whereof the ten commandments were, and are still the matter. All mankind being ruined by the breach of this law, Jesus Christ obeys and dies in the room of the elect, that they might be saved; they being united to him by faith, are, through his obedience and satisfaction imputed to them, freed from eternal death, and become heirs of everlasting life; so that the law of works being fully satisfied, expires as to them, as it would have done of course in the case of Adam's having stood the time of his trial: howbeit it remains in full force as to unbelievers. But the natural law of the ten commandments [which can never expire or determine, but is obligatory in all possible states of the creature, in earth, heaven, or hell] is, from the moment the law of works expires as to believers, issued forth to them [still liable to infirmities, though not to falling away like Adam] in the channel of the covenant of grace, bearing a promise of help to obey, (Ezek 36:27), and, agreeable to their state before the Lord, having annexed to it a promise of the tokens of God's fatherly love, for the sake of Christ, in case of that obedience; and a threatening of God's fatherly displeasure in case of their disobedience. (John 14:21), "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."—(Psa 89:31-33), "If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail." Thus it becomes the law of Christ to them; of which law also the same ten commandments are likewise the matter. In the threatenings of this law there is no revenging wrath; and in the promises of it no proper conditionality of works; but here is the order in the covenant of grace, to which the law of Christ belongs; a beautiful order of grace,

obedience, particular favours, and chastisements for disobedience. Thus the ten commandments stand, both in the law of works and in the law of Christ at the same time, being the common matter of both; but as they are the matter of [i.e. stand in] the law of works, they are actually a part of the law of works; howbeit, as they are the matter of, or stand in, the law of Christ, they are actually a part, not of the law of works, but of the law of Christ. And as they stand in the law of Christ, our author expressly asserts, against the Antinomian, that they ought to be a rule of life to a believer; but that they ought to be a rule of life to a believer, as they stand in the law of works, he justly denies, against the legalist. Even as when one and the same crime stands forbidden in the laws of different independent kingdoms, it is manifest that the rule of life to the subjects in that particular is the prohibition, as it stands in the law of that kingdom whereof they are subjects respectively, and not as it stands in the law of that kingdom of which they are not subjects.

[3] Not of the terms here used to express it by, but of the things thereby meant, viz: the covenant of works, the covenant of grace, and the law as a rule of life to believers, in whatever terms these things be expressed.



# Studies on Saving Faith

by A. W. Pink

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## **Part I - Signs of the Times**

It is generally recognized that *spirituality* is at a low ebb in Christendom and not a few perceive that *sound doctrine* is rapidly on the wane, yet many of the Lord's people take comfort from supposing that the Gospel is still being widely preached and that large numbers are being saved thereby. Alas, their optimistic supposition is ill-founded and sandy grounded. If the "message" now being delivered in Mission Halls be examined, if the "tracts" which are scattered among the unchurched masses be scrutinized, if the "open-air" speakers be carefully listened to, if the "sermons" or "addresses" of a "Soul-winning campaign" be analyzed; in short, if modern "Evangelism" be weighed in the balances of Holy Writ, it will be found wanting—lacking that which is vital to a genuine conversion, *lacking* what is essential if sinners are to be shown their need of a Saviour, *lacking* that which will produce the transfigured lives of new creatures in Christ Jesus.

It is in no captious spirit that we write, seeking to make men offenders for a word. It is not that we are looking for perfection, and complain because we cannot find it; nor that we criticize others because they are not doing things as *we* think they should be done. No; no, it is a matter far more serious than that. The "evangelism" of the day is not only superficial to the last degree, but it is *radically defective*. It is utterly lacking a foundation on which to base an appeal for sinners to come to Christ. There is not only a lamentable

lack of proportion (the mercy of God being made far more prominent than His holiness, His love than His wrath), but there is a *fatal omission* of that which God has given for the purpose of imparting a knowledge of sin. There is not only a reprehensible introducing of "bright singing," humorous witticisms and entertaining anecdotes, but there is a *studied omission of the dark background* upon which alone the Gospel can effectually shine forth.

But serious indeed as is the above indictment, it is only half of it—the negative side, that which is *lacking*. Worse still is that which is being retailed by the cheap-jack evangelists of the day. The *positive content* of their message is nothing but a throwing of dust in the eyes of the sinner. His soul is put to sleep by the Devil's opiate, ministered in a most unsuspecting form. Those who really receive the "message" which is now being given out from most of the "orthodox" pulpits and platforms today, are being fatally deceived. It is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but unless God sovereignly intervenes by a miracle of grace, all who follow it will surely find that the ends thereof are the ways of death. Tens of thousands who confidently imagine they are bound for Heaven, will get a terrible disillusionment when they awake in Hell.

*What is the Gospel?* Is it a message of glad tidings from Heaven to make God-defying rebels at ease in their wickedness? Is it given for the purpose of assuring the pleasure-crazy young people that, providing they only "believe" there is nothing for them to fear in the future? One would certainly think so from the way in which the Gospel is presented—or rather perverted—by most of the "evangelists," and the more so when we look *at the lives* of their "converts." Surely those with any degree of spiritual discernment must perceive that to assure such that God loves them and His Son died for them, and that a full pardon for all their sins (past, present,

and future) can be obtained by simply "accepting Christ as their personal Saviour," is but a casting of pearls before swine.

*The Gospel is not a thing apart.* It is not something independent of the prior revelation of God's Law. It is not an announcement that God has relaxed His justice or lowered the standard of His holiness. So far from that, when *Scripturally expounded* the Gospel presents the clearest demonstration and the climacteric proof of the inexorableness of God's justice and of His infinite abhorrence of sin. But for Scripturally expounding the Gospel, beardless youths and business men who devote their spare time to "evangelistic effort" are *quite unqualified*. Alas that the pride of the flesh suffers so many incompetent ones to rush in where those much wiser fear to tread. It is this multiplying of novices that is largely responsible for the woeful situation now confronting us, and because the "churches" and "assemblies" are so largely filled with *their* "converts," explains why they are so unspiritual and worldly.

No, my reader, the Gospel is very, very far from making light of sin. The Gospel shows us how unsparingly God deals with sin. It reveals to us the terrible sword of His justice smiting His beloved Son in order that atonement might be made for the transgressions of His people. So far from the Gospel setting aside the Law, it exhibits the Saviour enduring the curse of it. Calvary supplied the most solemn and awe-inspiring display of *God's hatred of sin* that time or eternity will ever furnish. And do you imagine that the Gospel is magnified or God glorified by going to worldlings and telling them that they "may be saved at this moment by simply accepting Christ as their personal Saviour" *while they are* wedded to their idols and their hearts still in love with sin? If I do so, I tell them a *lie*, pervert the Gospel, insult Christ, and turn the grace of God into lasciviousness.

No doubt some readers are ready to object to our "harsh" and "sarcastic" statements above by asking, When the question was put "What must I do to be saved?" did not an inspired apostle expressly say "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved?" Can we err, then, if *we* tell sinners the same thing today? Have we not Divine warrant for so doing? True, those words are found in Holy Writ, and because they *are*, many superficial and untrained people conclude they are justified in repeating them to all and sundry. But let it be pointed out that Acts 16:31 was not addressed to a promiscuous multitude, but *to a particular individual*, which at once intimates that it is *not* a message to be indiscriminately sounded forth, but rather a special word, to those *whose characters correspond* to the one to whom it was first spoken.

Verses of Scripture must not be wrenched from their setting, but weighed, interpreted, and applied *in accord with their context*; and *that* calls for prayerful consideration, careful meditation, and prolonged study; and it is failure at *this* point which accounts for these shoddy and worthless "messages" of this rush-ahead age. Look at the context of Acts 16:3 1, and what do we find? What was the occasion, and *to whom* was it that the apostle and his companions said "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ?" A sevenfold answer is there furnished, which supplies a striking and complete delineation of the character of those to whom we are warranted in giving this truly evangelistic word. As we briefly name these seven details, let the reader carefully *ponder* them.

First, the man to whom those words were spoken had just witnessed *the miracle-working power of God*. "And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed" (Acts 16:26). Second, in consequence thereof the man was

deeply stirred, even to the point of self-despair: "He drew his sword and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled" (v. 27). Third, he felt *the need of illumination*: "Then he called for a light" (v. 29). Fourth, his *self-complacency was utterly shattered*, for he "came trembling" (v. 29). Fifth, he took his proper place (before God)—in *the dust*, for he "fell down before Paul and Silas" (v. 29). Sixth, he showed respect and *consideration for God's servants*, for he "brought them out" (v. 30). Seventh, then, with a *deep concern for his soul*, he asked, "What must I do to be saved?"

Here, then, is something definite for our guidance—if we are willing to be guided. It was no giddy, careless, unconcerned person, who was exhorted to "simply" believe; but instead, one who gave clear evidence that a mighty work of God had already been wrought within him. He was *an awakened soul* (v. 27). In *his* case there was no need to press upon him his lost condition, for obviously he felt it; nor were the apostles required to urge upon him the duty of repentance, for his entire demeanor betokened his contrition. But to apply the words spoken to *him* unto those who are totally blind to their depraved state and completely dead toward God, would be more foolish than placing a bottle of smelling-salts to the nose of one who had just been dragged unconscious out of the water. Let the critic of this article read carefully through the Acts and see if he can find a single instance of the apostles addressing a promiscuous audience or a company of idolatrous heathen and "simply" telling them to believe in Christ.

Just as the world was not ready for the New Testament before it received the Old; just as the Jews were nor prepared for the ministry of Christ until John the Baptist had gone before Him with his claimant call to repentance, so the unsaved are in no condition today for the Gospel till *the Law* be applied to their hearts, for "by the law

is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20). It is a waste of time to sow seed on ground which has never been ploughed or spaded! To present the vicarious sacrifice of Christ to those whose dominant passion is to take their fill of sin, is to give that which is holy unto the dogs. What the unconverted need to hear about is the character of Him with whom they have to do, His claims upon them, His righteous demands, and the infinite enormity of disregarding Him and going their own way.

*The nature of Christ's salvation is woefully misrepresented by the present-day "evangelist."* He announces a Saviour from Hell, rather than a Saviour from *sin*. And that is why so many are fatally deceived, for there are multitudes who wish to escape the Lake of fire who have no desire to be delivered from their carnality and worldliness. The very first thing said of Him in the N.T. is, "thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people (*not* "from the wrath to come", but) *from their sins*" (Matt. 1:21). Christ is a Saviour for those realizing something of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, who feel the awful burden of it on their conscience, who loathe themselves for it, who long to be freed from its terrible dominion; and a Saviour *for no others*. Were He to "save from Hell" those who were still in love with sin, He would be the Minister of sin, condoning their wickedness and siding with them against God. What an unspeakably horrible and blasphemous thing with which to charge the Holy One!

Should the reader exclaim, *I was not conscious of the heinousness of sin nor bowed down with a sense of my guilt when Christ saved me.* Then we unhesitatingly reply, Either you have never been saved at all, or you were not saved as early as you supposed. True, as the Christian grows in grace he has a clearer realization of what sin is—rebellion against God—and a deeper hatred and sorrow for it; but to

think that one may be saved by Christ whose conscience has never been smitten by the Spirit and whose heart has not been made contrite before God, is to imagine something which has no existence whatever in the realm of fact. "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick" (Matt. 9:12): the only ones who really seek relief from the great Physician are they that are *sick of sin*—*who* long to be delivered from its God-dishonoring works and its soul-defiling pollutions.

Inasmuch, then, as Christ's salvation is a salvation from sin—from the love of it, from its dominion, from its guilt and penalty—then it necessarily follows that the first great task and the chief work of the evangelist is to preach upon SIN: to define what sin (as distinct from crime) really is, to show wherein its infinite enormity consists; to trace out its manifold workings in the heart; to indicate that nothing less than eternal punishment is its desert. Ah, and preaching upon sin—not merely uttering a few platitudes concerning it, but devoting sermon after sermon to explaining what sin is *in the sight of God*—will not make him popular nor draw the crowds, will it? No, it will not, and knowing this, those who love the praise of men more than the approbation of God, and who value their salary above immortal souls, trim their sails accordingly. "But such preaching *will* drive people away!" We answer, better drive people away by faithful preaching than *drive the Holy Spirit away* by unfaithfully pandering to the flesh.

*The terms of Christ's salvation* are erroneously stated by the present-day evangelist. With very rare exceptions he tells his hearers that salvation is by grace and is received as a free gift; that Christ has done everything *for the sinner*, and nothing remains but for him to "believe"—to trust in the infinite merits of His blood. And so widely does this conception now prevail in "orthodox" circles, so frequently



has it been dinned in their ears, so deeply has it taken root in their minds, that for one to now challenge it and denounce it is being so inadequate and one-sided as to be *deceptive and erroneous*, is for him to instantly court the stigma of being a heretic, and to be charged with dishonoring the finished work of Christ by inculcating salvation by works. Yet notwithstanding, the writer is quite prepared to run that risk.

Salvation *is* by grace, by grace *alone*, for a fallen creature cannot possibly do anything to merit God's approval or earn His favour. Nevertheless, Divine grace is not exercised at the expense of holiness, for it never compromises with sin. It is also true that salvation is a free gift, but an *empty* hand must receive it, and not a hand which still tightly grasps the world! But it is *not* true that "Christ has done every thing for the sinner." He did not fill His belly with the husks which the swine eat and find them unable to satisfy. He has not turned his back on the far country, arisen, gone to the Father, and acknowledged his sins—those are acts *which the sinner himself must perform*. True, he will not be saved *for* the performance of them, yet it is equally true that he cannot be saved *without* the performing of them—any more than the prodigal could receive the Father's kiss and ring while he still remained at a guilty distance from Him!

Something more than "believing" is necessary to salvation. A heart that is steeled in rebellion against God cannot savingly believe: it must first be broken. It is written "except ye *repent*, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). Repentance is just as essential as faith, yea, the latter cannot be without the former: "Repented not afterward, *that ye might* believe" (Matt. 21:32). The order is clearly enough laid down by Christ: "Repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15). Repentance is sorrowing for sin. Repentance is a heart-repudiation of sin. Repentance is a heart determination to forsake

sin. And where there is true repentance grace is free to act, for the requirements of holiness are conserved when sin is renounced. Thus, it is the duty of the evangelist to cry "Let the wicked *forsake his way*, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord (from whom he departed in Adam), and he will have mercy upon him" (Isa. 55:7). His task is to call on his hearers to lay down the weapons of their warfare against God, and then to sue for mercy through Christ.

*The way* of salvation is falsely defined. In most instances the modern "evangelist" assures his congregation that *all* any sinner has to do in order to escape Hell and make sure of Heaven is to "receive Christ as his personal Saviour." But such teaching is utterly misleading. No one can receive Christ as his Saviour while he *rejects Him as Lord*. It is true the preacher adds that, the one who accepts Christ should also surrender to Him as Lord, but he at once spoils it by asserting that though the convert fails to do so nevertheless Heaven is sure to him. That is one of the Devil's lies. Only those who are spiritually blind would declare that Christ will save any who despise His authority and refuse His yoke: why, my reader, *that* would not be grace but a *disgrace*—*charging* Christ with placing a premium on lawlessness.

It is in His office *of Lord* that Christ maintains God's honour, subserves His government, enforces His Law; and if the reader will turn to those passages—Luke 1:46, 47; Acts 5:31 (prince and Saviour); 2 Peter 1:11; 2:20; 3:18—where the two titles occur, he will find that it is always "Lord and Saviour," and *not* "Saviour and Lord." Therefore, those who have not bowed to Christ's sceptre and enthroned Him in their hearts and lives, and yet imagine that they are trusting in Him as their Saviour, *are deceived*, and unless God disillusions them they will go down to the everlasting burnings with a lie in their right hand (Isa. 44:20). Christ is "the Author of eternal

salvation unto all them that *obey* Him" (Heb. 5:9), but the attitude of those who submit not to His Lordship is "*we will not have this Man to reign over us*" (Luke 19:14). Pause then, my reader, and honestly face the question: are *you* subject to His will, are you sincerely endeavoring to keep His commandments?

Alas, alas, *God's* "way of salvation" is almost entirely unknown today, the *nature* of Christ's salvation is almost universally misunderstood, and the *terms* of His salvation misrepresented on every hand. The "Gospel" which is now being proclaimed is, in nine cases out of every ten, but *a perversion* of the Truth, and tens of thousands, assured they are bound for Heaven, are now hastening to Hell, as fast as time can take them. Things are far, *far worse* in Christendom than even the "pessimist" and the "alarmist" suppose. We are not a prophet, nor shall we indulge in any speculation of what Biblical prophecy forecasts—wiser men than the writer have often made fools of themselves by so doing. We are frank to say that we know not what God is about to do. Religious conditions were much worse, even in England, one hundred and fifty years ago. But this we greatly fear: unless God is pleased to grant a real revival, it will not be long ere "the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people" (Isa. 60:2), for "Evangelism" constitutes, in our judgment, the most solemn of all the "signs of the times."

What must the people of God do in view of the existing situation? Ephesians 5:11 supplies the Divine answer: "*Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them,*" and everything *opposed* to the light of the Word is "darkness." It is the bounded duty of every Christian to have no dealings with the "evangelistic" monstrosity of the day: to *withhold* all moral and financial support of the same, to attend none of their meetings, to circulate none of their tracts. Those preachers who tell sinners they

may be saved *without* forsaking their idols, *without* repenting, *without* surrendering to the Lordship of Christ are as erroneous and dangerous as others who insist that salvation is by works and that Heaven must be earned by our own efforts.

## **Part II - Saving Faith**

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned (Mark 16:16). These are the words of Christ, the risen Christ, and are the last that He uttered ere He left this earth. None more important were ever spoken to the sons of men. They call for our most diligent attention. They are of the greatest possible consequence, for in them are set forth the terms of eternal happiness or misery; life and death, and the conditions of both. Faith is the principal saving grace, and unbelief the chief damning sin. The law, which threatens death for every sin, has already passed sentence of condemnation upon all, because all have sinned. This sentence is so peremptory that it admits of but one exception—all shall be executed if they believe not.

The condition of life as made known by Christ in Mark 16:16 is double: the principal one, faith; the accessory one, baptism; accessory, we term it, because it is not absolutely necessary to life, as faith is. Proof of this is found in the fact of the omission in the second half of the verse: it is *not* "he that is not baptized shall be damned," but "he that believeth not." Faith is so indispensable that, though one be baptized, yet believeth not, he shall be damned. As we have said above, the sinner is already condemned: the sword of Divine justice is drawn even now and waits only to strike the fatal blow. Nothing can divert it but saving faith in Christ. My reader, continuance in unbelief makes Hell as certain as though you were already in it.

While you remain in unbelief, you are "having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12).

Now if believing be so necessary, and unbelief so dangerous and fatal, it deeply concerns us to *know* what it is *to* believe. It behooves each one of us to make the most diligent and thorough inquiry as to the nature of saving faith. The more so, because all faith does not save; yea, all faith in Christ does not save. Multitudes are deceived upon this vital matter. Thousands of those who sincerely believe that they have received Christ as their personal Saviour and are resting on His finished work, are building upon a foundation of sand. Vast numbers who have not a doubt but that God *has* accepted them in the Beloved, and are eternally secure in Christ, will only be awakened from their pleasant dreamings when the cold hand of death lays hold of them; and then it will be too late. Unspeakably solemn is this. Reader, will *that* be your fate? Others just as sure they were saved as you are, are now in Hell.

## **1. Its Counterfeits**

There are those who have a faith which is so like that which is saving as they themselves may take it to be the very same, and others too may deem it sufficient, yea, even others who have the spirit of discernment. Simon Magus is a case in point. Of him it is written, "Then Simon himself *believed* also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip" (Acts 8:13). Such a faith had he, and so expressed it, that Philip took him to be a genuine Christian, and admitted him to those privileges which are peculiar to them. Yet, a little later, the apostle Peter said to him, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God . . . I

perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity" (Acts 8:21, 23).

A man may believe *all* the truth contained in Scripture so far as he is acquainted with it, and he may be familiar with far more than are many genuine Christians. He may have studied the Bible for a longer time, and so his faith may grasp much which they have not yet reached. As his knowledge may be more extensive, so his faith may be more comprehensive. In this kind of faith he may go as far as the apostle Paul did, when he said, "But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing *all* things which are written in the law and in the prophets" (Acts 24:14). But this is no proof that his faith is saving. An example to the contrary is seen in Agrippa: "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou *believest*" (Acts 26:27).

Call the above a mere historical faith if you will, yet Scripture also teaches that people may possess a faith which is one of the Holy Spirit, and yet which is a *non-saving* one. This faith which we now allude to has two ingredients which neither education nor self-effort can produce: spiritual light and a Divine power moving the mind to assent. Now a man may have both illumination and inclination from heaven, and yet not be regenerated. We have a solemn proof of this in Hebrews 6:4-6. There we read of a company of apostates, concerning whom it is said, "It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance." Yet, of *these* we are told that they were "enlightened," and had "tasted of the heavenly gift," which means, they not only perceived it. but were inclined toward and embraced it; and both, because they were "partakers of the Holy Spirit."

People may have a Divine faith, not only in its originating power, but also in its foundation. The ground of their faith may be the Divine

testimony, upon which they rest with unshaken confidence. They may give credit to what they believe not only because it appears reasonable or even certain, but because they are fully persuaded it is the Word of Him who cannot lie. To believe the Scriptures on the ground of their being *God's Word*, is a Divine faith. Such a faith had the nation of Israel after their wondrous exodus from Egypt and deliverance from the Red Sea. Of them it is recorded "The people feared the Lord, and *believed* the Lord, and his servant Moses" (Ex. 14:31), yet of the great majority of them it is said, "Whose carcasses fell in the wilderness . . . and to whom sware he that they should not enter into His rest" (Heb. 3:17,18).

It is indeed searching and solemn to make a close study of Scripture on this point, and discover how much is said of unsaved people in a way of having faith in the Lord. In Jeremiah 13:11 we find God saying, "For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to *cleave* unto Me the whole house of Israel, and the whole house of Judah, saith the Lord," and to "cleave" unto God is the same as to "trust" Him: see 2 Kings 18:5,6. Yet of that very same generation God said, "This evil people, which refuse to hear My words, which walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing" (Jer. 13:10).

The term "stay" is another word denoting firm trust. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall *stay* upon the Lord" (Isa. 10:20); "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is *stayed* on Thee" (Isa. 26:3). And yet we find a class of whom it is recorded, "They call themselves of the holy city, and *stay themselves upon* the God of Israel" (Isa. 48:2). Who would doubt that *this* was a saving faith! Ah,

let us not be too hasty in jumping to conclusions: of this same people God said, "Thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass" (Isa. 48:4).

Again, the term "lean" is used to denote not only trust, but dependency on the Lord. Of the Spouse it is said, "who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, *leaning upon* her Beloved?" (Song of Sol. 8:5). Can it be possible that *such* an expression as this is applied to those who are *unsaved*? Yes, it is, and by none other than God Himself: "Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that *abhor* judgment, and *pervert all* equity . . . The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they *lean upon the Lord*, and say, "Is not the Lord among us? none evil can come upon us" (Micah 3:9,11). So thousands of carnal and worldly people are leaning upon Christ to uphold them, so that they cannot fall into Hell, and are confident that no "evil" can befall *them*. Yet is their confidence a horrible presumption.

To *rest upon* a Divine promise with implicit confidence, and that in the face of great discouragement and danger, is surely something which we would not expect to find predicated of a people who were unsaved. Ah, truth is stranger than fiction. This very thing is depicted in God's unerring Word. When Sennacherib and his great army besieged the cities of Judah, Hezekiah said, "Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him: with him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God" (2 Chron. 32:7,8); and we are told that "the people *rested themselves upon* the words of Hezekiah." Hezekiah had spoken the words of God, and for the people to rest upon them was to rest on God Himself. Yet, less than fifteen years after, this same people did



"worse than the heathen" (2 Chron. 33:9). Thus, resting upon a promise of God, is not, of itself, any proof of regeneration.

To *rely upon* God, on the ground of His "covenant" was far more than resting upon a Divine promise; yet unregenerate men may do even this. A case in point is found in Abijah king of Judah. It is indeed striking to read and weigh what he said in 2 Chronicles 13 when Jeroboam and his hosts came up against him. First, he reminded all Israel that the Lord God had given the kingdom to David and his sons forever "by a *covenant* of salt" (v. 5). Next, he denounced the sins of his adversary (vv. 6-9). Then he affirmed the Lord to be "our God" and that He was "with him and his people" (vv. 10-12). But Jeroboam heeded not, but forced the battle upon them. "Abijah and his people slew them with a great slaughter" (v. 17), "because they *relied upon* the Lord God of their fathers" (v. 18). Yet of this same Abijah it is said. "he walked in all the sins of his father," etc. (1 Kings 15:3). Unregenerate men may rely upon God, depend upon Christ, rest on His promise, and plead his covenant.

"The people of Nineveh (who were heathen) *believed* God" (Jonah 3:5). This is striking, for the God of Heaven was a stranger to them, and His prophet a man whom they knew not—why then should they trust his message? Moreover, it was not a promise, but a threatening, which they believed. How much easier then is it for a people now living under the Gospel to apply to themselves a promise, than the heathen a terrible threat! "In applying a threatening we are like to meet with more opposition, both from within and from without. From within, for a threatening is like a bitter pill, the bitterness of death is in it; no wonder if that hardly goes down. From without too, for Satan will be ready to raise opposition: he is afraid to have men startled, lest the sense of their misery denounced in the threatening should rouse them up to seek how they may make an escape. He is

more sure of them while they are secure, and will labour to keep them off the threatening, lest it should awaken them from dreams of peace and happiness, while they are sleeping in his very jaws.

"But now, in applying a promise, an unregenerate man ordinarily meets with no opposition. Not from within, for the promise is all sweetness; the promise of pardon and life is the very marrow, the quintessence of the Gospel. No wonder if they be ready to swallow it down greedily. And Satan will be so far from opposing, that he will rather encourage and assist one who has no interest in the promise, *to* apply it; for this he knows will be the way to fix and settle them in their natural condition. A promise misapplied will be *a seal upon the sepulchre*, making them sure in the grave of sin, wherein they lay dead and rotting. Therefore if unregenerate men may apply a threatening, which is in these respects more difficult, as appears they may by the case of the Ninevites, why may they not be apt to apply (appropriate) a Gospel promise when they are not like to meet with difficulty and opposition?" (David Clarkson, 1680, for some time co-pastor with J. Owen; to whom we are indebted for much of the above.)

Another most solemn example of those having faith, but not a saving one, is seen in the stony-ground hearers, of whom Christ said, "which for a while *believe*" (Luke 8:13). Concerning this class the Lord declared that they hear the Word and "with joy receiveth it" (Matt. 13:20). How many such have we met and known: happy souls with radiant faces, exuberant spirits, full of zeal that others too may enter into the bliss which they have found. How difficult it is to distinguish such from genuine Christians—the good-ground hearers. The difference is not apparent; no, it lies *beneath* the surface—they have "not *root* in themselves" (Matt. 13:21): deep digging has to be done to discover this fact! Have you searched yourself narrowly, my reader,

to ascertain whether or no "the root of the matter" (Job 19:28) be in you?

But let us refer now to another case which seems still more incredible. There are those who are willing to take Christ as their Saviour, yet who are most reluctant to submit to Him as their Lord, to be at His command, to be governed by His laws. Yet there are some unregenerate persons who acknowledge Christ as their Lord. Here is the Scripture proof of our assertion: "Many will say to me in that day, '*Lord, Lord* have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?' and then will I profess unto them, 'I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity'" (Matt. 7:22-23). There is a *large* class ("many") who profess subjection to Christ as Lord, and who do many mighty works in His name: thus a people who can even show you their faith by their works, and yet it is not a saving one!

It is impossible to say how far a non-saving faith may go, and how very closely it may resemble that faith which is saving. Saving faith has Christ for its object; so has a non-saving faith (John 2:23, 24). Saving faith is wrought by the Holy Spirit; so is a non-saving faith (Heb. 6:4). Saving faith is produced by the Word of God; so also is a non-saving faith (Matt. 13:20, 21). Saving faith will make a man prepare for the coming of the Lord, so also will a non-saving: of both the foolish and wise virgins it is written, "then *all* those virgins arose, and *trimmed* their lamps" (Matt. 25:7). Saving faith is accompanied with joy: so also is a non-saving faith (Matt. 13:20).

Perhaps some readers are ready to say, all of this is very unsettling, and if really heeded, most distressing. May God in His mercy grant that this article may have just these very effects on many who read it. O if you value your soul, dismiss it not lightly. If there be such a thing

(and there *is*) as a faith in Christ which does not save, then how easy it is to be *deceived* about *my* faith! It is not without reason that the Holy Spirit has so plainly cautioned us at this very point. "A deceived heart hath turned him aside" (Isa. 44:20). "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee" (Obad. 3). "Take heed that *ye* be not deceived" (Luke 21:8). "For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself" (Gal. 6:3). At no point does Satan use his cunning and power more tenaciously, and more successfully, than in getting people to believe that they have a saving faith when they have not.

The Devil deceives more souls by this one thing than by all his other devices put together. Take this present article as an illustration. How many a Satan-blinded soul will read it and then say, It does not apply to *me*; I know that *my* faith is a saving one! It is in this way that the Devil turns aside the sharp point of God's convicting Word, and secures his captives in their unbelief. He works in them a sense of false security, by persuading them that they *are* safe within the ark, and induces them to ignore the threatenings of the Word and appropriate only its comforting promises. He dissuades them from heeding that most salutary exhortation, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; *prove* your own selves" (2 Cor. 13:5). O my reader, heed that word *now*.

In closing this first article we will endeavour to point out some of the particulars in which this non-saving faith is defective, and wherein it comes short of a faith which does save. First, with many it is because they are willing for Christ to save them from Hell, but are not willing for Him to save them from *self*. They want to be delivered from the wrath to come, but they wish to retain their self-will and self-pleasing. But He will not be dictated unto: you must be saved on *His* terms, or not at all. When Christ *saves*, He saves from sin—from its

power and pollution, and therefore from its guilt. And the very essence of sin is the determination to have my *own* way (Isa. 53:6). Where Christ saves, He subdues the spirit of self-will, and implants a genuine, a powerful, a lasting desire and determination to please Him.

Again; many are never saved because they wish to divide Christ; they want to take Him as a Saviour, but are unwilling to subject themselves unto Him as their Lord. Or, if they are prepared to own Him as Lord, it is not as an *absolute* Lord. But this cannot be: Christ will be either Lord of all, or He will not be Lord at all. But the vast majority of professing Christians would have Christ's sovereignty limited at certain points; it must not entrench too far upon the liberty which some worldly lust or carnal interest demands. His peace they covet, but His "yoke" is unwelcome. Of all such Christ will yet say "But those mine enemies, *which would not* that I should *reign over them*, bring hither, and slay them before me" (Luke 19:27).

Again; there are multitudes which are quite ready for Christ to justify them, but not to sanctify. Some kind of, some degree of sanctification, they will tolerate, but to be sanctified *wholly*, their "whole spirit and soul and body" (1 Thess. 5:23), they have no relish for. For their hearts to be sanctified, for pride and covetousness to be subdued, would be too much like the plucking out of a right eye. For the constant mortification of *all* their members, they have no taste. For Christ to come to them as a Refiner, to burn up their lusts, consume their dross, to utterly dissolve their old frame of nature, to melt their souls, so as to make them run in a new mould, they like not. To utterly deny self, and take up their cross daily, is a task from which they shrink with abhorrence.

Again; many are willing for Christ to officiate as their Priest, but not for Him to legislate as their King. Ask them, in a general way, if they are ready to do whatsoever Christ requires of them, and they will answer in the affirmative, emphatically and with confidence. But come to particulars: apply to each one of them those specific commandments and precepts of the Lord which *they* are ignoring, and they will at once cry out "Legalism!" or, "We cannot be perfect in everything." Name nine duties and perhaps they are performing them, but mention a tenth and it at once makes them angry, for you have come too close home to *their* case. Herod heard John gladly and did "many things" (Mark 6:20), but when he referred to Herodias, he touched him to the quick. Many are willing to give up their theatre-going, and card-parties, who refuse to go forth unto Christ outside the camp. Others are willing to go outside the camp, yet refuse to *deny* their fleshly and worldly lusts. Reader, if there is a *reserve* in your obedience, you are on the way to Hell. Our next article will take up the Nature of saving faith.

## **2. Its Nature**

"There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness" (Prov. 30:12). A great many suppose that such a verse as this applies only to those who are trusting in something other than Christ for their acceptance before God, such as people who are relying upon baptism, church membership or their own moral and religious performances. But it is a great mistake to limit such scriptures unto the class just mentioned. Such a verse as "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12) has a far wider application than merely to those who are resting on something of or from themselves

to secure a title to everlasting bliss. Equally wrong is it to imagine that the only *deceived* souls are they who have no faith in Christ.

There is in Christendom today a very large number of people who have been taught that nothing the sinner can do will ever merit the esteem of God. They have been informed, and rightly so, that the highest moral achievements of the natural man are only "filthy rags" in the sight of the thrice holy God. They have heard quoted so often such passages as, "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9), and "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us" (Titus 3:5), that they have become thoroughly convinced that heaven cannot be attained by any doing of the creature. Further, they have been told so often that *Christ alone* can save any sinner that this has become a settled article in their creed, from which neither man nor devil can shake them. So far, so good.

That large company to whom we are now referring have also been taught that while Christ is the only way unto the Father, yet He becomes so only as faith is personally exercised in and upon Him: that He becomes our Saviour only when we believe on Him. During the last twenty-five years, almost the whole emphasis of "gospel preaching" has been thrown upon faith in Christ, and evangelistic efforts have been almost entirely confined to getting people to "believe" on the Lord Jesus. Apparently there has been great success; thousands upon thousands have responded; have, as they suppose, accepted Christ as their own personal Saviour. Yet we wish to point out here that it is as serious an error to suppose that all who "believe in Christ" are saved as it is to conclude that only those are deceived (and are described in Proverbs 14:12, and 30:12) who have no faith in Christ.

No one can read the New Testament attentively without discovering that there is a "believing" in Christ *which does not save*. In John 8:30, we are told, "As He spake these words, many *believed* on Him." Mark carefully, it is not said many believe *in* Him," but "many believed on Him." Nevertheless one does not have to read much farther on in the chapter to discover that those very people were unregenerate and unsaved souls. In verse 44 we find the Lord telling these very "believers" that *they* were of their father the Devil; and in verse 59 we find them taking up stones to cast at Him. This has presented a difficulty unto some; yet it ought not. They created their own difficulty, by supposing that all faith in Christ necessarily saves. It does not. There is a faith in Christ which saves, and there is also a faith in Christ which *does not save*.

"Among the chief rulers also many *believed on* Him." Were, then, those men saved? Many preachers and evangelists, as well as tens of thousands of their blinded dupes, would answer, "Most assuredly." But let us note what immediately follows here: "but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:42, 43). Will any of our readers now say that those men were *saved*? If so, it is clear proof that you are utter strangers to any saving work of God in your own souls. Men who are afraid to hazard for Christ's sake the loss of their worldly positions, temporal interests, personal reputations, or anything else that is dear to them, are yet in their sins—no matter how they may be trusting in Christ's finished work to take them to heaven.

Probably most of our readers have been brought up under the teaching that there are only two classes of people in this world, believers and unbelievers. But such a classification is most misleading, and is utterly erroneous. God's Word divides earth's



inhabitants into *three* classes: "Give none offence, neither to [1] the Jews, nor [2] to the Gentiles, nor [3] to the church of God" (1 Cor. 10:32). It was so during Old Testament times, more noticeably so from the days of Moses onwards. There were first the "gentile" or heathen nations, outside the commonwealth of Israel, which formed by far the largest class. Corresponding with that class today are the countless millions of modern heathen, who are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." Second, there was the nation of Israel, which has to be subdivided into two groups, for, as Romans 9:6, declares, "They are *not* all Israel, which are of Israel." By far the larger portion of the nation of Israel were only the nominal people of God, in outward relation to Him: corresponding with this class is the great mass of professors bearing the name of Christ. Third, there was the spiritual remnant of Israel, whose calling, hope and inheritance were heavenly: corresponding to them this day are the genuine Christians, God's "*little flock*" (Luke 12:32).

The same threefold division among men is plainly discernible throughout John's Gospel. First, there were the hardened leaders of the nation, the scribes and Pharisees, priests and elders. From start to finish they were openly opposed to Christ, and neither His blessed teaching nor His wondrous works had any melting effects upon them. Second, there were the common people who "heard Him gladly" (Mark 12:37), a great many of whom are said to have "believed on Him" (see John 2:23; 7:31; 8:30; 10:42; 12:11), but concerning whom there is nothing to show that they were saved. They were not outwardly opposed to Christ, but they never yielded their hearts to Him. They were impressed by His Divine credentials, yet were easily offended (John 6:66). Third, there was the insignificant handful who "received Him" (John 1:12) into their hearts and lives; received Him as their Lord and Saviour.

The same three classes are clearly discernible (to anointed eyes) in the world today. First, there are the vast multitudes who make no profession at all, who see nothing in Christ that they should desire Him; people who are deaf to every appeal, and who make little attempt to conceal their hatred of the Lord Jesus. Second, there is that large company who are attracted by Christ in a natural way. So far from being openly antagonistic to Him and His cause, they are found among His followers. Having been taught much of the Truth, they "believe in Christ," just as children reared by conscientious Mohammedans believe firmly and devoutly in Mohammed. Having received much of instruction concerning the virtues of Christ's precious blood, they trust in its merits to deliver them from the wrath to come; and yet there is nothing in their daily lives to show that they are *new* creatures in Christ Jesus! Third, there are the "few" (Matt. 7:13, 14) who deny themselves, take up the cross daily, and follow a despised and rejected Christ in the path of loving and unreserved obedience unto God.

Yes, there is a faith in Christ which saves, but there is a faith in Christ which does not save. From this statement probably few will dissent, yet many will be inclined to weaken it by saying that the faith in Christ which does not save is merely a historical faith, or where there is a believing *about* Christ instead of a believing *in* Him. Not so. That there are those who mistake a historical faith about Christ for a saving faith in Christ we do not deny; but what we would here emphasize is the solemn fact that there are *also* some who have *more* than a historical faith, more than a mere head-knowledge about Him, who yet have a faith which comes short of being a quickening and saving one. Not only are there some with this non-saving faith, but today there are vast numbers of such all around us. They are people who furnish the antitypes of those to which we called attention in the last article: who were represented and illustrated in .Old Testament

times by those who believed in, rested upon, leaned upon, relied upon the Lord, but who were, nevertheless, unsaved souls.

What, then, does saving faith consist of? In seeking to answer this question our present object is to supply not only a scriptural definition, but one which, at the same time, differentiates it from a non-saving faith. Nor is this any easy task, for the two things often have much in common: that faith in Christ which does not save has in it more than one element or ingredient of that faith which *does* vitally unite the soul to Him. Those pitfalls which the writer must now seek to avoid are undue discouraging of real saints on the one hand by raising the standard higher than Scripture has raised it, and encouraging unregenerate professors on the other hand by so lowering the standards as to include them. We do not wish to withhold from the people of God their legitimate portion; nor do we want to commit the sin of taking the children's bread and casting it to the dogs. May the Holy Spirit Himself deign to guide us into the Truth.

Much error would be avoided on this subject if due care were taken to frame a scriptural definition of *unbelief*. Again and again in Scripture we find believing and not believing placed in antithesis, and we are afforded much help toward arriving at a correct conception of the real nature of saving faith when we obtain a right understanding of the character of unbelief. It will at once be discovered that saving faith is far more than a hearty assenting unto what God's Word sets before us, when we perceive that unbelief is much more than an error or judgment or a failure to assent unto the Truth. Scripture depicts unbelief as a virulent and violent *principle of opposition to God*. Unbelief has both a passive and active, a negative and positive, side, and therefore the Greek noun is rendered both by "unbelief" (Romans 11:20; Heb. 4:6, 11), and "disobedience"

(Eph. 2:2; 5:6) and the verb by "believed not" (Heb. 3:18; 11:30) and "obey not" (1 Peter 3:1; 4:17). A few concrete examples will make this plainer.

Take first the case of Adam. There was something more than a mere negative failing to believe God's solemn threat that in the day he should eat of the forbidden fruit he would surely die: by one man's *disobedience* many were made sinners (Romans 5:12). Nor did the heinousness of our first parent's sin consist in listening to the lie of the serpent, for 1 Timothy 2:14, expressly declares "Adam *was not* deceived." No, he was determined to have his own way, no matter what God had prohibited and threatened. Thus, the very first case of unbelief in human history consisted not only in negatively failing to take to heart what God has so clearly and so solemnly said, but also in a deliberate defiance of and rebellion against Him.

Take the case of Israel in the wilderness. Concerning them it is said, "They could not enter in [the promised land] because of unbelief" (Heb. 3:19). Now exactly what do those words signify? Do they mean that Canaan was missed by them because of their failure to appropriate the promise of God? Yes, for a "promise" of entering in was "left" them, but it was not "mixed with faith in them that heard it" (Heb. 4:1, 2)—God had declared that the seed of Abraham should inherit that land which flowed with milk and honey, and it was the privilege of that generation which was delivered from Egypt to lay hold of and apply that promise to themselves. But they did not. Yet that is not all! There was something far worse: there was another element in their unbelief which is usually lost sight of nowadays—they were openly disobedient against God. When the spies brought back a sample of the goodly grapes, and Joshua urged them to go up and possess the land, they would not. Accordingly Moses declared, "notwithstanding ye would not go up, but rebelled against the

commandment of the Lord your God" (Deut. 1:26). Ah, there is the positive side of their unbelief; they were self-willed, disobedient, defiant.

Consider now the case of that generation of Israel which was in Palestine when the Lord Jesus appeared among them as "a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God" (Romans 15:8). John 1:11, informs us, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not," which the next verse defines as "they believed" Him not. But is that all? Were they guilty of nothing more than a failure to assent to His teaching and trust to His person? Nay, verily, that was merely the *negative* side of their unbelief. Positively, they "hated" Him (John 15:25), and would "not come to" Him (John 5:40). His holy demands suited not their fleshly desires, and therefore they said, "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14). Thus their unbelief, too, consisted in the spirit of self-will and open defiance, a determination to please themselves at all costs.

Unbelief is not simply an infirmity of fallen human nature, it is a heinous crime. Scripture everywhere attributes it to love of sin, obstinacy of will, hardness of heart. Unbelief has its root in a depraved nature, in a mind which is enmity against God. Love of sin is the immediate cause of unbelief: "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19). "The light of the Gospel is brought unto a place or people: they come so near it as to discover its end or tendency; but as soon as they find that it aims to part them and their sins, they will have no more to do with it. They like not the terms of the Gospel, and so perish in and for their iniquities" (John Owen). If the *Gospel* were more clearly and faithfully preached, fewer would profess to believe it!

Saving faith, then, is the opposite of damning belief. Both issue from the heart that is alienated from God, which is in a state of rebellion

against Him; saving faith from a heart which is reconciled to Him and so has ceased to fight against Him. Thus an essential element or ingredient in saving faith is a yielding to the authority of God, a submitting of myself to His rule. It is very much more than my understanding assenting and my will consenting to the fact that Christ is a Saviour for sinners, and that He stands ready to receive all who trust Him. To be received by Christ I must not only come to Him renouncing all my own righteousness (Romans 10:3), as an empty-handed beggar (Matt. 19:21), but I must also forsake my self-will and rebellion against Him (Psalm 12:11, 12; Prov. 28:13). Should an insurrectionist and seditionist come to an earthly king seeking his sovereign favour and pardon, then, obviously, the very law of his coming to him for forgiveness requires that he should come on his knees, laying aside his hostility. So it is with a sinner who really comes savingly to Christ for pardon; it is against the law of faith to do otherwise.

Saving faith is a genuine *coming to Christ* (Matt. 11:28; John 6:37, etc.). But let us take care that we do not miss the clear and inevitable implication of this term. If I say "I *come* to the U.S.A." then I necessarily indicate that I *left* some other country to get here. Thus it is in "coming" to Christ; something has to be left. Coming to Christ not only involves the abandoning of every false object of confidence, it also includes and entails the forsaking of all other competitors for my heart. "For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now *returned* unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your *souls* (1 Peter 2:25). And what is meant by "ye *were* [note the past tense—they are no longer doing so] as sheep going *astray*"? Isaiah 53:6, tells us: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to *His own* way." Ah, *that* is what must be forsaken before we can truly "come" to Christ—that course of self-will must be abandoned. The prodigal son could not *come* to his Father while he remained in the far country. Dear

reader, if you are still following a course of self-pleasing, you are only deceiving yourself if you think you have come to Christ.

Nor is the brief definition which we have given above of what it means really to "come" to Christ any forced or novel one of our own. In his book *Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ*, John Bunyan wrote: "Coming to Christ is attended with an honest and sincere forsaking all for Him [here he quotes Luke 14:26, 27]. By these and like expressions elsewhere, Christ describeth the true comer: he is one that casteth all behind his back. There are a great many pretended comers to Jesus Christ in the world. They are much like the man you read of in Matthew 21:30, that said to his father's bidding, 'I go, sir: and went not.' When Christ calls by His Gospel, they say, 'I come, Sir,' but they still abide by their pleasure and carnal delights." C. H. Spurgeon, in his sermon on John 6:44, said, "Coming to Christ embraces in it repentance, self-abnegation, and faith in the Lord Jesus, and so sums within itself all those things which are the necessary attendants of those great steps of heart, such as the belief of the truth, earnest prayers to God, the submission of the soul to the precepts of His Gospel." In his sermon on John 6:37, he says, "To come to Christ signifies to turn from sin and to trust in Him. Coming to Christ is a leaving of all false confidences, a renouncing of all love to sin and a looking to Jesus as the solitary pillar of our confidence and hope."

Saving faith consists of the complete surrender of my whole being and life to the claims of God upon me: "But first gave their own selves to the Lord" (2 Cor. 8:5).

It is the unreserved acceptance of Christ as my absolute Lord, bowing to His will and receiving His yoke. Possibly someone may object, Then why are Christians exhorted as they are in Romans 12:1? We

answer, All such exhortations are simply a calling on them to *continue as they began*: "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him" (Col. 2:6). Yes, mark it well that Christ is "received" as *Lord*. Oh, how far, far below the New Testament standard is this modern way of begging sinners to receive Christ as their own personal "Saviour." If the reader will consult his concordance, he will find that in *every passage* where the two titles are found together it is *always* "Lord and Saviour, and never vice versa: see Luke 1:46, 47; 2 Peter 1:11; 2:20; 3:18.

Until the ungodly are sensible of the exceeding sinfulness of their vile course of self-will and self-pleasing, until they are genuinely broken down and penitent over it before God, until they are willing to forsake the world for Christ, until they have resolved to come under His government, for such to depend upon Him for pardon and life is not faith, but blatant presumption, it is but to add insult to injury. And for any such to take His holy name upon their polluted lips and profess to be His followers is the most terribly blasphemy, and comes perilously nigh to committing that sin for which there is no forgiveness. Alas, alas, that modern evangelism is encouraging and producing just such hideous and Christ-dishonouring monstrosities.

Saving faith is a believing on Christ with the *heart*: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness" (Romans 10:9, 10). There is no such thing as a saving faith in Christ where there is no real *love* for Him, and by "real love" we mean a love which is evidenced by *obedience*. Christ acknowledges none to be His friends save those who do whatsoever He commands them (John 15:14). As unbelief is a species of rebellion, so saving faith is a complete subjection to God: Hence we read of "the obedience of faith"



(Romans 16:26). Saving faith is to the soul what health is to the body: it is a mighty principle of operation, full of life, ever working, bringing forth fruit after its own kind.

### **3. Its Difficulty**

Some of our readers will probably be surprised to hear about the *difficulty* of saving faith. On almost every side today it is being taught, even by men styled orthodox and "fundamentalists," that getting saved is an exceedingly simple affair. So long as a person believes John 3:16, and "rests on it," or "accepts Christ as his personal Saviour," that is *all* that is needed. It is often said that there is nothing left for the sinner to do but direct his faith toward the right object: just as a man trusts his bank or a wife her husband, let him exercise the same faculty of faith and trust in Christ. So widely has this idea been received that for anyone now to condemn it is to court being branded as a heretic. Notwithstanding, the writer here unhesitatingly denounces it as a most God-insulting lie of the Devil. A natural faith is sufficient for trusting a human object; but a supernatural faith is required to trust savingly in a Divine object.

While observing the methods employed by present-day "evangelists" and "personal workers," we are made to wonder what place the Holy Spirit has in their thoughts; certainly they entertain the most degrading conception of that miracle of grace which He performs when He moves a human heart to surrender truly unto the Lord Jesus. Alas, in these degenerate times few have any idea that saving faith is a miraculous thing. Instead, it is now almost universally supposed that saving faith is nothing more than an act of the human will, which any man is capable of performing: all that is needed is to bring before a sinner a few verses of Scripture which describe his lost

condition, one or two which contain the word "believe," and then a little persuasion, for him to "accept Christ," and the thing is done. And the awful thing is that so very, very few see anything wrong with this—blind to the fact that such a process is only the Devil's drug to lull thousands into a false peace.

So many have been *argued into* believing that they are saved. In reality, their "faith" sprang from nothing better than a superficial process of logic. Some "personal worker" addresses a man who has no concern whatever for the glory of God and no realization of his terrible hostility against Him. Anxious to "win another soul to Christ," he pulls out his New Testament and reads to him 1 Timothy 1:15. The worker says, "You are a sinner," and his man assenting he is at-once informed, "Then that verse includes *you*." Next John 3:16, is read, and the question is asked, "Whom does the word 'whosoever' include?" The question is repeated until the poor victim answers, "You, me, and everybody." Then he is asked, "Will you believe it; believe that God loves you, that Christ died for you?" If the answer is "Yes," he is at once assured that he is now saved. Ah, my reader, if *this* is how you were "saved," then it was with "*enticing* words of man's wisdom" and *your* "faith" stands only "in the wisdom of men" (1 Cor. 2:4, 5), and not in the power of God!

Multitudes seem to think that it is about as easy for a sinner to purify his heart (James 4:8) as it is to wash his hands; to admit the searching and flesh-withering light of Divine truth into the soul as the morning sun into his room by pulling up the blinds; to turn from idols to God, from the world to Christ, from sin to holiness, as to turn a ship right round by the help of her helm. Oh, my reader, be not deceived on this vital matter; to mortify the lusts of the flesh, to be crucified unto the world, to overcome the Devil, to die daily unto sin and live unto righteousness, to be meek and lowly in heart, trustful

and obedient, pious and patient, faithful and uncompromising, loving and gentle; in a word, to be a Christian, *to be Christ-like*, is a task far, far beyond the poor resources of fallen human nature.

It is because a generation has arisen which is ignorant of the *real nature* of saving faith that they deem it such a simple thing. It is because so very few have any scriptural conception of *the character* of God's great salvation that the delusions referred to above are so widely received. It is because so very few realize *what* they need saving from that the popular "evangel" (?) of the hour is so eagerly accepted. Once it is seen that saving faith consists of very much more than believing that "Christ died for me," that it involves and entails the complete surrender of my heart and life to His government, few will imagine that they possess it. Once it is seen that God's salvation is not only a legal but also an experimental thing, that it not only justifies but regenerates and sanctifies, fewer will suppose they are its participants. Once it is seen that Christ came here to save His people not only from hell, but from sin, from self-will and self-pleasing, then fewer will desire His salvation.

The Lord Jesus did not teach that saving faith was a simple matter. Far from it. Instead of declaring that the saving of the soul was an easy thing, which many would participate in, He said: "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:14). The only path which leads to heaven is a hard and laborious one. "We must through *much tribulation* enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22): an entrance into that path calls for the utmost endeavours of *soul*—"Strive to enter in at the strait gate" (Luke 13:24).

After the young ruler had departed from Christ, sorrowing, the Lord turned to His disciples and said, "How *hard* is it for them that trust

in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a *rich* man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:24, 25). What place is given to such a passage as this in the theology (if "theology" it is fit to be called) which is being taught in the "Bible institutes" to those seeking to qualify for evangelistic and personal work? None at all. According to their views, it is just as easy for a millionaire to be saved as it is for a pauper, since *all* that either has to do is "rest on the finished work of Christ." But those who are wallowing in wealth think not of God: "According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart exalted; therefore have they forgotten Me!" (Hosea 13:6).

When the disciples heard these words of Christ's "they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?" Had our moderns heard them, they had soon set their fears at rest, and assured them that anybody and everybody could be saved if they believed on the Lord Jesus. But not so did Christ reassure them. Instead, He immediately added, "With men it is *impossible*, but not with God" (Mark 10:27). Of himself, the fallen sinner can no more repent evangelically, believe in Christ savingly, come to Him effectually, than he can create a world. "With men it is impossible" rules out of court all special pleading for the power of man's will. Nothing but a *miracle of grace* can lead to the saving of any sinner.

And *why* is it impossible for the natural man to exercise saving faith? Let the answer be drawn from the case of this young ruler. He departed from Christ sorrowing, "for he had great possessions." He was wrapped up in them. They were his idols. His heart was chained to the things of earth. The demands of Christ were too exacting: to part with all and follow Him was more than flesh and blood could endure. Reader, what are *your* idols? To him the Lord said, "One

thing thou lackest." What was it? A yielding to the imperative requirements of Christ; a heart surrendered to God. When the soul is stuffed with the dregs of earth, there is no room for the impressions of heaven. When a man is satisfied with carnal riches, he has no desire for spiritual riches.

The same sad truth is brought out again in Christ's parable of the "great supper." The feast of Divine grace is spread, and through the Gospel a general call is given for men to come and partake of it. And what is the response? This: "They all with one consent began to make excuse" (Luke 14:18). And why should they? Because they were more interested in other things. Their hearts were set upon land (verse 18), oxen (verse 19), domestic comforts (verse 20). People are willing to "accept Christ" on their own terms, but not on His. What His terms *are* is made known in the same chapter: giving Him the supreme place in our affections (verse 26), the crucifixion of self (verse 27), the abandonment of every idol (verse 33). Therefore did He ask, "which of you, intending to build a tower [figure of a hard task of setting the affections on things *above*], sitteth not down first, and *counteth the cost*?" (Luke 14:28).

"How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" (John 5:44). Do these words picture the exercise of saving faith as the simple matter which so many deem it? The word "honour" here signifies approbation or praise. While those Jews were making it their chief aim to win and hold the good opinion of each other, and were indifferent to the approval of God, it was impossible that they should come to Christ. It is the same now: "Whomsoever therefore will be [desires and is determined to be] a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). To come to Christ effectually, to believe on Him savingly, involves turning our backs upon the world, alienating ourselves from

the esteem of our godless (or religious) fellows, and identifying ourselves with the despised and rejected One. It involves bowing to His yoke, surrendering to His lordship, and living henceforth for *His* glory. And *that* is no small task.

"*Labour* not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you" (John 6:27). Does this language imply that the obtaining of eternal life is a simple matter? It does not; far from it. It denotes that a man must be in deadly earnest, subordinating all other interests in his quest for it, and be prepared to put forth strenuous endeavours and overcome formidable difficulties. Then does this verse teach salvation by works, by self-efforts? No, and yes. No in the sense that anything we do can *merit* salvation—eternal life is a "gift." Yes in the sense that wholehearted seeking after salvation and a diligent use of the prescribed means of grace are demanded of us. Nowhere in Scripture is there any promise to the dilatory. (Compare Hebrews 4:11).

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him" (John 6:44). Plainly does this language give the lie to the popular theory of the day, that it lies within the power of man's will to be saved any time he chooses to be. Flatly does this verse contradict the flesh-pleasing and creature-honouring idea that anyone can receive Christ as his Saviour the *moment* he decides to do so. The reason why the natural man cannot come to Christ till the Father "draw" him is because he is the bondslave of sin (John 8:34), serving divers lusts (Titus 3:3), the captive of the Devil (2 Tim. 2:26). Almighty power must break his chains and open the prison doors (Luke 4:18) ere he *can* come to Christ. Can one who loves darkness and hates the light reverse the process? No, no more than a man who has a diseased foot or poisoned hand can heal it by an effort of will.

Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? No more can they do good who are accustomed to do evil (Jer. 13:23).

"And if the righteous with difficulty is saved, the ungodly and sinner where shall they appear?" (1 Peter 4: 18, Bag. Int.). Matthew Henry said, "It is as much as the best can do to secure the salvation of their souls; there are so many sufferings, temptations, and difficulties to be overcome; so many sins to be mortified; the gate is so strait, and the way so narrow, that it is as much as the righteous man can do to be saved. Let the absolute necessity of salvation balance the difficulty of it. Consider your difficulties are the greatest at first: God offers His grace and help; the contest will not last long. Be but faithful to the death and God will give you the crown of life (Rev. 2:10)." So also John Lillie, "After all that God has done by sending His Son, and the Son by the Holy Spirit, it is only with difficulty, exceeding difficulty, that the work of saving the righteous advances to its consummation. The entrance into the kingdom lies through much tribulation—through fightings without and fears within—through the world's seductions, and its frowns—through the utter weakness and continual failures of the flesh, and the many fiery darts of Satan."

Here then are the reasons why saving faith is so difficult to put forth. (1) By nature men are entirely ignorant of its real character, and therefore are easily deceived by Satan's plausible substitutes for it. But even when they are scripturally informed thereon, they either sorrowfully turn their backs on Christ, as did the rich young ruler when he learned His terms of discipleship, or they hypocritically profess what they do not possess. (2) The power of self-love reigns supreme within, and to *deny* self is too great a demand upon the unregenerate. (3) The love of the world and the approbation of their friends stands in the way of a complete surrender to Christ. (4) The demands of God that He should be loved with *all* the heart and that

we should be "holy in all manner of conversation" (1 Peter 1:15) repels the carnal. (5) Bearing the reproach of Christ, being hated by the religious world (John 15:18), suffering persecution for righteousness' sake, is something which mere flesh and blood shrinks from. (6) The humbling of ourselves before God, penitently confessing *all* our self-will, is something which an unbroken heart revolts against. (7) To fight the good fight of faith (1 Tim. 6:12) and overcome the Devil (1 John 2:13) is too arduous an undertaking for those who love their own ease.

Multitudes desire to be saved from hell (the natural instinct of self-preservation) who are quite unwilling to be saved from *sin*. Yes, there are tens of thousands who have been deluded into thinking that they have "accepted Christ as their Saviour," whose lives show plainly that they *reject* Him as their Lord. For a sinner to obtain the pardon of God he must "*forsake* his way" (Isaiah 55:7). No man can turn *to God* until he turns from *idols* (1 Thess. 1:9). Thus insisted the Lord Jesus, "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:33).

The terrible thing is that so many preachers today, under the pretence of magnifying the grace of God, have represented Christ as the Minister of *sin*; as One who has, through His atoning sacrifice, procured an indulgence for men to continue gratifying their fleshly and worldly lusts. Provided a man professes to believe in the virgin birth and vicarious death of Christ, and claims to be resting upon Him alone for salvation, he may pass for a real Christian almost anywhere today, even though his daily life may be no different from that of the moral worldling who makes no profession at all. The Devil is chloroforming thousands into hell by this very delusion. The Lord Jesus asks, "Why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and *do not* the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46); and insists, "Not every one that saith unto Me,



Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that *doeth* the will of My Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:2 1).

The hardest task before most of us is not to learn, but to unlearn. Many of God's own children have drunk so deeply of the sweetened poison of Satan that it is by no means easy to get it out of their systems; and while it remains in them it stupefies their understanding. So much is this the case that the first time one of them reads an article like this it is apt to strike him as an open attack upon the sufficiency of Christ's finished 'work, as though we were here teaching that the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb needed to be plussed by something from the creature. Not so. Nothing but, the merits of Immanuel can ever give any sinner title to stand before the ineffably holy God. But what we are now contending for is, *When* does God impute to any sinner the righteousness of Christ? Certainly not while he is opposed to Him.

Moreover, we do not honour the work of Christ until we correctly define *what* that work was designed to effect. The Lord of glory did not come here and die to procure the pardon of our sins, and take us to heaven while our hearts still remain cleaving to the earth. No, He came here to prepare a way to heaven (John 10:4; 14:4; Heb. 10:20-22; 1 Peter 2:21), to call men into that way, that by His precepts and promises, His example and spirit, He might form and fashion their souls to that glorious state, and make them willing to abandon all things for it. He lived and died so that His Spirit should come and quicken the dead sinners into newness of life, make them new creatures in Himself, and cause them to sojourn in this world as those who are not of it, as those whose hearts have already departed from it. Christ did not come here to render a change of heart, repentance, faith, personal holiness, loving God supremely and

obeying Him unreservedly, as unnecessary, or salvation as possible *without* them. How passing strange that any suppose He did!

Ah, my reader, it becomes a searching test for each of our hearts to face honestly the question, Is *this* what I really long for? As Bunyan asked (in his *The Jerusalem Sinner Saved*), "What are thy desires? Wouldest thou be saved? Wouldest thou be saved with a *thorough* salvation? Wouldest thou be saved from guilt, and from filth too? Wouldest thou be the *servant* of the Saviour? Art thou indeed weary of the service of thy old master, the Devil, sin, and the world? And have these desires put thy soul to flight? Dost thou fly to Him that is a Saviour from the wrath to come, for life? If these be thy desires, and if they be' unfeigned, fear not."

"Many people think that when we preach salvation, we mean salvation from going to hell. We do mean that, but we mean a great deal more: we preach salvation from *sin*; we say that Christ is able to save a man; and we mean by that that He is able to save him from sin and to make him holy; to make him a new man. No person has any right to say 'I am saved,' while he continues in sin as he did before. How can you be saved from sin while you are living in it? A man that is drowning cannot say he is saved from the water while he is sinking in it; a man that is frost-bitten cannot say, with any truth, that he is saved from the cold while he is stiffened in the wintry blast. No, man, Christ did not come to save thee *in* thy sins, but to save thee *from* thy sins, not to make the disease so that it should not kill thee, but to let it remain in itself mortal, and, nevertheless, to remove it from thee, and thee from it. Christ Jesus came then to heal us from the plague of sin, to touch us with His hand and say 'I will, be thou clean'" (C. H. Spurgeon, on Matt. 9:12).

They who do not yearn after holiness of heart and righteousness of life are only deceiving themselves when they suppose they desire to be saved by Christ. The plain fact is, all that is wanted by so many today is merely a soothing portion of their conscience, which will enable them to go on comfortably in a course of self-pleasing which will permit them to continue their worldly ways without the fear of eternal punishment. Human nature is the same the world over; that wretched instinct which causes multitudes to believe that paying a papist priest a few dollars procures forgiveness of all their past sins, and an "indulgence" for future ones, moves other multitudes to devour greedily the lie that, with an unbroken and impenitent heart, by a mere act of the will, they may "believe in Christ," and thereby obtain not only God's pardon for past sins but an "eternal security," no matter what they do or do not do in the future.

Oh, my reader, be not deceived; God frees none from the condemnation but those "which are *in Christ Jesus*" (Romans 8:1), and "if any man be in Christ, he is a *new creature*: old things are [*not* "ought to be"] passed away; behold, *all things are* become new (2 Cor. 5:17). Saving faith makes a sinner come to Christ with a real soul-thirst, that he may drink of the living water, even of His sanctifying Spirit (John 7:38, 39). To love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, to pray for them that despitefully use us, is very far from being easy, yet *this* is only one part of the task which Christ assigns unto those who would be *His* disciples. *He* acted thus, and He has left us an example that we should follow His steps. And *His* "salvation," in its *present* application, consists of revealing to our hearts the imperative need for our measuring up to His high and holy standard, with a realization of our own utter powerlessness so to do; and creating within us an intense hunger and thirst after such personal righteousness, and a daily turning unto Him and trustful supplication for needed grace and strength.

#### **4. Its Communication**

From the human viewpoint, things are now in a bad state in the world. But from the spiritual viewpoint things are in a far worse state in the religious realm. Sad is it to see the anti-Christian cults flourishing on every side; but far more grievous is it, for those who are taught of God, to discover that much of the so-called "Gospel" which is now being preached in many "fundamentalist churches" and "gospel halls" is but a satanic delusion. The Devil knows that his captives are quite secure while the grace of God and the finished work of Christ are "faithfully" proclaimed to them, so long as the only way in which sinners receive the saving virtues of the Atonement is unfaithfully concealed. While God's peremptory and unchanging demand for repentance is left out, while Christ's own terms of discipleship (i.e. how to become a Christian: Acts 11:26) in Luke 14:26, 27, 33, are withheld, and while saving faith is frittered down to a mere act of the will, blind laymen will continue to be led by blind preachers, only for both to fall into the ditch.

Things are far, far worse even in the "orthodox" sections of Christendom than the majority of God's own children are aware. Things are rotten even at the very foundation, for with very rare exceptions God's way of salvation is no longer being taught. Tens of thousands are "ever learning" points in prophecy, the meaning of the types, the significance of the numerals, how to divide the "dispensations," who are, nevertheless, "never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 3:7) of salvation itself—unable because unwilling to pay the price (Prov. 23:23), which is a full surrender to God Himself. As far as the writer understands the present situation, it seems to him that what is needed today is to

press upon the serious attention of professing Christians such questions as: When is it that God applies to a sinner the virtues of Christ's finished work? What is it that I am called upon to do in order to appropriate myself to the efficacy of Christ's atonement? What is it that gives me an actual entrance into the good of His redemption?

The questions formulated above are only three different ways of framing the same inquiry. Now the popular answer which is being returned to them is, "Nothing more is required from any sinner than that he simply believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." In the preceding articles of this series we have sought to show that such a reply is misleading, inadequate, faulty, and that because it ignores all the other scriptures which set forth what God requires from the sinner: it leaves out of account God's demand for repentance (with all that that involves and includes), and Christ's clearly defined terms of discipleship in Luke 14. To restrict ourselves to any one scripture term of a subject, or set of passages using that term, results in an erroneous conception of it. They who limit their ideas of regeneration to the one figure of the new birth lapse into serious error upon it. So they who limit their thoughts on how to be saved to the one word "believe" are easily misled. Diligent care needs to be taken to collect all that Scripture teaches on any subject if we are to have a properly balanced and accurate view thereof.

To be more specific. In Romans 10:13, we read, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Now does this mean that all who have, with their lips, cried unto the Lord, who have in the name of Christ besought God to have mercy on them, have been saved by Him? They who reply in the affirmative are only deceived by the mere sound of words, as the deluded Romanist is when he contends for Christ's bodily presence in the bread, because He said "this is My body." And how are we to show the papist is misled? Why,

by comparing Scripture with Scripture. So here. The writer well remembers being on a ship in a terrible storm off the coast of Newfoundland. All the hatches were battened down, and for three days no passenger was allowed on the decks. Reports from the stewards were disquieting. Strong men paled. As the winds increased and the ship rolled worse and worse, scores of men and women were heard calling upon the name of the Lord. Did He save them? A day or two later, when the weather changed, those same men and women were drinking, cursing, card-playing!

Perhaps someone asks, "But does not Romans 10:13 say what it means?" Certainly it does, but no verse of Scripture yields its meaning to lazy people. Christ Himself tells us that there are many who call Him "Lord" to whom He will say "Depart from Me" (Matt. 7:22, 23). Then what is to be done with Romans 10:13? Why, diligently compare it with all other passages which make known what the sinner must do ere God will save him. If nothing more than the fear of death or horror of hell prompts the sinner to call upon the Lord, he might just as well call upon the trees. The Almighty is not at the beck and call of any rebel who, when he is terrified, sues for mercy. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination" (Prov. 28:9)! "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and *forsaketh them* shall have mercy" (Prov. 28: 13). The only "calling upon His name" which the Lord heeds is that which issues from a broken, penitent, sin-hating heart, which thirsts after holiness.

The same principle applies to Acts 16:31, and all similar texts: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." To a casual reader, that seems a very simple matter, yet a closer pondering of those words should discover that more is involved than at first sight appears. Note that the apostles did not merely tell the

Philippian jailer to "rest on the finished work of Christ," or "trust in His atoning sacrifice." Instead, it was a Person that was set before him. Again, it was not simply "Believe on the Saviour," but "the Lord Jesus Christ." John 1:12 shows plainly that to "believe" is to "receive," and to be saved a sinner must receive One who is not only Saviour but "Lord," yea, who must be received as "Lord" before He becomes the Saviour of that person. And to receive "Christ Jesus the Lord" (Col. 2:6) necessarily involves the renouncing of our own sinful lordship, the throwing down of the weapons of our warfare against Him, and the submitting to His yoke and rule. And before any human rebel is brought to do that, a miracle of Divine grace has to be wrought within him. And this brings us more immediately to the present aspect of our theme.

Saving faith is not a native product of the human heart, but a spiritual grace communicated from on high. "It is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). It is "of the operation of God" (Col. 2:12). It is by "the power of God" (1 Cor. 2:5). A most remarkable passage on this subject is found in Ephesians 1:16-20. There we find the apostle Paul praying that the saints should have the eyes of their understanding enlightened, that they might know "what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead." Not the strong power of God, or the greatness of it, but the "exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward." Note too the standard of comparison: we "believe according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead."

God put forth His "Mighty power" when He resurrected Christ. There was a mighty power seeking to hinder, even Satan and all his hosts. There was a mighty difficulty to be overcome, even the vanquishing

of the grace. There was a mighty result to be achieved, even the bringing to life of One who was dead. None but God Himself was equal to a miracle so stupendous. Strictly analogous is that miracle of grace which issues in saving faith. The Devil employs all his arts and power to retain his captive. The sinner is dead in trespasses and sins, and can no more quicken himself than he can create a world. His heart is bound fast with the grave-clothes of worldly and fleshly lusts, and only Omnipotence can raise it into communion with God. Well may every true servant of the Lord emulate the apostle Paul and pray earnestly that God will enlighten His people concerning this wonder of wonders, so that instead of attributing their faith to an exercise of their own will they may freely ascribe all the honour and glory unto Him to whom alone it justly belongs.

If only the professing Christians of this untoward generation could begin to obtain some adequate conception of the real condition of every man by nature, they might be less inclined to cavil against the teaching that nothing short of a miracle of grace can ever qualify any sinner to believe unto the saving of his soul. If they could only see that the heart's attitude towards God of the most refined and moral is not a whit different from that of the most vulgar and vicious; that he who is most kind and benevolent toward his fellow creatures has no more real desire after Christ than has the most selfish and brutal; then it would be evident that Divine power must operate to change the heart. Divine power was needed to create, but much greater power is required to regenerate a soul: creation is only the bringing of something Out of nothing, but regeneration is the transforming not only of an unlovely object, but of one that resists with all its might the gracious designs of the heavenly Potter.

It is not simply that the Holy Spirit approaches a heart in which there is no love for God, but He finds it filled with enmity against Him, and



incapable of being subject to His law (Romans 8:7). True, the individual himself maybe quite unconscious of this terrible fact, yea, ready indignantly to deny it. But that is easily accounted for. If he has heard little or nothing but the love, the grace, the mercy, the goodness of God, it would indeed be surprising if he hated Him. But once the God of Scripture is made known to him in the power of the Spirit, once he is made to realize that God is the Governor of this world, demanding unqualified submission to all His laws; that He is inflexibly just, and "will by no means clear the guilty"; that He is sovereign, and loves whom He pleases and hates whom He wills; that so far from being an easy-going, indulgent Creator, who winks at the follies of His creatures, He is ineffably holy, so that His righteous wrath burns against all the workers of iniquity—then will people be conscious of indwelling enmity surging up against Him. And nothing but the almighty power of the Spirit can overcome that enmity and bring any rebel truly to love the God of Holy Writ.

Rightly did Thomas Goodwin the Puritan say, "A wolf will sooner marry a lamb, or a lamb a wolf, than ever a carnal heart be subject to the law of God, which was the ancient husband of it (Romans 7:6). It is the turning of one contrary into another. To turn water into wine, there is some kind of symbolizing, yet that is a miracle. But to turn a wolf into a lamb, to turn fire into water, is a yet greater miracle. Between nothing and something there is an infinite distance, but between sin and grace there is a greater distance than can be between nothing and the highest angel in heaven.. . To. destroy the power of sin in a man's soul is as great a work as to take away the guilt of sin. It is easier to say to a blind man, 'See,' and to a lame man, 'Walk,' than to say to a man that lies under the power of sin, 'Live, be holy,' for there is that that will not be subject."

In 2 Corinthians 10:4, the apostle describes the character of that work in which the true servants of Christ are engaged. It is a conflict with the forces of Satan. The weapons of their warfare are "not carnal"—as well might modern soldiers go forth equipped with only wooden swords and paper shields as preachers think to liberate the Devil's captives by means of human leaning, worldly methods, touching anecdotes, attractive singing, and so on. No, "their weapons" are the "word of God" and "all prayer" (Eph. 6:17, 18); and even these are only mighty "through God," that is by His direct and special blessing of them to particular souls. In what follows, a description is given of where the might of God is seen, namely in the powerful opposition which it meets with and vanquishes; "to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

Herein lies the power of God when He is pleased thus to put it forth in the saving of a sinner. The heart of that sinner is fortified against Him: it is steeled against His holy demands, His righteous claims. It is determined not to submit to His law, nor to abandon those idols which it prohibits. That haughty rebel has made up his mind that he will not turn away from the delights of this world and the pleasure of sin and give God the supreme place in his affections. But God has determined to overcome his sinful opposition, and transform him into a loving and loyal subject. The figure here used is that of a besieged town—the heart. Its "strongholds"—the reigning power of fleshly and worldly lusts—are "pulled down"; self-will is broken, pride is subdued, and the defiant rebel is made a willing captive to "the obedience of Christ"! "Mighty through God" points to this miracle of grace.

There is one other detail pointed by the analogy drawn in Ephesians 1:19, 20, which exemplifies the mighty power of God, namely "and set Him [Christ] at His own right hand in the heavenly places." The members of Christ's mystical body are predestinated to be conformed to the glorious image of their glorified Head: in measure, now; perfectly, in the day to come. The ascension of Christ was contrary to nature, being opposed by the law of gravitation. But the power of God overcame that opposition, and translated His resurrected Son bodily into heaven. In like manner, His grace produces in His people that which is contrary to nature, overcoming the opposition of the flesh, and drawing their hearts unto things above. How we would marvel if we saw a man extend his arms and suddenly leave the earth, soaring upward into the sky. Yet still more wonderful is it when we behold the power of the Spirit causing a sinful creature to rise above temptations, worldliness and sin, and breathe the atmosphere of heaven; when a human soul is made to disdain the things of earth and find its satisfaction in things above.

The historical order in connection with the Head in Ephesians 1:19, 20, is also the experimental order with regard to the members of His body. Before setting His Son at His own right hand in the heavenlies, God raised Him from the dead; so before the Holy Spirit fixes the heart of a sinner upon Christ He first quickens him into newness of life. There must be life before there can be sight, believing, or good works performed. One who is physically dead is incapable of doing anything; so he who is spiritually dead is incapable of any spiritual exercises. First the giving of life unto dead Lazarus, then the removing of the grave-clothes which bound him hand and foot. God must regenerate before there can be a "new creature in Christ Jesus." The washing of a child follows its birth.

When spiritual life has been communicated to the soul, that individual is now able to see things in their true colours. In God's light he sees light (Psalm 36:9). He is now given to perceive (by the Holy Spirit) what a lifelong rebel he has been against his Creator and Benefactor: that instead of making God's will his rule he has gone his own way; that instead of having before him God's glory he has sought only to please and gratify self. Even though he may have been preserved from all the grosser outward forms of wickedness, he now recognizes that he is a spiritual leper, a vile and polluted creature, utterly unfit to draw near, still less to dwell with, Him who is ineffably holy; and such an apprehension makes him feel that his case is hopeless.

There is a vast difference between hearing or reading of what conviction of sin is and being made to feel it in the depths of one's own soul. Multitudes are acquainted with the theory who are total strangers to the experience of it: One may read of the sad effects of war, and may agree that they are indeed dreadful; but when the enemy is at one's own door, plundering his goods, firing his home, slaying his dear ones, he is far more sensible of the miseries of war than ever he was (or could be) previously. So an unbeliever may hear of what a dreadful state the sinner is in before God, and how terrible will be the sufferings of hell; but when the Spirit brings home to his own heart its actual condition, and makes him feel the heat of God's wrath in his own conscience, he is ready to sink with dismay and despair. Reader, do you know anything of such an experience?

Only thus is any soul prepared truly to appreciate Christ. They that are whole need not a physician. The one who has been savingly convicted is made to realize that none but the Lord Jesus can heal one so desperately diseased by sin; that He alone can impart that spiritual health (holiness) which will enable him to run in the way of

God's commandments; that nothing but His precious blood can atone for the sins of the past and naught but His all-sufficient grace can meet the pressing needs of the present and future. Thus there must be discerning faith before there is coming faith. The Father "draws" to the Son (John 6:44) by imparting to the mind a deep realization of our desperate need of Christ, by giving to the heart a real sense of the inestimable worth of Him, and by causing the will to receive Him on His own terms.

## **5. Its Evidences**

The great majority of those who read this will, doubtless, be they who profess to be in possession of a saving faith. To all such we would put the questions. Where is your proof? What effects has it produced in you? A tree is known by its fruits, and a fountain by the waters which issue from it; so the nature of your faith may be ascertained by a careful examination of what it is bringing forth. We say "*a careful examination*," for as all fruit is not fit for eating nor all water for drinking, so all works are not the effects of a faith which saves. Reformation is not regeneration, and a changed life does not always indicate a changed heart. Have you been saved from a dislike of God's commandments and a disrelish of His holiness? Have you been saved from pride, covetousness, murmuring? Have you been delivered from the love of this world, from the fear of man, from the reigning power of every sin?

The heart of fallen man is thoroughly depraved, its thoughts and imaginations being only evil continually (Gen. 6:5). It is full of corrupt desires and affections, which exert themselves and influence man in all he does. Now the Gospel comes into direct opposition with these selfish lusts and corrupt affections, both in the root and in the

fruit of them (Titus 2:11, 12). There is no greater duty that the Gospel urges upon our souls than the mortifying and destroying of them, and this indispensably, if we intend to be made partakers of its promises (Romans 8:13; Col. 3:5, 8). Hence the first real work of faith is to cleanse the soul from these pollutions, and therefore we read, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24). Mark well, it is not that they "ought to" do so, but that they have *actually*, in some measure or degree.

It is one thing really to *think* we believe a thing, it is quite another actually to do so. So fickle is the human heart that even in natural things men know not their own minds. In temporal affairs what a man really believes is best ascertained by his practice. Suppose I meet a traveler in a narrow gorge and tell him that just ahead is an impassable river, and that the bridge across it is rotten: if he declines to turn back, am I not warranted in concluding that he does not believe me? Or if a physician tells me a certain disease holds me in its grip, and that in a short time it will prove fatal if I do not use a prescribed remedy which is sure to heal, would he not be justified in inferring that I did not trust his judgment were he to see me not only ignoring his directions but following a contrary course? Likewise, to believe there is a hell and yet run unto it; to believe that sin continued in will damn and yet live in it—to what purpose is it to boast of *such* a faith?

Now, from what was before us in the above section, it should be plain beyond all room for doubt that when God imparts saving faith to a soul radical and real effects will follow. One cannot be raised from the dead without there being a consequent walking in newness of life. One cannot be the subject of a miracle of grace being wrought in the heart without a noticeable change being apparent to all who know him. Where a supernatural root has been implanted, supernatural

fruit must issue therefrom. Not that sinless perfection is attained in the life, nor that the evil principle, the flesh, is eradicated from our beings, or even purified. Nevertheless, there is now a yearning after perfection, there is a spirit resisting the flesh, there is a striving against sin. And more, there is a growing in grace, and a *pressing forward* along the "narrow way" which leads to heaven.

One serious error so widely propagated today in "orthodox" circles, and which is responsible for so many souls being deceived, is the seemingly Christ-honoring doctrine that it is "His blood which *alone* saves any sinner." Ah, Satan is very clever; he knows exactly what bait to use for every place in which he fishes. Many a company would indignantly resent a preacher's telling them that getting baptized and eating the Lord's supper were God's appointed means for saving the soul; yet most of these same people will readily accept the lie that it is only by the blood of Christ we can be saved. That is true Godwards, but it is not true manwards. The work of the Spirit in us is *equally* essential as the work of Christ for us. Let the reader carefully ponder the whole of Titus 3:5.

Salvation is twofold: it is both legal and experimental, and consists of justification and sanctification. Moreover, I owe my salvation not only to the Son but to all three persons in the Godhead. Alas, how little is this realized today, and how little is it preached. First and primarily I owe my salvation to God the Father, who ordained and planned it, and who chose me unto salvation (2 Thess. 2:13). In Titus 2:4, it is the Father who is denominated "God our Saviour." Secondly and meritoriously I owe my salvation to the obedience and sacrifice of God the Son Incarnate, who performed as my Sponsor everything which the law required, and satisfied all its demands upon me. Thirdly and efficaciously I owe my salvation to the regenerating, sanctifying and preserving operations of the Spirit: note that His

work is made just as prominent in Luke 15:8-10, as is the Shepherd's in Luke 15:4-7! As Titus 3:5, so plainly affirms, God "saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit"; and it is the presence of *His* "fruit" in my heart and life which furnishes the immediate evidence of my salvation.

"With the heart man believeth unto righteousness" (Romans 10:10). Thus it is the heart which we must first examine in order to discover evidences of the presence of a saving faith. And first, God's Word speaks of "*purifying* their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9). Of old the Lord said, "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved" (Jer. 4:14). A heart that is being purified by faith (cf. 1 Peter 1:22), is one fixed upon a pure Object. It drinks from a pure Fountain, delights in a pure Law (Romans 7:22), and looks forward to spending eternity with a pure Saviour (1 John 3:3). It loathes all that is filthy—spiritually as well as morally—yea, hates the very garment spotted by the flesh (Jude 23). Contrariwise, it loves all that is holy, lovely and Christlike.

"The pure in heart shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). Heart purity is absolutely essential to fit us for dwelling in that place into which there shall in no wise enter anything "that defileth, neither worketh abomination" (Rev. 21:27). Perhaps a little fuller definition is called for. Purifying the heart by faith consists of, first, the purifying of the understanding, by the shining in of Divine light, so as to cleanse it from error. Second, the purifying of the conscience, so as to cleanse it from guilt. Third, the purifying of the will, so as to cleanse it from self-will and self-seeking. Fourth, the purifying of the affections, so as to cleanse them from the love of all that is evil. In Scripture the "heart" includes all these four faculties. A deliberate purpose to continue in any one sin cannot consist with a pure heart.



Again, saving faith is always evidenced by a *humble* heart. Faith lays the soul low, for it discovers its own vileness, emptiness, impotency. It realizes its former sinfulness and present unworthiness. It is conscious of its weaknesses and wants, its carnality and corruptions. Nothing more exalts Christ than faith, and nothing more debases a man. In order to magnify the riches of His grace, God has selected faith as the fittest instrument, and this because it is that which causes us to go entirely out from ourselves unto Him. Faith, realizing we are nothing but sin and wretchedness, comes unto Christ as an empty-handed beggar to receive all from Him. Faith empties a man of self-conceit, self-confidence, and self-righteousness, and makes him seem nothing, that Christ may be all in all. The strongest faith is always accompanied by the greatest humility, accounting self the greatest of sinners and unworthy of the least favour (see Matt. 8:8-10).

Again, saving faith is always found in a *tender* heart. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh" (Ezek. 36:26). An unregenerate heart is hard as stone, full of pride and presumption. It is quite unmoved by the sufferings of Christ, in the sense that they act as no deterrent against self-will and self-pleasing. But the real Christian is moved by the love of Christ, and says, How can I sin against His dying love for me. When overtaken by a fault, there is passionate relenting and bitter mourning. Oh, my reader, do you know what it is to be melted before God, for you to be heart-broken with anguish over sinning against and grieving such a Saviour? Ah, it is not the absence of sin but the grieving over it which distinguishes the child of God from empty professors.

Another characteristic of saving faith is that it "worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6). It is not inactive, but energetic. That faith which is "of the operation of God" (Col. 2:12) is a mighty principle of power, diffusing spiritual energy to all the faculties of the soul and enlisting them in the service of God. Faith is a principle of life, by which the Christian lives unto God; a principle of motion, by which he walks to heaven along the highway of holiness; a principle of strength, by which he opposes the flesh, the world, and the Devil. "Faith in the heart of a Christian is like the salt that was thrown into the corrupt fountain, that made the naughty waters good and the barren land fruitful. Hence it is that there followeth an alteration of life and conversation, and so bringeth forth fruit accordingly: 'A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good fruit'; which treasure is faith" (John Bunyan in Christian Behaviour).

Where a saving faith is rooted in the heart it grows up and spreads itself in all the branches of obedience, and is filled with the fruits of righteousness. It makes its possessor act for God, and thereby evidences that it is a living thing and not merely a lifeless theory. Even a newborn infant, though it cannot walk and work as a grown man, breathes and cries, moves and sucks, and thereby shows it is alive. So with the one who has been born again; there is a breathing unto God, a crying after Him, a moving toward Him, a clinging to Him. But the infant does not long remain a babe; there is growth, increasing strength, enlarged activity. Nor does the Christian remain stationary: he goes "from strength to strength" (Psalm 84:7).

But observe carefully, faith not only "worketh" but it "worketh by *love*." It is at this point that the "works" of the Christian differ from those of the mere religionist. "The papist works that he may merit heaven. The Pharisee works that he may be applauded, that he may be seen of men, that he may have a good esteem with them. The slave

works lest he should be beaten, lest he should be damned. The formalist works that he may stop the mouth of conscience, that will be accusing him, if he does nothing. The ordinary professor works because it is a shame to do nothing where so much is professed. But the true believer works because he loves. This is the principal, if not the only, motive that sets him a-work. If there were no other motive within or without him, yet would he be working for God, acting for Christ, because he loves Him; it is like fire in his bones" (David Clarkson).

Saving faith is ever accompanied by *an obedient walk*. "Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:3, 4). Make no mistake upon this point: infinite as are the merits of Christ's sacrifice, mighty as is the potency of His priestly intercession, yet they avail not for any who continue in the path of disobedience. He acknowledges none to be His disciples save them who do homage to Him as their Lord. "Too many professors pacify themselves with the idea that they possess imputed righteousness, while they are indifferent to the sanctifying work of the Spirit. They refuse to put on the garment of obedience, they reject the white linen which is the righteousness of the saints. They thus reveal their self-will, their enmity to God, and their non-submission to His Son. Such men may talk what they will about justification by faith, and salvation by grace, but they are rebels at heart; they have not on the wedding-dress any more than the self-righteous, whom they so eagerly condemn. The fact is, if we wish for the blessings of grace, we must in our hearts submit to the rules of grace without picking and choosing" (C. H. Spurgeon on "The Wedding Garment").

Once more: saving faith is *precious*, for, like gold, it will endure trial (1 Peter 1:7). A genuine Christian fears no test; he is willing, yea, wishes, to be tried by God Himself. He cries, "Examine me, o Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart" (Psalm 26:2). Therefore he is willing for his faith to be tried by others, for he shuns not the touchstone of Holy Writ. He frequently tries for himself, for where so much is at stake he must be *sure*. He is anxious to know the worst as well as the best. That preaching pleases him best which is most searching and discriminating. He is loath to be deluded with vain hopes. He would not be flattered into a high conceit of his spiritual state without grounds. When challenged, he complies with the apostle's advice in 2 Corinthians 13:5.

Herein does the real Christian differ from the formalist. The presumptuous professor is filled with pride, and, having a high opinion of himself, is quite sure that *he* has been saved by Christ. He disdains any searching tests, and considers self-examination to be highly injurious and destructive of faith. That preaching pleases him best which keeps at a respectable distance, which comes not near his conscience, which makes no scrutiny of his heart. To preach to him of the finished work of Christ and the eternal security of all who believe in Him strengthens his false peace and feeds his carnal confidence. Should a real servant of God seek to convince him that his hope is a delusion, and his confidence presumptuous, he would regard him as an enemy, as Satan seeking to fill him with doubts. There is more hope of a murderer being saved than of his being disillusioned.

Another characteristic of saving faith is that it gives the heart victory over all the vanities and vexations of things below. "For whatsoever is born of God *overcometh the world*: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4). Observe that this

is not an ideal after which the Christian strives, but an actuality of present experience. In this the saint is conformed to His Head: "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Christ overcame it for His people, and now He overcomes it in them. He opens their eyes to see the hollowness and worthlessness of the best which this world has to offer, and weans their hearts from it by satisfying them with spiritual things. So little does the world attract the genuine child of God that he longs for the time to come when God shall take him out of it.

Alas, that so very few of those now bearing the name of Christ have any real experimental acquaintance with these things. Alas, that so many are deceived by a faith which is not a saving one. "He only is a Christian who lives for Christ. Many persons think they can be Christians on easier terms than these. They think it is enough to trust in Christ while they do not live for Him. But the Bible teaches us that if we are partakers of Christ's death we are also partakers of His life. If we have any such appreciation of His love in dying for us as to lead us to confide in the merits of His death, *we shall be* constrained to consecrate our lives to His service. And this is the only evidence of the genuineness of our faith" (Charles Hodge on 2 Corinthians 5:15).

Reader, are the things mentioned above actualized in your own experience? If they are not, how worthless and wicked is your profession! "It is therefore exceedingly absurd for any to pretend that they have a good heart while they live a wicked life, or do not bring forth the fruit of universal holiness in their practice. Men that live in the ways of sin, and yet flatter themselves that they shall go to heaven, expecting to be received hereafter as holy persons, without a holy practice, act as though they expected to make a fool of their Judge. Which is implied in what the apostle says (speaking of men's doing good works and living a holy life, thereby exhibiting evidence

of their title to everlasting life), 'Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap' (Gal. 6:7). As much as to say, Do not deceive yourselves with an expectation of reaping life everlasting hereafter, if you do not sow to the Spirit here; it is in vain to think that God will be made a fool of by you" (Johathan Edwards in Religious Affections).

That which Christ requires from His disciples is that they should magnify and glorify Him in this world, and that by living holily to Him and suffering patiently for Him. Nothing is as honoring to Christ as that those who bear His name should, by their holy obedience, make manifest the power of His love over their hearts and lives. Contrariwise, nothing is so great a reproach to Him, nothing more dishonors Him, than that those who are living to please self, and who are conformed to this world, should cloak their wickedness under His holy name. A Christian is one who has taken Christ for his example in all things; then how great the insult which is done Him by those claiming to be Christians whose daily lives show they have no respect for His godly example. They are a stench in His nostrils; they are a cause of grievous sorrow to His real disciples; they are the greatest hindrance of all to the progress of His cause on earth; and they shall yet find that the hottest places in hell have been reserved for them. Oh that they would either abandon their course of self-pleasing or drop the profession of that name which is above every name.

Should the Lord be pleased to use this article in shattering the false confidence of some deluded souls, and should they earnestly inquire how they are to obtain a genuine and saving faith, we answer, Use the means which God has prescribed. When faith be His gift, He gives it in His own way; and if we desire to receive it, then we must put ourselves in that way wherein He is wont to communicate it.

Faith is the work of God, but He works it not immediately, but through the channels of His appointed means. The means prescribed cannot effect faith of themselves. They are no further effectual than in instruments in the hands of Him who is the principal cause. Though He has not tied Himself to them, yet He has confined us. Though He be free, yet the means are necessary to us.

The first means is *prayer*. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you" (Ezek. 36:26). Here is a gracious promise, but in what way will He accomplish it, and similar ones? Listen, "Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet for this *be inquired of* by the house of Israel, to do it for them" (Ezek. 36:3 7). Cry earnestly to God for a new heart, for His regenerating Spirit, for the gift of saving faith. Prayer is a universal duty. Though an unbeliever sin in praying (as in everything else), it is not a sin for him to pray.

The second means is the *written Word* heard (John 17:20; 1 Cor. 3:5) or read (2 Tim. 3:15). Said David, "I will never forget Thy precepts: for with them Thou hast quickened me" (Psalm 119:93). The Scriptures are the Word of God; through them He speaks. Then read them, asking Him to speak life, power, deliverance, peace, to your heart. May the Lord deign to add His blessing.

### **Part III - COMING TO CHRIST**

By way of introduction let us bring before the readers the following Scriptures. (1) "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" John 5:40. (2) "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" Matthew 11:28. (3) "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" John 6:44. (4) "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to

me I will in no wise cast out" John 6:37. (5) "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple" Luke 14:26,27. (6) "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious" 1 Peter 2:4. (7) "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" Hebrews 7:25.

The first of these passages applies to every unregenerate man and woman on this earth. While he is in a state of nature, no man can come to Christ. Though all excellencies, both Divine and human, are found in the Lord Jesus, though He is "altogether lovely" (Song of Sol. 5:16), yet the fallen sons of Adam see in Him no beauty that they should desire Him. They may be well instructed in "the doctrine of Christ," they may believe unhesitatingly all that Scripture affirms concerning Him, they may frequently take His name upon their lips, profess to be resting on His finished work, sing His praises, yet their *hearts* are far from Him. The things of this world have the first place in their affections. The gratifying of self is their dominant concern. They surrender not their lives to Him. He is too holy to suit their love of sin; His claims are too exacting to suit their selfish hearts; His terms of discipleship are too severe to suit their fleshly ways. They *will not* yield to His Lordship—true alike with each one of us till God performs a miracle of grace upon our hearts,

The second of these passages contains a gracious invitation, made by the compassionate Saviour to a particular class of sinners. The "all" is at once qualified, clearly and definitely, by the words which immediately follow it. The character of those to whom this loving word belongs is clearly defined: it is those who "labour" and are



"heavy laden." Most clearly then it applies not to the vast majority of our light-headed, gay-hearted, pleasure-seeking fellows, who have no regard for God's glory and no concern about their eternal welfare. No, the word for such poor creatures is rather, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God *will* bring thee into judgment" (Eccl. 11:9). But to those who have "laboured" hard to keep the law and please God, who are "heavy laden" with a felt sense of their utter inability to meet His requirements, and who long to be delivered from the power and pollution of sin, Christ says, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest."

The third passage quoted above at once tells us that "coming to Christ" is *not* the easy matter so many imagine it, nor so simple a thing as most preachers represent it to be. Instead of its so being, the incarnate Son of God positively declares that such an act is utterly impossible to a fallen and depraved creature unless and until Divine power is brought to bear upon him. A most pride-humbling, flesh-withering, man-abasing word is this. "Coming to Christ" is a far, far different thing from raising your hand to be prayed for by some Protestant "priest," coming forward and taking some cheap-jack evangelist's hand, signing some "decision" card, uniting with some "church," or any other of the "many inventions" (Eccl. 7:29) of man. Before any one can or will "come to Christ" the understanding must be supernaturally enlightened, the heart must be supernaturally changed, the stubborn will must be supernaturally broken.

The fourth passage is also one that is unpalatable to the carnal mind, yet is it a precious portion unto the Spirit-taught children of God. It sets forth the blessed truth of unconditional election, or the discriminating grace of God. It speaks of a favored people whom the

Father giveth to His Son. It declares that every one of that blessed company shall come to Christ: neither the effects of their fall in Adam, the power of indwelling sin, the hatred and untiring efforts of Satan, nor the deceptive delusions of blind preachers, will be able to finally hinder them—when God's appointed hour arrives, each of His elect is delivered from the power of darkness and is translated into the kingdom of his dear Son. It announces that each such one who comes to Christ, no matter how unworthy and vile he be in himself no matter how black and long the awful catalogue of his sins, He will by no means despise or fail to welcome him, and under no circumstances will He ever cast him off.

The fifth passage is one that makes known the terms on which alone Christ is willing to receive sinners. Here the uncompromising claims of His holiness are set out. He must be crowned Lord of all, or He will not be Lord at all. There must be the complete heart-renunciation of all that stands in competition with Him. He will brook no rival. All that pertains to "the flesh," whether found in a loved one or in self, has to be hated. The "cross" is the badge of Christian discipleship: not a golden one worn on the body, but the principle of self-denial and self-sacrifice ruling the heart. How evident is it, then, that a mighty, supernatural work of divine grace *must* be wrought in the human heart, if any man will even *desire* to meet such terms!

The sixth passage tells us that the Christian is to *continue as he began*. We are to "come to Christ" not once and for all, but frequently, daily. He is the only One who can minister to our needs, and to Him we must constantly turn for the supply of them. In our felt emptiness, we must draw from His "fullness" (John 1:16). In our weakness, we must turn to Him for strength. In our ignorance we must seek afresh His cleansing. *All* that we need for time and eternity

is stored up in Him: refreshment when we are weary (Isa. 40:3 1), healing of body when we are sick (Ex. 15:26), comfort when we are sad (1 Pet. 5:7), deliverance when we are tempted (Heb. 2:18). If we have wandered away from Him, left our first love, then the remedy is to "repent and do the first works" (Rev. 2:5), that is, cast ourselves upon Him anew, come just as we did the first time we came to Him—as unworthy, self-confessed sinners, seeking His mercy and forgiveness.

The seventh passage assures us of the eternal security of those who do come. Christ saves "unto the uttermost" or "for evermore" those who come unto God by Him. He is not of one mind to day and of another tomorrow. No, He is "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever" (Heb. 13:8). "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end" (John 13:1), and blessedly does He give proof of this, for "He ever liveth to make intercession for them." inasmuch as *His* prayers are effectual, for He declares that the Father hearest Him "always" (John 11:42), none whose name is indelibly stamped on the heart of our great High Priest can ever perish. Hallelujah!

Having sought to thus introduce some of the leading aspects of the subject which is to engage our attention, we now propose to enter into some detail as the Spirit of Truth is pleased to grant us His much-needed assistance. Let us consider some of the obstacles in coming to Christ.

## **6. OBSTACLES IN COMING TO CHRIST**

Under this head it will be our endeavour to show *why* it is that the natural man is *unable to* "come to Christ." As a starting point let us

again quote John 6:44, "No man can come to me, except the Father which has sent me draw him." The reason why this is such a "hard saying," even unto thousands who profess to be Christians, is because they utterly fail to realize the terrible havoc which the Fall has wrought; and, it is greatly to be feared, because they are themselves strangers to "the plague" of their own hearts (1 Kings 8:38). Surely if the Spirit had ever awakened them from the sleep of spiritual death, and given them to see something of the dreadful state they were in by nature, and they had been brought to feel that the carnal mind *in them* was "enmity against God" (Rom. 8:7), then they would no longer cavil against this solemn word of Christ's. But the spiritually dead can neither see nor feel spiritually.

Wherein lies the total inability of the natural man?

1. It is *not in the lack of the necessary faculties*. This needs to be plainly insisted upon, or otherwise fallen man would cease to be a responsible creature. Fearful as were the effects of the Fall, yet they deprived man of none of the faculties with which God originally endowed him. True it is that the coming in of sin took away from man all power to use those faculties aright, that is, to employ them for the glory of his Maker. Nevertheless, fallen man possesses identically the same threefold nature, of spirit and soul and body, as he did before the Fall. No part of man's being was annihilated, though each part was defiled and corrupted by sin. True, man died spiritually, but death is not extinction of being: spiritual death is *alienation from* God (Eph. 4:18): the spiritually dead one is very much alive and active in the service of Satan.

No, the inability of fallen man to come to Christ" lies in no physical or mental defect. He has the same feet to take him unto a place where the Gospel is preached, as he has to walk with to a picture-

show. He has the same eyes by which to read the Holy Scriptures, as he has to read the world's newspapers. He has the same lips and voice for calling upon God, as he now uses in idle talk or foolish song. So too he has the same mental faculties for pondering the things of God and the concerns of eternity, as he now uses so diligently in connection with his business. It is because of this that man is "without excuse.' It is the *misuse* of the faculties with which the Creator has endowed him which increases man's guilt. Let every servant of God see to it that these things are constantly pressed upon their unsaved hearers.

2. We have to search deeper in order to find the seat of man's spiritual impotency. His inability lies *in his corrupt nature*. Through Adam's fall, and through our own sin, our nature has become so debased and depraved, that it is impossible for any to "come to Christ," to "love and serve Him," to esteem Him more highly than all the world put together and submit to His rule, until the Spirit of God renews him, and implants a new nature. A bitter fountain cannot send forth sweet waters, nor an evil tree produce good fruit. Let us try and make this still clearer by an illustration. It is the *nature* of a vulture to feed upon carrion: true, it has the same bodily members to feed upon the wholesome grain as the hens do, but it lacks the disposition and relish for it. It is the nature of a sow to wallow in the mire: true, it has the same legs as a sheep, to conduct it to the meadow, but it lacks the desire for the green pastures. So it is with the unregenerate man. He has the same physical and mental faculties as the regenerate have for the things and service of God, but he has no love for them.

"Adam. . . begat a son in his own likeness, after his image" (Gen. 5:3). What an awful contrast is found here from that which we read two verses before: 'God created man, in the likeness of God made he

him." In the interval, Adam had fallen, and a fallen parent could beget only a fallen child, transmitting unto him his own depravity. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" (Job 14:4). Therefore do we find the sweet singer of Israel declaring, "Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me (Ps. 51:5). Though, later, grace made him the man after God's own heart, yet by nature David (as we) was a mass of iniquity and sin. How early does this corruption of nature appear in children. "Even a child is known by his doings" (Prov. 20:11): the evil bias of its heart is soon manifested—pride, self-will, vanity, lying, averseness to good, are the bitter fruits which quickly appear on the tender but vitiated twig.

3.The inability of the natural man to "come to Christ" lies in *the complete darkness of his understanding*. This leading faculty of the soul has been despoiled of its primitive glory, and covered over with confusion. Both mind and conscience are defiled: "there is none that understandeth" (Rom. 3:11). Solemnly did the apostle remind the saints: "ye were sometimes darkness" (Eph. 5:8), not merely "in darkness," but "darkness" itself. "Sin has closed the windows of the soul, darkness is over all the region: it is the land of darkness and the shadow of death, where the light is as darkness. The prince of darkness reigns there, and nothing but the works of darkness are framed there. We are born spiritually blind, and cannot be restored without a miracle of grace. This is thy case, whoever thou art, that art not born again" (Thos. Boston, 1680). "They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge" (Jer. 4:22).

"The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). There is in the unregenerate *an opposition* to spiritual things and an aversion against them. God has made a revelation of His will unto sinners touching the way of salvation, yet they will not walk therein. They

hear that Christ alone is able to save, yet they refuse to part with those things that hinder their coming to Him. They hear that it is sin which slays the soul, and yet they cherish it in their bosoms. They heed not the threatenings of God. Men believe that fire will burn them, and are at great pains to avoid it; yet they show by their actions that they regard the everlasting burnings as a mere scarecrow. The Divine commandments are "holy, just, and good," but men hate them, and observe them only so far as their respectability among men is promoted.

4. The inability of the natural man to "come to Christ" lies in *the complete corruption of his affections*. "Man as he is, before he receives the grace of God, loves anything and everything above spiritual things. If ye want proof of this, look around you. There needs no monument to the depravity of the human affections. Cast your eyes everywhere—there is not a street, nor a house, nay, nor a heart, which doth not bear upon it sad evidence of this dreadful truth. Why is it that men are not found on the Sabbath day universally flocking to the house of God? Why are we not more constantly found reading our Bibles? How is it that prayer is a duty almost universally neglected? Why is Christ Jesus so little beloved? Why are even His professed followers so cold in their affections to Him? Whence arise these things? Assuredly, dear brethren, we can trace them to no other source than this, the corruption and vitiation of the affections. We love that which we ought to hate, and we hate that which we ought to love. It is but human nature, fallen human nature, that man should love this present life better than the life to come. It is but the effect of the fall, that man should love sin better than righteousness, and the ways of this world better than the ways of God" (C.H. Spurgeon, Sermon on John 6:44).

The affections of the unrenewed man are wholly depraved and distempered. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and *desperately wicked*" (Jer. 17:9). Solemnly did the Lord Jesus affirm that the affections of fallen man are a mother of abominations: "For from within (not from the Devil!) out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness" (Mark 7:21,22). "The natural man's affections are wretchedly misplaced; he is a spiritual monster. His heart is where his feet should be, fixed on the earth: his heels are lifted up against heaven, which his heart should be set on: Acts 9:5. His face is towards Hell, his back towards Heaven; and therefore God calls him to turn. He joys in what he ought to mourn for, and mourns for what he should rejoice in; glories in his shame, and is ashamed of his glory; abhors what he should desire, and desires what he should abhor: Proverbs 2:13-15" (From Boston's "Fourfold State").

5. The inability of the natural man to "come to Christ" lies in *the total depravity of his will*. "Oh!" said the Arminian, 'men may be saved if they will.' We reply, 'My dear sir, we all believe that; but it is just the *if they will* that is the difficulty.' We assert that no man *will* come to Christ unless he be drawn; nay, *we* do not assert it, but *Christ* Himself declares it—'Ye will not come to me that ye might have life' (John 5:40); and as long as that 'ye will not come' stands on record in Holy Scripture, we shall not be brought to believe in any doctrine of the freedom of the human will. It is strange how people, when talking about free-will, talk of things which they do not at all understand. 'Now,' says one, 'I believe men can be saved if they will.' My dear sir, that is not the question at all. The question is, are men ever found naturally willing to submit to the humbling terms of the gospel of Christ? We declare upon scriptural authority, that the human will is so desperately set on mischief, so depraved, and so



inclined to everything that is evil, and so disinclined to everything that is good, that without the powerful, supernatural, irresistible influence of the Holy Spirit, no human being will ever be constrained towards Christ" (C.H. Spurgeon).

"Now here is a threefold cord against heaven and holiness, not easily to be broken; a blind mind, a perverse will, and disorderly, distempered affections. The mind, swelled with self-conceit, says the man should not stoop; and the corrupt affections rising against the Lord, in defense of the corrupt will, says, he shall not. Thus the poor creature stands out against God and goodness, till a day of power come, in which he is made a new creature" (T. Boston). Perhaps some readers are inclined to say, Such teaching as this is calculated to discourage sinners and drive them to despair. Our answer is, first, it is according to God's Word! Second, O that it may please Him to use this article *to* drive some to despair of all help from themselves. Third, it makes manifest the absolute necessity of the Holy Spirit's working with such depraved and spiritually helpless creatures, if they are ever to savingly come to Christ. And until this is clearly perceived, His aid will never be *really* sought in earnest!

There are some souls greatly distressed and puzzled to know exactly what is signified by "coming to Christ." They have read and heard the words often, and perhaps many a preacher has bidden them to 'come to Him,' yet without giving a scriptural explanation of what that term connotes. Such as have been awakened by the Spirit, shown their woeful condition, convicted of their high-handed and lifelong rebellion against God, and brought to realize their dire need of Christ, and who are truly anxious to come savingly to Him, have found it a task altogether beyond their powers. Their cry is, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to His seat!" (Job 23:3). True, there are not many who pass through such an

experience, for *God's* 'flock' is but a "little" one (Luke 12:32). True, the vast majority of professing Christians claim that *the* found "coming to Christ" a very simple matter. But in the clear light of John 6:44 we must assure you, dear reader, that if *you* found "coming to Christ" to be easy, then it is proof you have *never* come to Him at all in a spiritual and saving way.

What, then, is meant by "coming to Christ"? First, and negatively, let it be pointed out that it is *not* an act which we perform by any of our bodily members. This is so obvious that there should be no need for us to make the statement. But in these awful days of spiritual ignorance and the carnal perversion of the holy things of God, explanation of the most elementary truths and terms is really required. When so many precious souls have been deluded into thinking that a going forward to a "mourner's bench" or "penitent form," or the taking of some preacher's hand, is the same thing as coming to Christ, we dare not pass over the defining of this apparently simple term, nor ignore the need for pointing out what it does not signify.

Second, the word "come," when used in this connection, is a *metaphorical* one: that is to say, a word which expresses an act of the body is transferred to the soul, to denote its act. To "come to Christ" signifies the movement of a Spirit-enlightened mind toward the Lord Jesus—as Prophet, to be instructed by Him; as Priest, whose atonement and intercession are to be relied upon; as King, to be ruled by Him. Coming to Christ implies a turning of our back upon the world, and a turning unto Him as our only Hope and Portion. It is a going out of self so as to rest fl() longer on anything in self. It is the abandoning of every idol and of all other dependencies, the heart going out to Him in loving submission and trustful confidence. it is

the will surrendering to Him as Lord, ready to accept His yoke, take up the cross, and follow Him without reserve.

To "come to Christ" is the turning of the whole soul unto a whole Christ in the exercise of Divine grace upon Him: it is the mind, heart and will being supernaturally drawn to Him, so as to trust, love and serve Him. "It is the duty and interest of weary and heavy-laden sinners to 'come to Jesus Christ'—renouncing all those things which stand in opposition to Him, or in competition with Him; we must accept Him as our Physician and Advocate, and give up ourselves to His conduct and government, freely willing to be saved by Him, in His own way, and on His own terms" (Matthew Henry). Ere proceeding further, we would earnestly beg each reader to prayerfully and carefully test and measure himself of herself by what has been said in this and the preceding paragraph. Take nothing for granted: as you value your soul, seek Divine help to make sure that you have *truly* "come to Christ."

Now a popish "christ" is a christ of *wood*, and a false preacher's "christ" is a christ of *words*; but Christ Jesus, our Lord, is "the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace" (Isa. 9:6). The Christ of God fills heaven and earth: He is the One by whom all things exist and consist. He is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having all power, dominion, and might. He is made higher than the heavens, and unto Him all principalities and powers are subject. At His presence both the earth and the heavens shall yet flee away. Such a Christ is neither to be offered nor proffered, sold nor given by sinful men. He is the unspeakable Gift of the Father to as many as He has ordained to eternal life, and none others. This Christ, this Gift of the Father, is supernaturally revealed and applied to the heirs of salvation by the Holy Spirit, when, where, and as He pleases; and not when, where, and how men please.

In the preceding article we dwelt at length upon those words of Christ in John 6:44, "no man can come unto me," seeking to show the nature of the fallen creature's spiritual impotency, or why it is the unregenerate are unable to come to Christ in a spiritual and saving way. Let us now ponder the remainder of our Lord's sentence: "except the Father which sent me draw him." Of what does that "drawing" consist? We answer, first, just as our "coming to Christ" does not refer to any bodily action, so this Divine "drawing" respects not the employment of any external force. Second, it signifies a powerful impulse put forth by the Holy Spirit within the elect, whereby their native impotency for performing spiritual actions is overcome, and an ability for the same is imparted. It is this secret and effectual operation of the Spirit upon the human soul which enables and causes it to come to Christ. This brings us to our next division.

## **7. COMING TO CHRIST WITH OUR UNDERSTANDING**

1. *A knowledge of Christ is essential.* There can be no movement towards an unknown object. No man can obey a command until he is acquainted with its terms. A prop must be seen before it will be rested upon. We must have some acquaintance with a person before he will either be trusted or loved. This principle is so obvious it needs arguing no further. Apply it unto the case in hand, the subject before us: the knowledge of Christ must of necessity precede our believing on Him or our coming to Him. "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" (Rom. 10:14). "He that cometh to God *must* believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6). None can come to Christ while they are ignorant about Him. As it was in the old creation, so it is in the new: God first says, "Let there be light."

2. *This knowledge of Christ comes to the mind from the Holy Scriptures.* Nothing can be known of Him save that which God has been pleased to reveal concerning Him in the Word of Truth. It is there alone that the true "doctrine of Christ" (2 John 9) is to be found. Therefore did our Lord give commandment, "Search the Scriptures.. .they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). When He rebuked the two disciples for their slowness of heart to believe, we are told that "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). The Divine Oracles are designed "the word of Christ" (Col. 3:16) because He is the substance of them. Where the Scriptures have not gone, Christ is unknown: clear proof is this that an acquaintance with Him cannot be gained apart from their inspired testimony.

3. *A theoretical knowledge of Christ is not sufficient.* Upon this point we must dilate at greater length, for much ignorance concerning it prevails today. A head-knowledge about Christ is very frequently mistaken for a heart-acquaintance with Him. But orthodoxy is not salvation. A carnal judgment about Christ, a mere intellectual knowledge of Him, will never bring a dead sinner to His feet: there must be a living experience—God's word and work meeting together in the soul, renewing and understanding. As 1 Corinthians 13:2 so plainly and solemnly warns us, I may have the gift of prophecy, understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, yet if I have not love, then I am nothing. Just as a blind man may, through labor and diligence, acquire an accurate theoretical or notional conception of many subjects and objects which he never saw, so the natural man may, by religious education and personal effort, obtain a sound doctrinal knowledge of the person and work of Christ, without having any spiritual or vital acquaintance with Him.

Not every kind of knowledge, even God's Truth and His Christ, is effectual and saving. There is a *form* of knowledge, as well as of godliness, which is destitute of power—"which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law" (Rom. 2:20). The reference is to the Jews, who were instructed in the Scriptures, and considered themselves well qualified to teach others; yet the Truth had not been written on their hearts by the Holy Spirit. A "*form* of knowledge" signifies there was a model of it in their brains, so that they were able to discourse freely and fluently upon the things of God, yet were they without the life of God in their souls. O how many have a knowledge *of* salvation, yet not a knowledge *unto* salvation, as the apostle distinguishes it in 2 Timothy 3:15—such a knowledge as the latter must be imparted to the soul by the miracle-working operation of the Holy Spirit.

"They proceed from evil to evil, and *they know not me*, saith the Lord" (Jer. 9:3). Of whom was this spoken—of the heathen who were without any written revelation from Him? No, of Israel, who had His law in their hands, His temple in their midst, His prophets speaking to them. They had been favored with many and wondrous manifestations of his majesty, holiness, power and mercy; yet though they had much intellectual knowledge of Him, they were strangers to Him spiritually. So it was when the Son of God became incarnate. How much *natural* light *they* had concerning Him: they witnessed His perfect life, saw His wondrous miracles, heard His matchless teaching, were frequently in His immediate presence; yet, though the Light shone in the darkness, "the darkness comprehended it not" (John 1:5). So it is today. Reader, you may be a diligent student of the N. T, be thoroughly acquainted with the O. T. types and prophecies, believe all that the Scriptures say concerning Christ, and earnestly teach them to others, and yet be yourself a stranger to Him spiritually.

"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3), which means that the unregenerate are utterly incapable of discerning the things of God spiritually. True, they may "see" them in a natural way: they may investigate and even admire them theoretically, but to receive them in an experimental and vital way they cannot. As this distinction is of such great importance, and yet so little known today, let us endeavour to illustrate it. Suppose a man who had never heard any music: others tell him of its beauty and charm, and he decides to make a careful study of it. That man might thoroughly familiarize himself with the art of music, learn all the rules of that art, so that he understood the proportions and harmony of it; but what a different thing is that from listening to a grand oratorio—the ear now taking in what before the mind knew only the theory of! Still greater is the difference between a natural and a spiritual knowledge of Divine things.

The apostle declared, "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery" (1 Cor. 2:7). He did not only affirm that it is a mystery in itself, but that it is still spoken "*in a mystery.*" And why is this? Because the unregenerate, even where it is spoken in their hearing, yea, when it is clearly apprehended by them in a notional way, yet they neither know nor apprehend the mystery that is still in it. Proverbs 9:10 declares, "the knowledge of the holy is understanding:" there is no true understanding of Divine things except the "knowledge of the Holy." Every real Christian has a knowledge of Divine things, a personal, experimental, vital knowledge of them, which no carnal man possesses, or can obtain, no matter how diligently he study them. If I have seen the picture of a man, I have an image in my mind of that man according to his picture; but if I see the man himself, how different is the image of him which is then formed in my mind! Far greater still is the difference between Christ made known in the Scriptures and Christ revealed "*in me*" (Gal. 1:16).

4. *There must be a spiritual and supernatural knowledge of Christ imparted by the Holy Spirit.* This is in view in 1 John 5:20, "we know that the Son of God is come, and hath *given us an understanding*, that we may know him that is true." The faculty must be suited to the object or subject known. The natural understanding is capable of taking in Christ and knowing Him in a natural way, but we must be "renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Eph. 4:23) before we can know Christ in a spiritual way. There must be a supernatural work of grace wrought upon the mind by the Holy Spirit before there can be any inward and spiritual apprehension of the supernatural and spiritual person of Christ. That is the true and saving knowledge of Christ which fires the affections, sanctifies the will, and raises up the mind to a spiritual fixation on the Rock of ages. It is *this* knowledge of Him which is "life eternal" (John 17:3). It is *this* knowledge which produces faith in Christ, love for Him, submission to Him. It is *this* knowledge which causes the soul to truthfully and joyously exclaim, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee" (Ps. 73:25).

"No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44). It is by the secret and effectual operation of the Spirit that the Father brings each of His elect to a saving knowledge of Christ. These operations of the Spirit begin by His enlightening the understanding, renewing the mind. Observe carefully the order in Ezek. 37:14, "And shall put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live. . .*then* shall *ye know* that I the Lord have spoken it." No sinner ever comes to Christ until the Holy Spirit first comes to him! And no sinner will savingly believe on Christ until the Spirit has communicated faith to him (Eph. 2:5; Col. 2:12); and even then, faith is an eye to *discern* Christ before it is a foot to *approach* Him. There can be no act without an object, and there can be no exercising of faith upon Christ till Christ is seen in His excellency, sufficiency, and



suitability to poor sinners. "They that *know* thy name will (not "ought to") put their trust in thee" (Ps. 9:10). But again, we say, that knowledge must be a spiritual and miraculous one imparted by the Spirit.

The Spirit Himself, and not merely a preacher, must take of the things of Christ and show them unto the heart. It is only in *God's* "light" that we truly "*see* light" (Psa. 36:9). The opening of his eyes precedes the conversion of the sinner from Satan unto God (Acts 26:18). The light of the sun is seen breaking out at the dawn of day, before its heat is felt. It is those who "see" the Son with a supernaturally enlightened understanding that "believe" on Him with a spiritual and saving faith (John 6:40). We *behold* as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, before we are *changed* into His very image (2 Cor. 3:18). Note the order in Romans 3:11, "there is none that understandeth" goes before "there is none that seeketh after God." The Spirit must shed His light upon the understanding, which light conveys the actual image of spiritual things in a spiritual way to the mind, forming them on the soul; much as a sensitive photographic plate receives from the light the images to which it is exposed. *This* is the "*demonstration* of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. 2:4).

5. *How is this spiritual and vital knowledge to be known from a mere theoretical and notional one?* By its effects. Unto the Thessalonians Paul wrote, "For our Gospel came not unto you in *word only*, but *also in power*, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance" (1 Thess. 1:5), which is partly explained in the next verse, "having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost." The Spirit had given that Word an efficacy which no logic, rhetoric, or persuasive power of men could. It had smitten the conscience, torn open the wounds which sin had made, exposed its

festering sores. It had pierced them even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit. It had slain their good opinion of themselves. It had made them feel the wrath of God burning against them. It had caused them to seriously question if such wretches could possibly find mercy at the hands of a holy God. It had communicated faith to look upon the great physician of souls. It had given a joy such as this poor world knows nothing of.

The light which the Spirit imparts to the understanding is full of efficacy, whereas that which men acquire through their study is not so. Ordinary and strong mineral water are alike in color, but differ much in their taste and virtue. A carnal man may acquire a theoretical knowledge of all that a spiritual man knows vitally, yet is he "barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:8). The light that he has is ineffectual, for it neither purifies his heart, renews his will, nor transforms his life. The head-knowledge of Divine truth, which is all that multitudes of present-day professing Christians possess, has no more influence upon their walk unto practical godliness, than though it was stored up in some other man's brains. The light which the Spirit gives, humbles and abases its recipient; the knowledge which is acquired by education and personal efforts, puffs up and fills with conceit.

A spiritual and saving knowledge of Christ always constrains the soul unto loving obedience. No sooner did the light of Christ shine into Paul's heart, than he at once asked, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). Of the Colossians the apostle declared, "The Gospel which is come unto you.. .bringeth forth fruit... since the day ye heard.. .and knew the grace of God in truth" or "in reality" (1:6). But a mere intellectual knowledge of the truth is "held in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18). Its possessors are zealous to argue and cavil about it, and look down with contempt upon all who are not

so wise as they: yet the *lives* of these frequently put them to shame. A saving knowledge of Christ so endears Him to the soul that all else is esteemed as dung in comparison with His excellency: the light of His glory has cast a complete eclipse over all that is in the world. But a mere doctrinal knowledge of Christ produces no such effects: while its possessors may loudly sing His praises, yet their hearts are still coveting and eagerly pursuing the things of time and sense.

The natural man may know the truth of the things of God, but not the things themselves. He may thoroughly understand the Scriptures in the letter of them, but not in their spirit. He may discourse of them in a sound and orthodox manner, but in no other way than one can *talk of* honey and vinegar, who never tasted the sweetness of the one, nor the sourness of the other. There are hundreds of preachers who have accurate notions of spiritual things, but who see and taste not the things themselves which are wrapped in the words of Truth—"understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm" (1 Tim. 1:7). Just as an astronomer who makes a life-study of the stars, knows their names, positions, and varying magnitudes. yet receives no more personal and special influence from them than do other men; so it is with those who study the Scriptures, but are not supernaturally and savingly enlightened by the Spirit. O my reader, has the Day-star arisen *in your heart* (2 Pet. 1:19)?

We trust that sufficient has been said in the previous articles to make clear unto every Christian reader that the saving "coming to Christ" of a poor sinner is neither a physical nor mental act, but is wholly spiritual and supernatural; that that act springs not from human reason or human-will power, but from the secret and efficacious operations of God the Spirit. We say clear unto "the Christian reader," for we must not expect the unregenerate to perceive that of which they have no personal experience. The distinction pointed out

in the second half of the last article (the whole of which may well be carefully re-read) between a sound intellectual knowledge of Christ and a vital and transforming knowledge of Him, between knowing Christ as He is set forth in the Scriptures, and as He is Divinely revealed *in us* (Gal. 1:16), is not one which will appeal to the carnal mind; rather is it one which will be contemptuously rejected. But instead of being surprised at this, we should expect it.

Were our last article sent to the average "Fundamentalist" preacher or "Bible teacher," and a request made for his honest opinion of it, in all probability he would say that the writer had lapsed into either "mysticism" or "fanaticism." Just as the religious leaders of Christ's day rejected His spiritual teachings, so the "champions of orthodoxy," those who boast so loudly that *they* are faithfully and earnestly contending for the faith, will not receive the humbling and searching messages of Christ's servants today. The substance of this article would be ridiculed by them. But their very ridicule only serves to demonstrate the solemn truth of 1 Corinthians 2:14, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him." These words have puzzled some who have thoughtfully pondered them, for they do not seem to square with the patent facts of observation.

We have personally met the most conscienceless men—untruthful, dishonest, not scrupling to use tactics which many a non-professor would scorn—who, nevertheless, ardently proclaimed the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures, the Deity of Christ, salvation by grace alone. We have had personal dealings with men whose hearts were filled with covetousness, and whose ways were worldly almost to the last degree, yet who tiraded against "modernism" and "evolutionism" etc., and "faithfully preached" the Virgin-birth and the blood of Christ as the sinner's only hope. That these men are "natural" or

"carnal," that is, unregenerate, is plain and unmistakable if we measure them by the infallible rule of Holy Writ: it would not only be a contradiction in terms, but *blasphemy* to say such had been made, by God, "new creatures in Christ." Nevertheless, so far from the foundation truths of Scripture being "foolishness" unto these unregenerate characters, they warmly endorse and ardently propagate them.

But what has been said above *does not* clash, to the slightest degree, with 1 Corinthians 2:14, when that verse be rightly read and understood. Let it be carefully noted that it does not say the "things of God are foolishness" unto the natural man. Had it done so, the writer had been at a complete loss to explain it. No, it declares that the "things of *the Spirit* of God" are foolishness: and what has been said above only serves to illustrate the minute accuracy of this verse. The "things of God" these men profess to believe; the "things of Christ," they appear to valiantly champion; but the "things of *the Spirit* of God they are personal strangers unto; and therefore when His secret and mysterious work upon the souls of God's elect is pressed upon them, they appear to be so much "foolishness" unto them—either "mysticism" or "fanaticism." But to the renewed it is far otherwise.

The Spirit's supernatural operations in the implanting of faith in God's elect (Col. 2:12) produces a "new creation." Salvation by faith is wrought through the Spirit's working effectually with the Gospel. Then it is that He *forms* Christ in the soul (Gal. 4:19), and lets the Object of faith through the eye of faith, a real "image" of Christ being directly stamped upon the newly-quickeningsoul, which quickening has given ability to discern Christ. Thus, Christ is "formed" in the heart, after the manner that an outward object is formed in the eye. When I say that I have a certain man or object in my eye, I do not

mean that this man or object is in my eye *locally*—*that* is impossible; but they are in my eye *objectively*—*I see* them. So, when it is said that Christ is "formed *in* us," that Christ is *in* us "the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27), it is not to be understood that He who is now corporeally at the right hand of God, is *locally and substantially* formed in us. No, but that Christ at the right hand of God, the substance and *Object* of faith, is by the Spirit let in from above, so that the soul sees Him by the eye of faith, exactly as He is represented in the Word. So Christ is "formed" in us; and thus He "dwell(s) in your hearts by faith" (Eph. 3:17).

What we have endeavoured to set forth above is beautifully adumbrated in the lower and visible world. It is indeed striking to discover how much of God's spiritual works are shadowed out in the material realm. If our minds were but more spiritual, and our eyes engaged in a keener lookout, we should find signs and symbols on every side of the invisible realities of God. On a sunshiny day, when a man looks into clear water, he sees there a face (his own), formed by representation, which directly answers to the face outside and above the water; there are not two faces, but one, original and yet represented. But only one face is seen, casting its own single image upon the water. So it is in the soul's history of God's elect; "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, *are changed into the same image* from glory to glory, even *as by the Spirit* of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). Oh that His image in us may be more evident to others!

## **8. COMING TO CHRIST WITH OUR AFFECTIONS**

"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me" (John 6:37), declared the Lord Jesus. He who, before the foundation of the world,

gave the *persons* of His people unto Christ, now gives them, in regeneration, a *heart* for Christ. The "heart" includes the affections as well as the understanding. In the previous chapter we pointed out how that no man will (or can) "come to Christ" while ignorant of Him; it is equally true that no man will (or can) "come to Christ" while his affections are alienated from Him. Not only is the understanding of the natural man shrouded in total darkness, but his heart is thoroughly opposed to God. "The carnal mind is enmity (not merely "at enmity," but "enmity" itself) against God" (Rom. 8:7); and "enmity" is something more than a train of hostile thoughts, it is the hatred of the affections themselves. Therefore when the Holy Spirit makes a man a "new creature in Christ," He not only renews his understanding, but He radically changes the heart.

When faith gives us a sight of spiritual things, the heart is warmed with love to them. Note the order in Hebrews 11:13, where, in connection with the patriarchs' faith in God's promises, we are told, "were persuaded of them, and *embraced* them," *which is a term denoting great affection*. When the understanding is renewed by the Spirit, then the heart is drawn unto Christ with a tender desire for Him. When the Holy Spirit is pleased to make known in the soul the wondrous love of Christ to me, then love unto Him is begotten and goes out toward Him in return. Observe the order in 1 John 4:16, "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him;" the apostle places knowledge (not intellectual, but spiritual) before faith, and both before a union and communion with Divine love. The light and knowledge of Christ and heaven which we have by tradition, education, hearing or reading, never fires the affections. But when the love of God is "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 5:5), O what a difference is produced!

Far too little emphasis has been placed upon this aspect of our subject. In proof of this assertion, weigh carefully the following question: Why is it that "he that *believeth not* shall be damned" (Mark 16:16) is quoted a hundred times more frequently by preachers and tract-writers than "if any man *love not* the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema" (1 Cor. 16:22)? If we are to properly preserve the balance of truth, we must note carefully the manner in which the Holy Spirit has rung the changes on "believe" and "love" in the N. T. Consider the following verses: "all things work together for good to them that (not "trust," but) *love* God" (Rom. 8:28); "the things which God hath prepared for them that (not only "believe," but) *love* Him" (1 Cor. 2:9); "if any *love* God, the same is known (or "approved") of Him" (1 Cor. 8:3); "a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me in that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that (not "believe in," but) *love* his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8); "a crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that *love* Him" (James 1:12); "He that *loveth not* knoweth not God; for God is love" (1 John 4:8).

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44). In the last chapter we saw that this "drawing" consists, in part, of the Spirit's supernatural enlightenment of the understanding. It also consists in the Spirit's inclining the affections unto Christ. He acts upon sinners agreeably to their nature: not by external force, such as is used on an unwilling animal, but by spiritual influence or power moving their inward faculties: "I drew them with cords of a *man*, with bands of *love*" (Hosea 11:4)—by rational conviction of their judgment, by showing them that there is infinitely more goodness and blessedness in Christ than in the creature or the sinful gratification of carnal desire; by winning their hearts to Christ, by communicating to them a powerful sense of His superlative excellency and complete suitability unto all their needs.



To them that believe, "he is *precious*"(1 Pet. 2:7)—so precious, they are willing to part with the world and everything, that they may "win Christ" (Phil. 3:8).

As was shown at some length in the opening chapter, the affections of the natural man are alienated from God, wedded to the things of time and sense, so that he will not come to Christ. Though God's servants seek to charm him with the lovely music of the Gospel, like the adder he closes his ear. It is as the Lord portrayed it in the parable of the Great Supper: "they all with one consent began to make excuse" (Luke 14:18), one preferring his lands, another his merchandise, another his social recreation. And nothing short of the Almighty power and working of the Holy Spirit in the heart can break the spell which sin and Satan has cast over man, and turn his heart from perishing objects to an imperishable one. This He does in God's elect by His secret and invincible operations, sweetly working in and alluring them by revealing Christ to them in the winsomeness of His person and the infinite riches of His grace, by letting down His love into their hearts, and by moving them to lay hold of His kind invitations and precious promises.

Most blessedly is this represented to us in "My beloved put is hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him" (Song of Sol. 5:4). Here the door of the heart (Acts 16:14), or more specifically, the "door of faith" (Acts 14:27), is seen shut against Christ, and the object of His love being so loath and unwilling as to rise and open to Him. But though unwelcome, His love cannot be quenched, and He gently enters (He does not burst the door open!) uninvited. His "hand" opening the "door" is a figure of His efficacious grace removing every obstacle in the heart of His elect (cf. Acts 11:21), and winning it to Himself. The effect of His gracious entry, by His Spirit, is seen in the "and my bowels were moved for him," which is a figure

of the stirring of the affections after Him—cf. Isaiah 63:15, Philemon 12. For the thoughts of this paragraph we are indebted to the incomparable commentary of John Gill on the Song of Solomon.

O what a miracle of grace has been wrought when the heart is truly turned from the world unto God, from self unto Christ, from love of sin unto love of holiness! It is this which is the fulfillment of God's covenant promise in Ezekiel 36:26, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." There is no man that loves money so much, but that he is willing to part with it, for that which he values more highly than the sum he parts with to purchase it. The natural man esteems material things more highly than he does spiritual, but the regenerated loves Christ more than all other objects beside, and this, because he has been made a "new creature." It is a spiritual love which binds the heart to Christ.

It is not simply a knowledge of the Truth which saves, but a *love* of it which is the essential prerequisite. This is clear from 2 Thessalonians 2:10, "Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." Close attention must be paid unto these words, or a wrong conclusion may be drawn: it is not a love *for* the Truth, but a love *of* the Truth. There are those who have the former, who are destitute of the latter. We have met Russelites, and have boarded with Christadelphians, who put many a real Christian to shame: people who after a long day's work, spent the whole evening in diligently studying the Bible. Nor was it just to satisfy curiosity. Their zeal had lasted for years. Their Bible was as precious to them as a devout Romanist's "beads" or "rosary" are to her. So too there is a *natural* "love" for Christ, an ardent devotion for Him, which springs not from a renewed heart. Just as one reared among devout Romanists, grows up with a deep veneration and genuine affection for the Virgin; so

one carefully trained by Protestant parents, told from infancy that Jesus loves him, grows up with a real but natural love for Him.

There may be a historical faith in all the doctrines of Scripture, where the power of them is never experienced. There may be a fleshly zeal for portions of God's Truth (as there was in the case of the Pharisees) and yet the heart not be renewed. There may be joyous emotions felt by a superficial reception of the Word (as there was in the stonyground hearers: Matt. 13:20), where the "root of the matter" (Job 19:28) be lacking. Tears may flow freely at the pathetic sight of the suffering Saviour (as with the company of women who bewailed Christ as He journeyed to the cross: Luke 23:27, 28), and yet the heart be as hard as the nether millstone toward God. There may be a rejoicing in the light of God's Truth (as was the case with Herod: Mark 6:20), and yet Hell never be escaped from.

Since then there is a "love for the Truth" in contradistinction from a "love of the Truth," and a natural love for Christ in contrast from a spiritual love of Him, how am I to be sure which mine is? We may distinguish between these "loves" thus: first, the one is partial, the other is impartial: the one esteems the doctrines of Scripture but not the duties it enjoins, the promises of Scripture but not the precepts, the blessings of Christ but not His claims, His priestly office but not His kingly rule; but not so with the spiritual lover. Second, the one is occasional, the other is regular: the former balks when personal interests are crossed; not so the latter. Third, the one is evanescent and weak, the other lasting and powerful: the former quickly wanes when other delights compete, and prevails not to control the other affections; the latter rules the heart, and is strong as death. Fourth, the former betters not its possessor; the latter transforms the life.

That a saving "coming to Christ" is the affections being turned to and fixed upon Him, may be further demonstrated from the nature of backsliding, which begins with the heart's departure from Christ. Observe how this is traced to its real source in Revelation 2:4, "Thou hast left (not "lost") thy first *love*." The reality and genuineness of our *returning* to Christ is evidenced by the *effects* which the workings of the understanding produce upon the affections. A striking example of this is found in Matthew 26:75, "and Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, 'Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.' And he went out, and wept bitterly": that "remembrance" was not merely an historical, but a gracious one—his heart was melted by it. So it ever is when the Holy Spirit works in and "renews" us. I may recall a past sin, without being duly humbled thereby. I may "remember" Christ's death in a mechanical and speculative way, without the affections being truly moved. It is only as the faculty of our understanding is quickened by the Holy Spirit that the heart is powerfully impressed.

## **9. COMING TO CHRIST WITH OUR WILL**

The man within the body is possessed of three principal faculties: the understanding, the affections, and the will. As was shown earlier, all of these were radically affected by the Fall: they were defiled and corrupted, and in consequence, they are used in the service of self and sin, rather than of God and of Christ. But in regeneration, these faculties are quickened and cleansed by the Spirit: not completely, but initially, and continuously so in the life-long process of sanctification, and perfectly so at glorification. Now each of these three faculties is subordinated to the others by the order of nature, that is, as man has been constituted by his Maker. One faculty is

influenced by the other. In Genesis 3:6 we read, "the woman saw (perceived) that the tree was good for food"—that was a conclusion drawn by the understanding; "and that it was *pleasant* to the eyes"—there was the response of her affections; "and a tree to be desired"—there was the moving of the will; "she took"—there was the completed action.

Now the motions of Divine grace work through the apprehensions of faith in the understanding, these warming and firing the affections, and they in turn influencing and moving the will. Every faculty of the soul is put forth in a saving "coming to Christ": "If thou believest with *all* thine heart, thou mayest"—be baptized (Acts 8:37). "Coming to Christ" is more immediately an act of the will, as John 5:40 shows; yet the will is not active toward Him until the understanding has been enlightened and the affections quickened. The Spirit first causes the sinner to perceive his deep need of Christ, and this, by showing him his fearful rebellion against God, and that none but Christ can atone for the same. Secondly, the Spirit creates in the heart a desire after Christ, and this, by making him sick of sin and in love with holiness. Third, as the awakened and enlightened soul has been given to see the glory and excellency of Christ, and His perfect suitability to the lost and perishing sinner, then the Spirit draws out the will to set the highest value on that excellency, to esteem it far above all else, and to close with Him.

As there is a Divine order among the three Persons of the Godhead in providing salvation, so there is in the applying or bestowing of it. It was God the Father's good pleasure appointing His people from eternity unto salvation, which was the most full and sufficient *impulsive* cause of their salvation, and every whit able to produce its effect. It was the incarnate Son of God whose obedience and sufferings were the most complete and sufficient *meritorious* cause

of their salvation, to which nothing can be added to make it more apt and able to secure the travail of His soul. Yet neither the one nor the other can *actually* save any sinner except as the Spirit *applies* Christ to it: His work being the *efficient* and immediate cause of their salvation. In like manner, the sinner is not saved when his understanding is enlightened, and his affections fired: there must also be the act of the will, surrendering to God and laying hold of Christ.

The order of the Spirit's operations corresponds to the three great offices of Christ, the Mediator, namely, His prophetic, priestly, and kingly. As Prophet, He is first apprehended by the understanding, the Truth of God being received from His lips. As Priest, He is trusted and loved by the heart or affections, His glorious person being first endeared unto the soul by the gracious work which He performed for it. As Potentate, our will must be subdued unto Him, so that we submit to His government, yield to His scepter, and heed His commandments. Nothing short of the throne of our hearts will satisfy the Lord Jesus. In order to do this, the Holy Spirit casts down our carnal imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5), so that we freely and gladly take His yoke upon us; which yoke is, as one of the Puritans said, "lined with love."

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44). This "drawing" is accomplished by the Spirit: first, in effectually enlightening the understanding; secondly, by quickening the affections; third, by freeing the will from the bondage of sin and inclining it toward God. By the invincible workings of grace, the Spirit turns the bent of that will, which before moved only toward sin and vanity, unto Christ. "Thy people," said God unto the

Mediator, "shall be willing in the day of thy power" (Ps. 110:3). Yet though Divine power be put forth upon a human object, the Spirit does not infringe the will's prerogative of acting freely: He morally persuades it. He subdues its sinful intractability. He overcomes its prejudice, wins and draws it by the sweet attractions of grace.

"God never treats man as though he were a brute; He does not drag him with cart ropes; He treats men as men; and when He binds them with cords, they are the cords of love and the bands of a man. I may exercise power over another's will, and yet that other man's will may be perfectly free; because the constraint is exercised in a manner accordant with the laws of the human mind. If I show a man that a certain line of action is much for his advantage, he feels bound to follow it, but he is perfectly free in so doing. If man's will were subdued or chained by some physical process, if man's heart should, for instance, be taken from him and be turned round by a manual operation, that would be altogether inconsistent with human freedom, or indeed with human nature; and yet I think some few people imagine that we mean this when we talk of constraining influence and Divine grace. We mean nothing of the kind; we mean that Jehovah Jesus knows how, by irresistible arguments addressed to the understanding, by mighty reasons appealing to the affections, and by the mysterious influence of His Holy Spirit operating upon all the powers and passions of the soul, so to subdue the whole man, that whereas it was once rebellious it becomes obedient; whereas it stood stoutly against the Most High, it throws down the weapons of its rebellion and cries, 'I yield! I yield! subdued by sovereign love, and by the enlightenment which Thou hast bestowed upon me, I yield myself to Thy will'" (C. H. Spurgeon, John 6:37).

The perfect consistency between the freedom of a regenerated man's spiritual actions and the efficacious grace of God moving him

thereto, is seen in 2 Corinthians 8:16,17. "But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. For indeed he accepted the exhortation: but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you." Titus was moved to that work by Paul's exhortation, and was "willing of his own accord" to engage therein; and yet it was "God which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus" for them. God controls the inward feelings and acts of men without interfering either with their liberty or responsibility. The zeal of Titus was the spontaneous effusion of his own heart, and was an index to an element of his character; nevertheless, God wrought in him both to will and to do of *His* good pleasure.

No sinner savingly "comes to Christ," or truly receives Him into the heart, until the will freely consents (not merely "assents" in a theoretical way) to the severe and self—denying terms upon which He is presented in the Gospel. No sinner is prepared to forsake all for Christ, take up "the cross," and "follow" Him in the path of universal obedience, until the heart genuinely esteems Him "The Fairest among ten thousand," and this none will ever do before the understanding has been supernaturally enlightened and the affections supernaturally quickened. Obviously, none will espouse themselves with conjugal affections to that person whom they account not the best that can be chosen. It is as the Spirit convicts us of our emptiness and shows us Christ's fulness, our guilt and His righteousness, our filthiness and the cleansing merits of His blood, our depravity and His holiness, that the heart is won and the resistance of the will is overcome.



The holy and spiritual Truth of God finds nothing akin to itself in the unregenerate soul, but instead, everything that is opposed to it (John 15:18; Rom. 8:7). The demands of Christ are too humbling to our natural pride, too searching for the callous conscience, too exacting for our fleshly desires. And a miracle of grace has to be wrought within us before this awful depravity of our nature, this dreadful state of affairs, is changed. That miracle of grace consists in overcoming the resistance which is made by indwelling sin, and creating desires and longings Christward; and then it is that the will cries,

"Nay, but I yield, I yield,  
I can hold out no more;  
I sink, by dying love compell'd,  
And own Thee Conqueror."

A beautiful illustration of this is found in Ruth 1:14-18. Naomi, a backslidden saint, is on the point of leaving the far country, and (typically) returning to her Father's house. Her two daughters-in-law wish to accompany her. Faithfully did Naomi bid them "count the cost" (Luke 14:28); instead of at once urging them to act on their first impulse, she pointed out the difficulties and trials to be encountered. This was too much for Orpha: her "goodness" (like that of the stony-ground hearers, and myriads of others) was only "as a morning cloud" and "as the early dew" it quickly went away (Hos. 6:4). In blessed contrast from this we read, "But Ruth clave unto her. . . saying, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

What depth and loveliness of affection was here! What whole-hearted self-surrender! See Ruth freely and readily leaving her own

country and kindred, tearing herself from every association of nature, turning a deaf ear to her mother-in-law's begging her to return to her gods (v. 15) and people. See her renouncing idolatry and all that flesh holds dear, to be a worshipper and servant of the living God, counting all things but loss for the sake of His favour and salvation; and her future conduct proved her faith was genuine and her profession sincere. Ah, naught but a miraculous work of God in her soul can explain this. It was God working in her "both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). He was drawing her with the bands of love: grace triumphed over the flesh. This is what every genuine conversion is—a complete surrender of the mind, heart and will to God and His Christ, so that there is a desire to "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth" (Rev. 14:4).

The relation between our understanding being enlightened and the affections quickened by God and the resultant consent of the will, is seen in Psalm 119:34, "Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart." "The sure result of regeneration, or the bestowal of understanding, is the devout reverence for the law and a reverent keeping of it in the heart. The Spirit of God makes us to know the Lord and to understand somewhat of His love, wisdom, holiness, and majesty; and the result is that we honour the law and yield our hearts to the obedience of the faith. The understanding operates upon the affections; it convinces the heart of the beauty of the law, so that the soul loves it with all its powers; and then it reveals the majesty of the law-Giver, and the whole nature bows before His supreme will. He alone obeys God who can say 'My Lord, I would serve Thee, and do it with all my heart'; and none can truly say this till they have received as a free grant the inward illumination of the Holy Spirit" (C. H. Spurgeon).

Ere turning to our final section, a few words need to be added here upon 1 Peter 2:4, "To whom coming as unto a living stone. . .we also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house." Has the sovereign grace of God inclined me to come unto Christ? then it is my duty and interest to "abide" in Him (John 15:4). Abide in Him by a life of faith, and letting His Spirit abide in me without grieving Him (Eph. 4:30) or quenching His motions (1 Thess. 5:19). It is not enough that I once believed on Christ, I must live in and upon Him by faith daily: Galatians 2:20. It is in this way of continual coming to Christ that we are "built up a spiritual house." It is in this way the life of grace is maintained, until it issue in the life of glory. Faith is to be always receiving out of His fulness "grace for grace" (John 1:16). Daily should there be the renewed dedication of myself unto Him and the heart's occupation with Him.

## **10. TESTS**

Unto those who never savingly "came to Christ," He will yet say "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels." The contemplation of those awful words ought to almost freeze the very blood in our veins, searching our consciences and awing our hearts. But, alas, it is much to be feared that Satan will blunt their piercing force unto many of our readers, by assuring them that *they have already* come to Christ, and telling them they are fools to doubt it for a moment. But, O dear friend, seeing that there is no less than your immortal soul at stake, that whether you spend eternity in Heaven with the blessed or in Hell with the cursed, hinges on whether or no you really and truly "come to Christ," will not you read the paragraphs which follow with double care.

1. How many rest on their sound doctrinal views of Christ. They believe firmly in His Deity, His holy humanity, His perfect life, His vicarious death, His bodily resurrection, His ascension to God's right hand, His present intercession on high, and His second advent. So too did many of those to whom James addressed his epistle, but he reminded them that the "demons also believe and tremble" (2:19). O my reader, saving faith in Christ is very much more than assenting to the teachings of Scripture concerning Him; it is the giving up of the soul unto Him to be saved, to renounce all else, to yield fully unto Him.

2. How many mistake the absence of doubts for a proof they have savingly come to Christ. They take for granted that for which they have no clear evidence. But, reader, a man possesses not Christ by faith as he does money in a strongbox or title-deeds of land which are preserved by his lawyer, and which he never looks at once in a year. No, Christ is as "bread" which a man feeds upon, chews, digests, which his stomach works upon continually, and by which he is nourished and strengthened: John 6:53. The empty professor feeds upon a good opinion of himself, rather than upon Christ.

3. How many mistake the stirring of the emotions for the Spirit's quickening of the affections. If people weep under the preaching of the word, superficial observers are greatly encouraged, and if they go forward to the "mourners' bench" and sob and wail over their sins, this is regarded as a sure sign that God has savingly convicted them. But a supernatural work of Divine grace goes much deeper than that. Tears are but on the surface, and are a matter of temperamental constitution—even in nature, some of those who feel things the most give the least outward sign of it. It is the weeping of the heart which God requires; it is a godly sorrow for sin which breaks its reigning power over the soul that evidences regeneration.

4. How many mistake a fear of the wrath to come for an hatred of sin. No one wants to go to Hell. If the intellect be convinced of its reality, and the unspeakable awfulness of its torments are in a measure believed, then there may be great uneasiness of mind, fear of conscience, and anguish of heart, over the prospect of suffering its eternal burnings. Those fears may last a considerable time, yea, their effects may never completely wear off. The subject of them may come under the ministry of a faithful servant of God, hear him describe the deep ploughing of the Spirit's work, and conclude that he has been the subject of them, yet have none of that love for Christ which manifests itself in a life, all the details of which seek to honour and glorify Him.

5. How many mistake a false peace for a true one. Let a person who has had awakened within him a natural dread of the lake of fire, whose own conscience has made him wretched, and the preaching he has heard terrify him yet more, then is he not (like a drowning man) ready to clutch at a straw. Let one of the false prophets of the day tell him that all he has to do is believe John 3:16 and salvation is his, and how eagerly will he—though unchanged in heart— drink in such "smooth things." Assured that nothing more is required than to firmly believe that God loves him and that Christ died for him, and his burden is gone: peace now fills him. Yes, and nineteen times out of twenty, that "peace" is nothing but Satan's opiate, drugging his conscience and chloroforming him into Hell. "There is no (true, spiritual) peace, saith my God, to the wicked," and unless the heart has been purified no man will see God (Matt. 5:8).

6. How many mistake self-confidence for spiritual assurance. It is natural for each of us to think well and hope well of ourselves, and to imagine with Haman, "I am the man whom the King delighteth to honour." Perhaps the reader is ready to say, That is certainly not true

of me: so far from having a high esteem, I regard myself as a worthless, sinful creature. Yes, and so deceitful is the human heart, and so ready is Satan to turn everything to his own advantage, these very lowly thoughts of self may be feasted on, and rested on to assure the heart that all is well with you. The apostate king Saul began by having a lowly estimate of himself (1 Sam. 9:21).

7. How many make a promise the sole ground of their faith, and look no further than the letter of it. Thus the Jews were deceived by the letter of the law, for they never saw the spiritual meaning of Moses' ministry. In like manner, multitudes are deceived by the letter of such promises as Acts 16:31; Romans 10:13, etc., and look not to Christ in them: they see that He is the jewel in the casket, but rest upon the superscription without, and never lay hold of the Treasure within. But unless the *person* of Christ be apprehended, unless there be a real surrendering to His Lordship, unless He be Himself received into the heart, then believing the letter of the promises will avail nothing.

The above paragraphs have been written in the hope that God may be pleased to arouse some empty professors out of their false security. But lest any of Christ's little ones be stumbled, we close with an excerpt from John Bunyan's *Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ*: "How shall we know that such men are coming to Christ? Answer: do they cry out at sin, being burdened with it, as an exceedingly bitter thing? Do they fly from it, as from the face of a deadly serpent? Do they cry out of the insufficiency of their own righteousness, as to justification in the sight of God? Do they cry out after the Lord Jesus to save them? Do they see more worth and merit in one drop of Christ's blood to save them, than in all the sins of the world to damn them? Are they tender of sinning against Jesus Christ? Do they favour Christ in this world, and do they leave all the world for His

sake? And are they willing (God helping them) to run hazards for His name, for the love they bear to Him? Are His saints precious to them? If these things be so, these men *are* coming to Christ."

## **Part IV - Assurances**

### **11. INTRODUCTION**

By way of introduction and in order to acquaint the reader with the particular angle of viewpoint from which we now approach our present theme, let it be pointed out that changing conditions in Christendom call for an ever-varying emphasis on different aspects of Divine Truth. At different periods the true servants of God have had to face widely different situations, and meet errors of varied character. This has called for a campaign of offense and defense adapted to the exigencies of many situations. The weapons suited to one conflict were quite useless for another; fresh ones needing to be constantly drawn from the armory of Scripture.

At the close of that lengthy period known as the "dark ages" (though throughout it God never left Himself without a clear witness), when the Lord caused a flood of light to break forth upon Christendom, the Reformers were faced by the hoary errors of Romanism, among which was her insistence that none could be positively assured of his salvation till the hour of death was reached. This caused Luther and his contemporaries to deliver a positive message, seeking to stimulate confidence toward God and the laying hold of His sure promises. Yet it has to be acknowledged there were times when their zeal carried them too far, leading to a position which could not be successfully defended from the Scriptures. Many of the Reformers insisted that assurance was an essential element in saving faith itself,

and that unless a person *knew* he was "accepted in the Beloved" he was yet in his sins. Thus, in the revolt from Romanism, the Protestant pendulum swung too far to the opposite side.

In the great mercy of God the *balance* of Truth was restored in the days of the Puritans. The principal doctrine which Luther and his fellows had emphasized so forcibly was justification by faith alone, but at the close of the sixteenth century and in the early part of the seventeenth such men as Perkins, Gattaker, Rollock, etc., made prominent the collateral doctrine of sanctification by the Spirit. For the next fifty years the Church on earth was blest with many men "mighty in the Scriptures," deeply taught of God, enabled by Him to maintain a well-rounded ministry. Such men as Goodwin, Owen, Charnock, Flavel, Sibbs, etc., though living in troublous times and suffering fierce persecution, taught the Word more helpfully (in our judgment) and were more used of God than any since the days of the apostles to the present hour.

The ministry of the Puritans was an exceedingly searching one. While magnifying the free grace of God in no uncertain terms, while teaching plainly that the satisfaction of Christ alone gave *title* to Heaven, while emphatically repudiating all creature-merits, they nevertheless insisted that a supernatural and transforming work of the Spirit in the heart and life of the believer was indispensable to *fit* him for Heaven. Professors were rigidly tested, and the results and fruits of faith were demanded before its presence was admitted. Self-examination was frequently insisted upon, and full details given as to how one might ascertain that he was a "new creature in Christ Jesus." Christians were constantly urged to "make their calling and election sure" by ascertaining that they had clear evidence of the same. While conditions were far from being perfect, yet there is good reason to conclude that more deluded souls were undeceived and



more hypocrites exposed than at any other period since the first century A.D.

The eighteenth century witnessed a sad declension and departure from the faith. Worldly prosperity brought in spiritual deterioration. As the Puritan leaders died off, none were raised up to fill their places. Arminianism spread rapidly, followed by Deism (Unitarianism) and other fatal errors. Worldliness engulfed the churches, and lawlessness and wickedness were rampant without. The Gospel-trumpet was almost silent, and the remnant of God's people dwindled down to an insignificant and helpless handful. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. Again the light of God shone forth powerfully in the darkness: Whitefield, Romaine, Gill, Hervey, and others being raised up by God to revive His saints and convert many sinners to Christ. The main emphasis of their preaching and teaching was upon the sovereign grace of God as exhibited in the everlasting covenant, the certain efficacy of Christ's atonement unto all for whom it was made, and the work of the Spirit in regeneration.

Under the God-given revivals of the latter part of the eighteenth century the great *doctrines* of the Christian faith occupied the most prominent place. In order that the balance of truth might be preserved during the next two or three generations it became necessary for the servants of God to emphasize the *experimental* side of things. Intellectual orthodoxy qualifies none for Heaven: there must be a moral and spiritual transformation, a miracle of grace wrought within the soul, which begins at regeneration and is carried on by sanctification. During that period doctrinal exposition receded more and more into the background, and the practical application of the Word to the heart and life was the characteristic feature in orthodox circles. This called for serious self-examination, and that,

in many cases, resulted in doubtings and despondency. Where a due balance is not preserved by preachers and teachers between the objective and subjective sides of the truth, where the latter preponderates, either a species of mysticism or a lack of assurance ensues.

The second half of last century found many circles of professing Christians on the borders of the Slough of Despond. In many companies the full assurance of salvation was looked upon as a species of fanaticism or as carnal presumption. Unduly occupied with themselves, ill-instructed upon the "two natures" in the Christian, thousands of poor souls regarded doubts and fears, sighs and groans, as the highest evidence of a regenerate state; but those being mixed with worldly and fleshly lustings, the subjects were afraid to affirm they were children of God. To meet this situation many ill-trained evangelists and teachers sought to direct attention to Christ and His "finished work," and to get their hearers' confidence placed upon the bare Word of God. While one evil was corrected another was committed: while the letter of Scripture was honored, the work of the Spirit was (unwittingly) dishonored. Supposing they had a remedy which was sure to work in all cases alike, a superficial work resulted, the aftermath of which we are now reaping. Thousands of souls who give no evidence of being born again are quite confident that Christ has saved them.

From the brief outline presented above, it will be seen that the pendulum has swung from one side to the other. Man is a creature of extremes, and nought but the grace of God can enable any of us to steer a middle path. A careful study of the course of religious history also reveals the fact that the servants of God have been obliged, from time to time, to vary their note of emphasis. This is one meaning of that expression, "and be established in the present truth" (2 Pet.

1:12), namely that particular aspect or line of truth which is most needful at any given time. Instead of gaining ground, the Puritans had lost it had they merely echoed what the Reformers had taught. It was not that Owen contradicted Luther, rather did he *supplement* him. Where particular stress has been laid on the counsels of sovereign grace and the imputed righteousness of Christ, this needs to be followed by attention being drawn to the work of the Spirit *within* the saints. In like manner, where much ministry has been given on the Christian's state, there is a need for a clear exposition of his standing before God.

It is truly deplorable that so few have recognized the need for *applying* the principle that has just been mentioned. So many, having a zeal which is not tempered by knowledge, suppose that because some honored servant of God in the past was granted much success through his dwelling so largely upon one particular line of truth, that *they* will have equal success provided they imitate him. But circumstances alter cases. The different states through which the professing Church passes, calls for different ministry. There is such a thing as "a word spoken *in due season*"(Prov. 15:23):O that it may please God to open the eyes of many to see *what* is most "seasonable" for the degenerate times in which our lot is cast, and grant them spiritual discernment to recognize that even many portions of Divine truth may prove highly injurious to souls if given them *out* of season.

We recognize this fact easily enough in connection with material things, why are we so slow to do so when it concerns spiritual things? Meats and nuts are nutritious, but who would think of feeding an infant upon them? So too sickness of the body calls for a change of diet. The same is true of the soul. To make this clearer, let us select one or two extreme cases. The truth of eternal punishment should be

faithfully preached by every servant of God, but would a broken-hearted woman who had just lost her husband or child, be a suitable audience? The glory and bliss of the heavenly state is a precious theme, but would it be fitting to present it unto a professing Christian who was intoxicated? The eternal security of the saints is clearly revealed in Holy Writ, but does that justify me in pressing it on the attention of a *backslidden* child of God?

Our introduction has been a lengthy one, yet we deemed it necessary to pave the way for what follows. The servant of God is facing today a dreadfully serious and solemn situation. Much that is dearest of all to his heart he has largely to be silent upon. If he is to faithfully deal with souls, he must address himself to the condition they are in. Unless he is much upon his guard, unless he constantly seeks wisdom and guidance from above, he is likely to make bad matters worse. On every side are people full of assurance, certain that they are journeying to Heaven; yet their daily lives show plainly that they are deceived, and that their assurance is only a fleshly one. Thousands are, to use their own words, "resting on John 3:16," or 5:24, and have not the slightest doubt they will spend eternity with Christ. Nevertheless it is the bounden duty of every real servant of God to tell the great majority of them that they are woefully deluded by Satan. O that it may please God to give us the ear and serious attention of some of them.

Some time ago we read of an incident which, as nearly as we recall, was as follows. Nearly one hundred years since, conditions in England were similar to what they have recently been in this country. Banks were failing, and people were panic-stricken. One man who had lost confidence in the banks, drew out all his money in five-pound notes, and then got a friend to change them into gold. Conditions grew worse, other banks failed, and some of this man's

friends told him they had lost their all. With much confidence he informed them that he had drawn out *his* money, had changed it into gold, and that this was secretly hidden where no one would find it; so that he was perfectly safe. A little later, when needing to buy some things, he went to his secret hoard and took out five golden sovereigns. He went from one shop to another, but none would accept them— they were bad ones. Thoroughly alarmed, he went to his hidden money, only to find that it was all counterfeit coin!

Now, dear reader, you too may be quite sure that *your* faith in Christ is *true* "gold," and yet, after all, be mistaken. The danger of this is not to be fancied, but real. The human heart is dreadfully deceitful (Jer. 17:9). God's Word plainly warns us that "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is *not washed* from their filthiness" (Prov. 30:12). Do you ask (O that you *may*, in deep earnestness and sincerity) How can I be *sure* that my faith is a genuine and saving one? The answer is, *Test* it. Make certain that it is the "faith of God's elect" (Titus 1:1). Ascertain whether or no your faith is accompanied with those *fruits* which are inseparable from a God-given and Spirit-wrought faith.

Probably many are ready to say, There is no need for me to be put to any such trouble; I *know* that *my* faith is a saving one, for I am resting on the finished work of Christ. But dear friend, it is foolish to talk like that. God Himself bids His people *to make* their "calling and election *sure*" (2 Pet. 1:10). Is that a needless exhortation? O pit not your vain confidence against Divine wisdom. It is Satan who is striving so hard to keep many from this very task, lest they discover that their house is built on the sand. There is hope for one who discovers his illusion, but there is none for those who go on believing the Devil's lie, and rest content with the very real but *false* peace which he gives to so many of his poor victims.

God Himself has supplied us *with tests*, and we are mad if we do not avail ourselves of them, and honestly measure ourselves by them. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God: *that ye may know* that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe (more intelligently) on the name of the Son of God" (1 John 5:13). The Holy Spirit Himself moved one of His servants to write a whole Epistle to instruct us *how* we might know whether or not we have eternal life. Does that look as though the question may be determined and settled as easily as so many present-day preachers and writers represent it? If nothing more than a firm persuasion of the truth of John 3:16 or 5:24 be needed to assure me of my salvation, then why did God give a whole Epistle to instruct us on this subject?

Let the really concerned soul read slowly and thoughtfully through this first epistle of John, and let him duly observe that not once in its five chapters are we told "We know that we have passed from death unto life *because* we are resting on the finished work of Christ." The total absence of such a statement ought, surely, to convince us that something must be radically wrong with so much of the popular teaching of the day on this subject. But not only is there no such declaration made in this epistle, the very first passage which contains the familiar "we know" is quite the reverse of what is now being so widely advocated as *the ground* of Christian assurance. "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments" (1 John 2:3). Is not that plain enough? A *godly life* is the first proof that I am a child of God.

But let us observe the solemn declaration that immediately follows. "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:4). Do these words anger you? We trust not: they are *God's*, not ours. Do you refuse to read

any more of this article? That would be a bad sign: an *honest* heart does not fear the light. A sincere soul is willing to be searched by the Truth. If you are unable to endure now the feeble probing of one of His servants, how will it fare in a soon-coming day when the Lord Himself shall search you through and through? O dear friend, give your poor soul a fair chance, be willing to ascertain whether your faith is real wheat, or only chaff. If it prove to be the latter, there is still time for you to humble yourself before God and cry unto Him to give you saving faith. But in that Day it will be too late!

"He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:4). How plain and pointed is this language! How awful its clear intimation! Do you not see, dear reader, this verse plainly implies that there *are* those who claim to *know* Christ, and yet are liars. The father of lies has deceived them, and he is doing everything in his power to keep them from being undeceived. *That* is why the unregenerate reader finds this article so unpalatable, and wishes to turn from it. O resist this inclination, we beseech you. God has given us this very verse by which we may measure ourselves, and discover whether or not *our* "assurance of salvation" will stand the test of His Holy Word. Then act not like the silly ostrich, which buries his head in the sand rather than face his danger.

Let us quote one more verse from this *first* "we know" passage in John's epistle: "But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him" (1 John 2:5). This stands in sharp contrast from the preceding verse. The apostle was here moved to set before us some clear scriptural *evidences* of spiritual faith and love, which constitute the vital difference between sheep and goats. In verse 4 it is the empty professor who says "I know Christ as my personal Saviour." He has a

theoretical, but not a vital knowledge of Him. He boasts that he is resting on Christ's finished work, and is confident that he is saved; but keeps not His commandments. He is still a self-pleaser. Like Solomon's sluggard, he is "wiser in his own conceit than seven men that *can* give a reason" (Prov. 26:16). He talks boldly, but walks carelessly.

In verse 5 it is the genuine Christian who is in view. *He* does not *say* "I know Him," instead he *proves* it. The apostle is not here presenting Christ as the immediate Object of faith, but is describing him who has savingly fled to the Lord for refuge, and this, by the effects produced. In him Christ's Word is everything: his food, his constant meditation, his chart. He "keeps" it, in memory, in heart, in action. Christ's "commandments" occupy his thoughts and prayers as much as do His promises. That Word working in him subdues his carnal desires, feeds his graces, and draws them into real exercise and act. That Word has *such* a place in his heart and mind that he cannot but give proof of the same in his talk and walk. In *this* way the "love of God is perfected": the Family likeness is plainly stamped upon him; all can see to *which* "father" he belongs—contrast John 8:44.

"*Whoso keepeth his word. . .* hereby (in this way) know we that we *are* in Him." Keep His Word perfectly? No. But actually, characteristically, in deep desire and honest effort *to* do so. Yes. Regeneration is that miracle of Divine grace wrought in the soul which enlists the affections Godward, which brings the human will into subjection to the Divine, and which produces a real and radical change in the life. That change is from worldliness to godliness, from disobedience to obedience. At the new birth, the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit, and that love is manifested in a dominating longing and sincere purpose to *please in all things* the



One who has plucked me as a brand from the burning. There is a greater difference between the genuine Christian and the deceived professing Christian than there is between a living man and a corpse. None need remain in doubt if they will *honestly measure themselves* by the Holy Word of God.

There is only space for us to consider one other scripture in this opening article, namely, the Parable of the Sower. Why did the Lord Jesus give us that parable? Why, but to stir me up to serious inquiry and diligent examination so as to discover *which* kind of a "hearer" I am. In that parable, Christ likened those who hear the Word unto various sorts of ground upon which the seed falls. He divided them into four different classes. Three out of the four brought no fruit to perfection. That is exceedingly solemn and searching. In one case, the Devil catches away the good seed out of the heart (Luke 8:12). In another case, they "for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away" (Luke 8:13). In another case, they are "choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life" (Luke 8:14). Are you, my reader, described in one of these? Do not ignore this question; we beg you: face it honestly, and make sure *which* of the various soils represents *your* heart.

But there are some "good ground" hearers. And *how are they to be identified?* What did the infallible Son of God say of them? How did He describe them? Did He say, "that on the good ground are they who rest on the Word of God, and doubt not His promises; are thoroughly persuaded they are saved, and yet go on living the same kind of life as previously"? No, He did not. Instead, He declared, "But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15). Ah, dear readers, the test is *fruit*: not knowledge, not boastings, not orthodoxy, not joy, but fruit; and *such* "fruit" as mere

nature cannot produce. It is the fruit of the Vine, namely, *likeness to Christ*, being conformed to His image. May the Holy Spirit search each one of us.

"Can true believers be infallibly assured that they are in the estate of grace, and that they shall persevere therein unto salvation? Answer: Such as truly believe in Christ, and endeavour to walk in all good conscience before Him (1 John 2:3), may, without extraordinary revelation, by faith grounded upon the truth of God's promises, and by the Spirit enabling them to discern in themselves those graces to which the promises of life are made (1 John 3:14, 18, 19, 21, 24; Heb. 6:11-12, etc.), and bearing witness with their spirits that they are the children of God (Rom. 8:16), be infallibly assured that they are in the estate of grace and shall persevere therein unto salvation (1 John 5:13; 2 Tim. 1:12)."

"Assurance is the believer's full conviction that, through the work of Christ alone, received by faith, he is in possession of a salvation in which he will be eternally kept. And this assurance rests only upon the Scripture promises to him who believes."

The careful reader will perceive a considerable difference of doctrine in the two quotations given above. The former is the product of the Puritans, the latter is a fair sample of what the boasted enlightenment of the twentieth century has brought forth. The one is extracted from the Westminster Confession of Faith (the doctrinal statement of the Presbyterians), the other is taken from the "Scofield Bible." In the one, the balance of Truth is helpfully preserved; in the second, the work and witness of the Holy Spirit is altogether ignored. This example is only one out of scores we could cite, which sadly illustrates how far we have gone backward. The answer given by the Puritans is calculated to lead to heart searchings; the definition (if

such it may be called) of the popular dispensationalist is likely to bolster up the deluded. This brings us to consider, more definitely, the *nature* of assurance.

## 12. ITS NATURE

Let us begin by asking the question, Assurance of *what*? That the Holy Scriptures are the inspired and infallible Word of God? No, that is not our subject. Assured that salvation is by grace alone? No, for neither is that our immediate theme. Rather, the assurance that I am no longer in a state of nature, but in a state of grace; and this, not as a mere conjectural persuasion, but as resting on sure evidence. It is a well-authenticated realization that not only has my mind been enlightened concerning the great truths of God's Word, but that a supernatural work has been wrought in my soul which has made me a new creature in Christ Jesus. A scriptural assurance of salvation is that knowledge which the Holy Spirit imparts to the heart through the Scriptures, that *my* "faith" is not a natural one, but "the faith *of God's elect*" (Titus 1:1), that my love for Christ is sincere and not fictitious, that my daily walk is that of a regenerated man.

The assurance of the saints is, as the Westminster divines said, "by the Spirit enabling them to discern in themselves those graces to which the promises of life are made." Let us seek to amplify that statement. At the commencement of Matthew 5 we find the Lord Jesus pronouncing *blessed* a certain class of people. They are not named as "believers" or saints," but instead are described by their characters; and it is only by comparing ourselves and others with the description that the Lord Jesus there gave, that we are enabled to *identify* such. First, He said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." To be "poor in spirit" is to have a feeling sense that in me, that is, in my

flesh, "there dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18). It is the realization that I am utterly destitute of anything and everything which could commend me favorably to God's notice. It is to recognize that I am a spiritual bankrupt. It is the consciousness, even now (not years ago, when I was first awakened), that I am without strength and wisdom, and that I am a helpless creature, completely dependent upon the grace and mercy of God. To be "poor in spirit" is the opposite of Laodiceanism, which consists of self-complacency and self-sufficiency, imagining I am "rich, and in need of nothing."

"Blessed are they that mourn." It is one thing to believe the theory that I am spiritually a poverty-stricken pauper, it is quite another to have an acute sense of it in my soul. Where the latter exists, there are deep exercises of heart, which evoke the bitter cry, "my leanness, my leanness, woe unto me!" (Isa. 24:16). There is deep anguish that there is so little growth in grace, so little fruit to God's glory, such a wretched return made for His abounding goodness unto me. This is accompanied by an ever-deepening discovery of the depths of corruption which is still within me. The soul finds that when it would do good, evil is present with him (Rom. 7:21). It is grieved by the motions of unbelief, the swellings of pride, the surging of rebellion against God. Instead of peace, there is war within; instead of realizing his holy aspirations, the blessed one is daily defeated; until the stricken heart cries out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24).

"Blessed are the meek." Meekness is *yieldedness*. It is the opposite of self-will. Meekness is pliability and meltedness of heart, which makes me submissive and responsive to God's will. Now observe, dear reader, these first three marks of the "blessed" consist not in outward actions, but of inward graces; not in showy deeds, but in states of soul. Note too that they are far from being characteristics

which will render their possessor pleasing and popular to the world. He who feels himself to be a spiritual pauper will not be welcomed by the wealthy Laodiceans. He who daily mourns for his leanness, his barrenness, his sinfulness, will not be courted by the self-righteous. He who is truly meek will not be sought after by the self-assertive. No, he will be scorned by the Pharisees and looked upon with contempt by those who boast they are "out of Romans 7 and living in Romans 8." These lovely graces, which are of great price in the sight of God, are despised by the bloated professors of the day.

We must not now review the additional marks of the "blessed" named by the Redeemer at the beginning of His precious Sermon on the Mount, but at one other we will just glance. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake.. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you. . .for My sake" (Matt. 5:10, 11). Observe that this antagonism is not evoked by wrongdoing, or by a well-grounded offence. They who are morose, selfish, haughty, evil speakers, cruel, have no right to shelter behind this beatitude, when people retaliate against them. No, it is where Christ-likeness of character and conduct is assailed; where practical godliness condemns the worldly ways of empty professors, that fires their enmity; where humble but vital piety cannot be tolerated by those who are destitute of the same. Blessed, said Christ, are the spiritual, whom the carnal hate; the gentle sheep, whom the dogs snap at.

Now dear reader, seek grace to honestly measure yourself by these criteria. Do such heavenly graces adorn your soul? Are these marks of those whom the Son of God pronounces "blessed" stamped upon *your* character? Are you truly "poor in spirit"? We say "truly": for it is easy to adopt expressions and call ourselves names—if you are offended when someone else applies them to you, it shows you do not mean what you say. Do you "mourn" over your lack of conformity

to Christ, the feebleness of your faith, the coldness of your love? Are you "meek"? Has your will been broken and your heart made submissive to God? Do you hunger and thirst after righteousness?—do you use the means of grace, your searching of the Scriptures, your prayers, evince it? Are you "merciful," or censorious and harsh? Are you "pure in heart"? grieved when an impure imagination assails? If not, you have no right to regard yourself as "blessed"; instead you are under the curse of a holy and sin-hating God.

It is *not*, Are these spiritual graces *fully developed* within you—they never are in this life. But are they truly present at all? It is not are you completely emptied of self, but is it your sincere desire and earnest prayer to be so. It is not do you "mourn" as deeply as you ought over indwelling sin and its activities, but have you *felt* at all "the plague" of your own heart (1 Kings 8:38). It is not is your meekness all that can be desired, but is there unmistakable proof that the root of it has actually been communicated to your soul? There is a growth: "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." But that which has no existence can have no growth. Has the "seed" (1 Pet. 1:23) of grace been planted in your heart: *that* is the point which each of us is called upon to determine—not to assume, or take for granted, but to make "sure" (2 Pet. 1:10) of. And this is done when we faithfully examine our hearts to discover whether or not there is in them those spiritual graces to which the promises of God are addressed.

While Gospel assurance is the opposite of carnal presumption and of unbelieving doubts, yet it is far from being opposed to thorough self-examination. But alas, so many have been taught, and by men highly reputed for their orthodoxy, that if it is not actually wrong, it is highly injurious for a Christian to look within. There is a *balance* of truth to be observed here, as everywhere. That one might become too

introspective is readily granted, but that a Christian is never to search his own heart, test his faith, scrutinize his motives, and make sure that he has the "root of the matter" within him (Job 19:28), is contradicted by many plain Scriptures. Regeneration is a work which God performs *within* us (Phil. 1:6), and as eternal destiny hinges on the same, it behooves every serious soul to take the utmost pains and ascertain whether or not this miracle of grace has been wrought within him. When Paul stood in doubt of the state of the Galatians, he said, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed *in* you" (4:19). So to the Colossians he wrote, "Christ *in* you, the hope of glory" (1:27).

"For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in (or "by") God" (John 3:20, 21). Here is one of the vital differences between the unregenerate and the regenerate, the unbelieving and the believing. Unbelief is far more than an error of judgment, or speculative mistake into which an *honest* mind may fall; it proceeds from heart-enmity against God. The natural man, while left to himself, hates the searching light of God (v. 19), fearful lest it should disquiet the conscience, expose the fallacy of his presumptuous confidence, and shatter his false peace. But it is the very reverse with him who has been given "an honest and good heart." He who acts sincerely and conscientiously, desiring to know and do the whole will of God without reserve, welcomes the Light.

The genuine Christian believes what Scripture says concerning the natural heart, namely, that it is "deceitful above all things" (Jer. 17:9), and the surest proof that he *does* believe this solemn fact is that he is deeply concerned lest "a deceived heart hath turned *him* aside" (Isa. 44:20), and caused him to believe that all is well with his

soul, when in reality he is yet "in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity." He believes what God's Word says about Satan, the great deluder, and trembles lest, after all, the Devil has beguiled him with a false peace. Such a possibility, such a likelihood, occasions him much exercise of soul. Like David of old (and every other genuine saint), he "communes with his own heart" (Ps. 4:4), and his "spirit (makes) *diligent search*" (Ps. 77:6). He turns to the light of Holy Writ, anxious to have his character and conduct scrutinized by the same, desiring to have his deeds made manifest, as to whether they proceed from self-love or real love to God.

It is not that we are here seeking to foster any confidence in self, rather do we desire to promote real confidence toward God. It is one thing to make sure that I love God, and it is quite another for me to find satisfaction in that love. The self-examination which the Scriptures enjoin (in 1 Cor. 11:28, for example), is *not* for the purpose of finding something within to make me more acceptable to God, nor as a ground of my justification before Him; but is with the object of discovering whether Christ is being formed in me. There are two extremes to be guarded against: such an undue occupation with the work of the Spirit *within*, that the heart is taken off from the work of Christ *for* His people; and, such a one-sided emphasis upon the imputed righteousness of Christ that the righteousness *imparted* by the Spirit is ignored and disparaged. It is impossible that the Third Person of the Trinity should take up His abode within a soul, without effecting a radical change within him: and it is *this* which I need to make sure of. It is the Spirit's work within the heart which is the only infallible proof of salvation.

It is perfectly true that as I look within and seek to faithfully examine my heart in the light of Scripture, that the work of the Spirit is *not all* I shall discover there. No, indeed: much corruption still remains. The



genuine Christian finds clear evidence of *two* natures, two contrary principles at work within him. This is brought out plainly, not only in Romans 7 and Galatians 5:17, but strikingly too in the Song of Solomon: "What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of *two* armies" (6:13). Hence it is that in her present state, the Bride says, "I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon" (1:5). And again, "I sleep, but my heart waketh" (5:2)—strange language to the natural man, but quite intelligible to the spiritual. And therefore is it also that the renewed soul so often finds suited to his case the prayer of Mark 9:24: "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

It is because the real Christian finds within himself so much that is conflicting, that it is difficult for him to be sure of his actual state. And therefore does he cry, "Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart" (Ps. 26:2). They who are filled with a carnal assurance, a fleshly confidence, a vain presumption, feel no need for asking the Lord to "prove" *them*. So completely has Satan deceived them, that they imagine it would be an act of unbelief so to do. Poor souls, they "call evil good, and good evil"; they "put darkness for light, and light for darkness" (Isa. 5:20). One of the surest marks of regeneration is that the soul frequently cries "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139:23, 24).

Perhaps some of our readers are still ready to say, "I do not see that there needs to be so much difficulty in ascertaining whether one is in a lost or saved condition: I am resting upon John 5:24, and that is sufficient for me." But allow us to point out, dear friend, that John 5:24 is *not* a *promise* which Christ gave to an individual disciple, but instead, a doctrinal declaration which He made in the hearing of a

mixed multitude. If the objector replies, "I believe that verse does contain a promise, and I am going to hold fast to it," then may we lovingly ask, Are you sure that it belongs *to you*? That John 5:24 contains a precious promise, we gladly acknowledge, but to whom is it made? Let us examine it: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

That promise is given to a definitely defined character, namely, "He that *heareth my word*." Now dear reader, can it be truthfully said that you are one that "heareth" His Word? Are you sure? Do not be misled by the mere sound of words. The reference here is not to the hearing of the outward ear, but to the response of the heart. In the days that He sojourned on earth, there were many of whom the Lord Jesus had to say that "hearing (with the outward ear), they hear not" with the heart (Matt. 13:13). So it is still. To "hear" spiritually, to "hear" savingly, is to *heed* (Matt. 18:15), is to *obey* (Matt. 17:5; John 10:27; Heb. 3:7). Ah, are *you* obedient? Have you searched the Scriptures diligently in order to discover His commandments? And that, not to satisfy an idle curiosity, but desiring to put them into practice? Do you love His commandments? Are you actually *doing* them? Not once or twice, but regularly, as the main tenor of your life—for note it is not "hear" but "heareth."

Does someone object, "All of this is getting away from the *simplicity* of Christ: you are taking us from the Word, and seeking to get us occupied with ourselves." Well, does not Scripture say, "Take heed unto thyself" (1 Tim. 4:16)? But it may be answered, "There cannot be any *certainty* while we are occupied with our wretched selves; I prefer to abide by the written Word." To this we have no objection at all: what we are here pressing is the vital necessity of making sure

that the portions of the Word you cite or are resting upon, fairly and squarely *belong to you*. The reader may refer me to "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31) and ask, Is not that plain enough? But have you ever noted, dear friend, to whom the apostles addressed those words, and all the attendant circumstances?

It was neither to a promiscuous crowd, nor to a careless and unconcerned soul, that the apostles said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. Rather was it to an awakened, deeply exercised, penitent soul, who had taken his place in the dust, and in deepest anguish cried, "What must I do to be saved?" However, what is the *use* you are making of Acts 16:31? You answer, "This: those words are divinely simple, I believe in Christ, and therefore I am saved; *God* says so, and the Devil cannot shake me." Possibly he is not at all anxious to; he may be well content for you to retain a carnal confidence. But observe, dear friend, the apostles did not tell the stricken jailor to "believe on Jesus" nor "believe in Christ"; but to "believe on *the Lord Jesus Christ*."

What does it mean to *savingly* "believe"? We have sought to answer this question at length in our recent articles on "Saving Faith." But let us now give a brief reply. John 1:12 makes it clear that to "believe" is to "receive," to receive "Christ Jesus *the Lord*" (Col. 2:6). Christ is the Saviour of none until He is welcomed as Lord. The immediate context shows plainly the particular character in which Christ is there viewed: "He came unto *his own*" (John 1:11); He was their rightful Owner, because their Lord. But "his own received him not"; no, they declared, "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14). Ah, dear friend, this is searching. Have *you* received "*the Lord Jesus Christ*"? We do not ask, "Are you resting on His finished work," but have you bowed to His scepter and owned His authority

in a *practical* way? Have you *disowned your own* sinful lordship? If not, you certainly *have not* "believed on *the Lord Jesus Christ*," and therefore the promise of Acts 16:3 1 does not belong to you.

"Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9). *This* is just as much a part of God's Word as is Acts 16:3 1. Why do we not hear it quoted as frequently! And how can anyone *know* that he is indwelt by the Spirit of Christ? Only by discovering within him the *fruits* of His regenerating and sanctifying grace. *Not* that either these "fruits" or the "good works" of the Christian are in any wise or to any degree meritorious. No, no; but as the *evidence* of his Divine sonship.

### **13. ITS BASIS**

The task which these articles set before us is by no means easily executed. On the one hand, we wish to be kept from taking the "children's" bread and casting it to the "dogs"; on the other, it is our earnest prayer that we may be delivered from casting a stumblingblock before any of God's "little ones." That which occasions our difficulty is the desire to expose an empty profession and to be used of God in writing that which, under His free Spirit, may be used in removing the scales from the eyes of those who, though unregenerate, are resting with carnal confidence on some of the Divine promises given to those who are in Christ—for while a sinner is out of Christ none of the promises belong to him: see 2 Corinthians 1:20. Notwithstanding, it behooves us to seek wisdom from above so that we may write in such a way that any of Christ's who are yet not established in the faith may not draw the conclusion they are still dead in trespasses and sins.

Having before us the twofold objective named above, let us ask the question, Is a simple faith in Christ sufficient to save a soul for time and eternity? At the risk of some readers turning away from this article and refusing to read further, we unhesitatingly answer, No, it is not. The Lord Jesus Himself declared, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). Repentance is just as essential to salvation as is believing. Again, we read that, "wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead" (James 2:20). A "simple faith" which remains alone, a faith which does not purify the heart (Acts 15:9), work by love (Gal. 5:6), and overcome the world (1 John 5:4), will save nobody.

Much confusion has been caused in many quarters through failure to define clearly *what it is* from which the sinner needs saving. Only too often the thought of many minds is restricted to Hell. But that is a very inadequate conception, and often proves most misleading. The only thing which can ever take any creature to Hell is unrepented and unforgiven *sin*. Now on the very first page of the N. T. the Holy Spirit has particularly recorded it that, the incarnate Son of God was named "Jesus" because "he shall *save* his people *from their sins*" (Matt. 1:21). Why is it that that which God has placed at the forefront is relegated to the rear by most of modern evangelists? To ask a person if he has been saved from Hell is much more ambiguous than to inquire if he has been saved from his sins.

Let us attempt to enlarge on this a little, for thousands of professing Christians in these days have but the vaguest idea of what it means to be saved *from sin*. First, it signifies to be saved from the *love* of sin. The heart of the natural man is wedded to everything which is opposed to God. He may not acknowledge it, he may not be conscious of it, yet such is the fact nevertheless. Having been shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin (Ps. 51:5), man cannot but be

enamoured with that which is now part and parcel of his very being. When the Lord Jesus explained why condemnation rests upon the unsaved, He declared "men *loved darkness* rather than light" (John 3:19). Nothing but a supernatural change of heart can deliver any from this dreadful state. Only an omnipotent Redeemer can bring us to "abhor" (Job 42:6) ourselves and loath iniquity. This He does when He saves a soul, for "the fear of the Lord is to *hate evil*" (Prov. 8:13).

Second, to be saved from our sins is to be delivered from the *allowance* of them. It is the unvarying tendency of the natural heart to excuse evil-doing, to extenuate and gloss it over. At the beginning, Adam declined to acknowledge his guilt, and sought to throw the blame upon his wife. It was the same with Eve: instead of honestly acknowledging her wickedness, she attempted to place the onus on the serpent. But how different is the regenerated person's attitude toward sin! "For that which I do, I *allow not*" (Rom. 7:15): Paul committed sin, but he did not approve, still less did he seek to vindicate, it. He disclaimed all friendliness toward it. Nay, more; the real Christian repents of his wrongdoing, confesses it to God, mourns over it, and prays earnestly to be kept from a repetition of the same. Pride, coldness, slothfulness, he hates, yet day by day he finds them reasserting their power over him; yet nightly he returns to the Fountain which has been opened "for sin and for uncleanness" (Zech. 13:1), that he may be cleansed. The true Christian desires to render perfect obedience to God, and cannot rest satisfied with anything short of it; and instead of palliating his failures, he mourns over them.

Third, to be saved from our sins is to be delivered from the *reigning power* or mastery of them. Sin still indwells the Christian, tempts, annoys, wounds, and daily trips him up: "in many things we offend

all" (James 3:2). Nevertheless, sin is not the complete master of the Christian, for he resists and fights against it. While far from being completely successful in his fight, yet, on the other hand, there is a vast difference between him and the helpless slaves of Satan. His repenting, his prayers, his aspirations after holiness, his pressing forward unto the mark set before him, all witness to the fact that sin does *not* have "dominion" over (Rom. 6:14) him. Undoubtedly there are great differences of attainment among God's children: in His high sovereignty, God grants more grace unto one than to another. Some of His children are far more plagued by constitutional sins than others. Some who are very largely delivered from outward transgressions are yet made to groan over inward ones. Some who are largely kept from sins of commission have yet to bewail sins of omission. Yet sin is no longer complete master over any who belong to the household of faith.

The last sentence may perhaps discourage some who have a sensitive conscience. He who is really honest with himself and has had his eyes opened in some degree to see the awful sinfulness of self, and who is becoming more and more acquainted with that sink of iniquity, that mass of corruption which still indwells him, often feels that sin more completely rules him now than ever it did before. When he longs to trust God with all his heart, unbelief seems to paralyze him. When he wishes to be completely surrendered to God's blessed will, murmurings and rebellion surge within him. When he would spend an hour in meditating on the things of God, evil imaginations harass him. When he desires to be more humble, pride seeks to fill him. When he would pray, his mind wanders. The more he fights against these sins, the further off victory seems to be. To him it appears that sin is very much the master of him, and Satan tells him that his profession is vain. What shall we say to such a dear soul who is deeply exercised over this problem? Two things.

First, the very fact that you *are* conscious of these sins and are so much concerned over your failure to overcome them, is a *healthy* sign. It is the blind who cannot see; it is the dead who feel not—true alike naturally and spiritually. Only they who have been quickened into newness of life are capable of real sorrow for sin. Moreover, such experiences as we have mentioned above evidence a *spiritual growth*: a growth in the knowledge of self. As the wise man tells us, "he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow" (Eccl. 1:18). In God's light we see light (Ps. 36:9). The more the Holy Spirit reveals to me the high claims of God's holiness, the more I discover how far short I come of meeting them. Let the midday sun shine into a darkened room, and dust and dirt which before were invisible are now plainly seen. So with the Christian: the more the light of God enters his heart, the more he discovers the spiritual filth which dwells there. Beloved brother, or sister, it is not that you are becoming more sinful, but that God is now giving you a clearer and fuller sight of your sinfulness. Praise Him for it, for the eyes of the vast majority of your fellows (religionists included) are blind, and cannot see what so distresses you!

Second, side by side with sin in your heart is *grace*. There is a new and holy nature within the Christian as well as the old and unholy one. Grace is active within you, as well as sin. The new nature is influencing your conduct as well as the old. Why is it that you so desire *to be* conformed to the image of Christ, to trust Him fully, love Him fervently, and serve Him diligently? These longings proceed not from the flesh. No, my distressed brother or sister, sin is *not* your *complete* master; if it were, all aspirations, prayers, and strivings after holiness would be banished from your heart. There are "as it were the company of *two* armies" (Song of Sol. 6:13) fighting to gain control of the Christian. As it was with our mother Rebekah—"the children struggled together within her" (Gen. 25:22)—so it is with us.



But the very "struggle" shows that the issue is not yet decided: had sin *conquered*, the soul would no longer be able to *resist*. The conqueror disarms his enemy so that he can no longer fight back. The very fact that you *are* still "fighting" proves that sin has not vanquished you! It may *seem* to you that it soon will: but the issue is not in doubt—Christ will yet save you from the very *presence* of sin.

Having sought in the above paragraphs to heed the injunction found in Hebrews 12:12, 13 to "lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees," and to make "straight paths" for the feet of God's little ones, "*lest* that which is lame be turned out of the way," let us again direct our attention unto those who "have not a doubt" of *their* acceptance in Christ, and perhaps feel no personal need for what has been said above. The Lord declared that a tree is known by its fruits, so there cannot be anything wrong in examining the tree of our heart, to ascertain *what* kind of "fruit" it is now bringing forth, and discover whether it be such as may proceed from mere nature, or that which can only issue from indwelling grace. It may at once be objected, But nothing spiritual can issue from ourselves. From our *natural* selves, No; but from a *regenerated* person, Yes. But how can an evil tree ever be any different? Christ said, "Make the tree good, and his fruit good" (Matt. 12:33). This is typed out by engrafting a new slip on an old stock.

All pretensions unto the present enjoyment of the assurance of faith by those whose daily lives are unbecoming the Gospel are groundless. They who are confident of entering that Eternal Happiness which consists very much in a perfect freedom from all sin, but who now *allow* themselves in the practice of sin (persuading themselves that Christ has fully atoned for the same), are deceived. None truly desire to be free from sin in the future, who do not sincerely long to forsake it in the present. He who does not pant after

holiness here is dreadfully mistaken if he imagines he desires holiness hereafter. Glory is but grace consummated; the heavenly life is but the full development of the regenerated life on earth. Neither death nor the second coming of Christ will effect any radical change in the Christian: it will only perfect what he *already* has and is. Any, then, who pretend unto the assurance of salvation, boast of their pardon and present possession of eternal life, but who have not an experience of deep sorrow for sin, real indignation against it, and hatred of themselves because of transgressions, know nothing at all of what *holy assurance* is.

In considering the *basis* of the Christian's assurance we must distinguish sharply between the ground of his *acceptance before God*, and his own knowledge *that he is* accepted by Him. Nothing but the righteousness of Christ—wrought out by Him in His virtuous life and vicarious death—can give any sinner a perfect legal standing before the thrice holy God. And nothing but the communication of a new nature, a supernatural work of grace within, can furnish proof that the righteousness of Christ *has been* placed to my account. Whom God legally saves, he experimentally saves; whom He justifies, them He also sanctifies. Where the righteousness of Christ is *imputed* to an individual, a principle of holiness is *imparted* to him; the former can only be ascertained by the latter. It is impossible to obtain a scriptural knowledge that the merits of Christ's finished work are reckoned to my account, except by proving that the efficacy of the Holy Spirit's work is evident in my soul.

"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (2 Pet. 1:10). Why *that order* of "calling" before "election"? Here it is the converse of what we find in Romans 8:29, 30, "whom he did (1) predestinate, them he also (2) called"; but here in Peter the Christian is bidden to make sure (1) his "calling" and (2)

his "election." Why this variation of order? The answer is simple: in Romans 8:29, 30, it is the execution of God's eternal counsels; but in 2 Peter 1 it is the Christian's obtaining an experimental knowledge of the same. I have to work back from effect to cause, to examine the fruit so as to discover the nature of the tree. I have no immediate access to the Lamb's book of life, but if I obtain clear proof that I have been effectually called by God out of the darkness of sin's enmity into the light of reconciliation, then I *know* that *my* name is written there.

And *how* am I to make my "calling and election *sure*"? The context of this passage tells me very plainly. In verses 5-7 we read, "And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love." There we have a summary of those graces which make up the Christian character. The word "add" signifies "supply in connection with," just as in a choir a number of parts and voices unite together in making harmony; or, as in a rainbow the various colors, side by side, blend into one beautiful whole. In the previous verses the apostle had spoken of the grace of God manifested toward His elect: by regeneration they had "escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." Now he adds, Rest not satisfied with a negative salvation, but press forward unto perfection: be in thorough earnest to "add to your faith" these virtues. Faith is not to be alone, but the other spiritual graces must supplement and adorn it.

In verses 8, 9 the Spirit moved the apostle to set before us the consequences of a compliance or a non-compliance with the duties specified in verses 5-7. The "these things" in verse 8 are the seven graces of the previous verses. If "all diligence" be devoted to the

acquiring and cultivating of those lovely virtues, then a certain consequence is sure to follow: as cause stands to effect, so is fruitfulness dependent on Christian diligence. Just as the neglect of our daily food will lead to leanness and feebleness, just as lack of exercise means flabby muscles, so a disregard of the Divine injunction of verse 5 issues in soul-barrenness, lack of vision, and loss of holy assurance. This brings us now to verse 10.

The "Wherefore the rather, brethren," of verse 10 points to a contrast from the sad tragedy presented in verse 9. There we see the pitiful results of being in a backslidden state of soul. There is no remaining stationary in the Christian life: he who does not progress, retrogrades. He who does not diligently heed the Divine precepts, soon loses the good of the Divine promises. He who does not add or conjoin with his "faith" the graces mentioned in verses 5-7, will soon fall under the power of unbelief. He who does not cultivate the garden of his soul, will quickly find it grown over with weeds. He who neglects God's exhortations will lose the joy of His salvation, and will lapse into such a state of doubting that he will seriously question his Divine sonship. To prevent this the apostle says, "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure."

The obvious meaning, then, of this exhortation in 2 Peter 1:10 is, Bestir yourselves, take pains to secure satisfactory evidence that you are among the effectually called and elect of God. Let there be no doubt or uncertainty about it: you profess to be a child of God, then justify your profession by cultivating the character and displaying the conduct of one. Sure proof is this that something more than a mere resting upon John 5:24 or Acts 16:31 is demanded of us! It is only in proportion as the Christian manifests the fruit of a genuine conversion that he is entitled to regard himself and be regarded by

others as one of the called and elect of God. It is just in proportion as we add to our faith the other Christian graces that we have solid ground on which to rest the assurance we belong to the family of Christ. It is not those who are governed by self-will, but "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:14).

"In times so critical to the interests of vital religion, and amidst such awful departures from the faith as we are daily called upon to behold, it becomes a very anxious inquiry in the breasts of the humble—Is there no method under Divine grace by which the believer may arrive to a well-grounded assurance, concerning the great truths of the Gospel? Is it not possible for him to be so firmly settled in those great truths, as that he shall not only be ready 'to give an answer to every one that asketh him a reason of the hope that is in him,' but to find the comfort of it in his own mind, that his faith 'doth not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God'? To this inquiry I answer, Yes, blessed be God, there is. An infallible method is discovered, at once to secure from the possibility of apostasy, and to afford comfort and satisfaction to the believer's own mind, concerning the great truths of God; namely, from *the Spirit's work in the heart*; by the sweet influences of which he may find 'joy and peace in believing, and abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit'" (Robert Hawker, 1803).

Christian assurance, then, is a scripturally-grounded knowledge that I am in the Narrow Way which leadeth unto life. Thus, it is based upon the Word of God, yet consists of the Holy Spirit's enabling me to discern in myself a character to which the Divine promises are addressed. We have the same Word to measure ourselves by now as God will judge us by in the Day to Come. Therefore it behooves every serious soul to prayerfully and carefully set down the scriptural marks of God's children on the one side, and the characteristics of

his own soul and life on the other, and determine if there be any real resemblance between them. We will close this section by quoting from the saintly Samuel Rutherford (1637).

"You may put a difference betwixt you and reprobates if you have these marks: If ye prize Christ and His truth so as you will sell all and buy Him, and suffer for it. If the love of Christ keeps you back from sinning more than the law or fear of hell does. If you be humble, and deny your own will, wit, credit, case, honour, the world, and the vanity and glory of it. Your profession must not be barren and void of good works. You must in all things aim at *God's* honour; you must eat, sleep, buy, sell, sit, stand, speak, pray, read, and hear the Word with a heart purpose that God may be honoured. Acquaint yourself with daily praying; commit all your ways and actions to God by prayer, supplication and thanksgiving; and count not much for being mocked, for Christ Jesus was mocked before you."

#### **14. ITS ATTAINMENT**

In writing to a company of the saints an apostle was inspired to declare, "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work *in* you will perform (or "finish") it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6). *That* is what distinguishes the regenerate children of God from empty professors, from those who while having a "name to live" are really spiritually dead (Rev. 3:1). This is what differentiates true Christians from deluded ones. And in what does this "good work" which is "begun" *within* the saved consist? It is variously described in different Scriptures. It is the heart in being purified by faith (Acts 15:9). It is the love of God being shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5). It is the laws of God being written in their hearts (Heb. 8:10). Thus, the *nature* of Christian

assurance is a well-founded knowledge that I am a child of God. The *basis* of this assurance is that there is an unmistakable agreement between *my* character, experience, and life, and the description which Holy Writ furnishes of the characters, experiences, and lives of God's children. Therefore, the *attainment* of assurance is by an impartial scrutiny of myself and an honest comparing of myself with the scriptural marks of God's children.

A reliable and satisfactory assurance can only be attained or reached by means of a thorough self-examination. "O therefore, Christians, rest not till you can call this rest your own. Sit not down without assurance. Get alone, and bring thy heart to the bar of trial: force it to answer the interrogatories put to it; set the qualifications of the saints on one side, and the qualifications of thy soul on the other side, and then judge what resemblance there is between them. Thou hast the same Word before thee, by which to judge thyself now, as thou shalt be judged by at the great day. Thou mayest there read the very articles upon which thou shalt be tried; try thyself by these articles now. Thou mayest there know beforehand on what terms men shall then be acquitted or condemned. Try now whether thou art possessed of that which will acquit thee, or whether thou be in the condition of those that will be condemned; and accordingly acquit or condemn thyself. Yet be sure thou judge by a true touchstone, and mistake not the scripture description of a saint, that thou neither acquit nor condemn thyself by mistake" (*The Saint's Everlasting Rest*, Richard Baxter, 1680).

The need for such self-examination is indeed great, for multitudes are deceived; quite sure that they are Christians, yet without the marks of one. "They say they are saved, and they stick to it they are, and think it wicked to doubt it; but yet they have no reason to warrant their confidence. There is a great difference between

presumption and full assurance. Full assurance is reasonable: it is based on solid ground. Presumption takes for granted, and with brazen face pronounces that to be its own to which it has no right whatever. Beware, I pray thee, of presuming that thou art saved. If thy heart be renewed, if thou shalt hate the things that thou didst once love, and love the things that thou didst once hate; if thou hast really repented; if there be a thorough change of mind in thee; if thou be born again, then thou hast reason to rejoice: but if there be no vital change, no inward godliness; if there be no love to God, no prayer, no work of the Holy Spirit, then thy saying 'I am saved' is but thine own assertion, and it may delude, but it will not deliver thee" (C. H. Spurgeon on 1 Chron. 4:10).

O what efforts Satan puts forth to keep people from this vitally important and all-necessary work of self-examination. He knows full well that if many of his deceived victims set about the task in earnest, they would soon discover that no miracle of Divine grace has been wrought in them, and that this would cause them to seek the Lord with all their hearts. He knows too that real Christians would gain much advantage against the power of indwelling sin would they but thoroughly search their own hearts. Many are diverted from this wholesome work by the evil example set by so many who now bear the name of Christ. Not a few argue, if he or she (that claims to have been a Christian so much longer and appears to know the Bible so much better), who is so worldly, so governed by the "lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," is sure he is bound for Heaven, why should I be concerned?

But *the state of men's hearts* is what holds so many back from the discharge of this duty. Some are so ignorant that they know not what self-examination is, nor what a servant of God means when he seeks to persuade them to "*prove your own selves*" (2 Cor. 13:5). Others are



so much in love with sin and have such a dislike for the holy ways of God, they dare not venture on the trial of their state, lest they should be forced from the course they so much relish, to one which they hate. Others are so taken up with their worldly affairs, and are so busy providing for themselves and their families, they say, "I pray thee have me excused" (Luke 14:18). Others are so slothful that they cannot be induced on any consideration to be at those pains which are necessary in order to know their own hearts.

Pride holds many back. They think highly of themselves. They are so sure of *their* salvation, so thoroughly convinced that all is right between their souls and God, they deem any search after *proof* and testing of themselves by Scripture to see if they *have* the marks of those who are "new creatures in Christ Jesus," as quite unnecessary and superfluous. They have been brought up in a religious atmosphere where none of those professing the name of Christ expressed any doubts about their state. They have been taught that such doubtings are of the Devil, a calling into question the veracity of God's Word. They have heard so many affirm "I *know* that my Redeemer liveth," they felt it their duty to echo the same, forgetting that he who first uttered these words (Job 19:25) was one of whom God said, "There is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil" (Job 1:8).

Tens of thousands have been taught that it is wrong for the Christian to look within himself, and they have blindly followed the advice of such physicians "of no value." How can it be wrong for me to examine my heart to see whether or not God *has* written His laws upon it (Heb. 8:10)? How can it be wrong for me to look and see whether or not God *has* begun a "good work" *in* me (Phil. 1:6)? How can it be wrong for me to test myself by the Parable of the Sower to see *which* of its four soils represents *my* heart? How can it be wrong

to measure myself by the Parable of the Virgins, and ascertain whether or not the "oil" of regenerating and sanctifying grace is within the "vessel" of my soul (Matt. 25:4)? Since God Himself declares, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. 8:9), how can it be wrong for me to make sure that *I am* indwelt by Him?

Rightly did an eminent Puritan say, "The Scripture abounds in commands and cautions for our utmost diligence in our search and inquiry, whether we are made partakers of Christ or not, or whether His Spirit dwell in us or not; which argue both the difficulty of attaining an assured confidence herein, as also the danger of our being mistaken, and yet the certainty of a good issue upon the diligent and regular use of means to that purpose" (John Owen on Heb. 3:14, 1670). Alas, this is what has been so strenuously opposed by many during the last two or three generations. An easy-going religion, well calculated to be acceptable unto the slothful, has been zealously propagated, representing the salvation of the soul and assurance of the same as a very simple matter.

It is very evident to one who has been taught of God that the vast majority of present-day evangelists, tract-writers, and "personal workers" do not believe one-half of what Holy Writ declares concerning the spiritual impotency of the natural man, or the absolute necessity of a miracle of grace being wrought within him before he *can* savingly turn to Christ. Instead, they erroneously imagine that fallen man is a "*free* moral agent," possessing equal power to accept Christ as to reject Him. They suppose all that is needed is information and coercion: to preach the Gospel and persuade men to believe it. But have they never heard of the Holy Spirit? O yes, and *say* they believe that only He can effectually convict of sin and regenerate. But do their actions agree with this?

They certainly do not, for not only is there practically no definite waiting upon God and an earnest seeking from Him the power of His Spirit, but they sally forth and speak and write to the unsaved as if the Holy Spirit had no existence.

Now just as it is plainly *implied* by such "novices" that lost sinners can receive Christ any time they make up their minds to do so, just as they are constantly told that nothing more is needed than to believe that Christ died for them and rest on John 3:16 and salvation is theirs; so the idea has been inculcated that the professing Christian may enjoy the full assurance of faith any time he wishes, and that nothing more is required for this than to "rest on John 5:24," etc. One verse of Holy Scripture is sufficient to give the lie to this popular delusion: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8:16). If the written promises of God were sufficient of themselves to produce assurance, then what is there need for the third person of the Godhead to "bear witness" with the spirit of the Christian that he is a child of God?

As this verse is virtually given no place at all in modern ministry, let us ponder its terms: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." The clear implication of these words is that the actual existence of the saint's sonship is, at times at least, a matter of painful uncertainty, and that the supernatural agency of the Spirit is required to authenticate the fact, and thus allay all fear. To be fully assured of the amazing fact that God is my spiritual Father, demands something more than the testimony of my own feelings, or the opinions of men; and, let us reverently add, something more than resting upon a Divine promise. Millions have "rested on" the words "this is my body," and no argument could persuade them that the bread upon the Lord's table was not actually changed into Christ's literal flesh.

Who so competent to authenticate the work of the Spirit in the heart as the Spirit Himself? What, then, is the mode of His testimony? Not by visions and voices, nor by any direct inspiration or new revelation of truth. Not by bringing some verse of Scripture (of which I was not thinking) vividly before the mind, so that the heart is made to leap for joy. If the Christian had no surer ground than *that* to stand upon, he might well despair. Satan can bring a verse of Scripture before the mind (Matt. 4:6), and produce in his victims strong emotions of joy, and impart a false peace to the soul. Therefore the witness of the Spirit, to be decisive and conclusive, must be something which the Devil cannot duplicate. And what is that? This: Satan cannot beget Divine grace and impart real holiness to the heart.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit." To "bear witness with" is a legal term, and signifies to produce valid and convincing evidence. "Our spirit" here has reference to the renewed conscience. Concerning natural men it is said, "which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their *conscience* also *bearing witness*" (Rom. 2:15). But the conscience of the natural man is partial, dim-sighted, stupid. Grace makes it tender, pliant, and more able to do its office. The desire of the regenerate man, and unto which he exercises himself, is "to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men" (Acts 24:16). Where such a conscience is (by grace) maintained, we can say with the apostle, "Our rejoicing is this (what? resting on John 3:16? No, but) *the testimony of our conscience*, that in simplicity and godly sincerity. . . we have had our conversation in the world" (2 Cor. 1:12).

Was the beloved Paul off the right track when he found something *in himself* which afforded ground for "rejoicing"? According to many present-day teachers(?) he was. It is a great pity that these men do not give less attention to human writings, and more to the Holy

Scriptures, for then they would read "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself" (Prov. 14:14). If that text be despised because it is in the O. T., then we also read in the N.T. "But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have *rejoicing in himself* alone, and not in another" (Gal. 6:4). Once more, "let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth: And *hereby* we know that we are of the truth, and *shall assure our hearts before Him*" (1 John 3:18, 19). What is the method which God here sets before His children for assuring their hearts before Him? Not in telling them to appropriate one of His promises, but to *walk in the Truth*, and then their own spirit will bear witness to their Divine sonship.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." In addition to the testimony of a renewed conscience which is enjoyed by the Christian when he (by grace) is walking in the Truth, the Spirit adds His confirmation. How? First, He has laid down clear marks in the Scriptures by which we may settle the question: "For as many as are *led* by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:14)—why tell us this, if "resting on John 5:24" be all that is necessary? Second, by working such graces in the saints as are peculiar to God's children: in Galatians 5:22 these graces are expressly designated "the fruit of the Spirit." Third, by His spiritual consolation: "walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 9:31, and cf. Rom. 15:13). Fourth, by producing in the Christian the affections which dutiful children bear to a wise and loving Parent (Rom. 8:15).

To sum up: the blessed Spirit witnesses along with our spirit that we are the children of God by enabling us to discern (in the light of Scripture) the *effects and fruits* of His supernatural operation within us. The breathings of the renewed heart after holiness, the pantings

after a fuller conformity to the image of Christ, the strivings against sin, are all inspired by Him. Thus, by begetting in us the Divine nature, by teaching us to deny "ungodliness and worldly lusts," and to "live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:12), the Spirit conducts us to the sure conclusion that we are the children of God. Thereby He shows us there is a real correspondency between our experience and revealed truth. "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us *of* his Spirit" (1 John 4:13).

## **15. ITS SUBJECTS**

Under this head we propose briefly to consider the character of those persons to whom the privilege of Christian assurance rightfully belongs. Here again there are two extremes to be guarded against. On the one hand is that class who have been deceived by the slogan "believe you are saved, and you *are* saved," which is best met by pointing out that genuine assurance is never any greater than is our *evidence* of the same. On the other hand are those who are fearful that such evidence is unattainable while the body of sin indwells them. To such we would ask, Is it impossible to ascertain whether or not the health of your body is sound? Are there not certain symptoms and signs which are a clear index? If I were doubtful, and feared that some fatal disease was beginning to grip me, I would seek a physician. Were he merely to look at me and then lightly say, Your health is good, I would leave him and seek another more competent. I would request a thorough overhauling: the taking of my blood-pressure, the sounding of my heart, the testing of my other vital organs. So it should be with the soul.

In seeking to determine from God's Word who are entitled to Christian assurance, let us ask and answer a number of questions. Who are they with whom the great God dwells? "with him also that is of (not an haughty and boastful, but) a contrite and humble spirit" (Isa. 57:15); "to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and *trembleth at My Word*" (Isa. 66:2)—do you? Or do you joke over or argue about its sacred contents? Whom does God really forgive? They who "repent" and are "converted" (Acts 3:19), that is, they who turn their backs upon the world and sinful practices, and yield to Him; those in whose hearts God puts His "*laws*" and writes them in their minds, in consequence of which they love, meditate upon, and keep His commandments: note how Hebrews 10:16 precedes 10:17!

Who is the man whom Christ likened unto one who built his house upon the rock? Not merely him who "believes," but "whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and *doeth* them" (Matt. 7:24). Who are truly born again? "Everyone that doeth righteousness" (1 John 2:29); they who "love the brethren" with such a love as is described in 1 John 3:17, 18. To whom does God experimentally reveal the eternal purpose of His grace? "The secret of the Lord is with them that *fear him*; and he will show *them* his covenant" (Ps. 25:14). "To him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God (Ps. 50:23). What are the identifying marks of a saving faith? One which "purifies their hearts" (Acts 15:9), "worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6), "overcometh the world" (1 John 5:4): only thus may I know that *my* faith is a living and spiritual one.

The birth of the Spirit can only be known from its effects (John 3:8). Thus, it is by comparing what God, in His Word, has promised to do *in* His elect with what His Spirit has, or has not, wrought in my heart, that I can ascertain whether assurance of salvation be my

legitimate portion. *This* is "comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (1 Cor. 2:13). Wondrous things has God prepared "for them that *love* Him" (1 Cor. 2:9); how important then for me to make sure that I love Him. Many suppose that because they have (or had) a dread of eternal punishment, that therefore they love God. Not so: true love for God is neither begotten by fears of Hell nor hopes of Heaven: if I do not love God for what He is in Himself, then I do not love Him at all! And if I love Him, my desire, my purpose, my aim will be to *please* Him in all things. Much might be added to this section of our subject, but we trust that sufficient has been said to enable exercised and honest souls to learn how to identify those whom Scripture teaches are entitled to the assurance of salvation.

## **16. ITS HINDRANCES**

*"Question:* Are all true believers at all times assured of their present being in the estate of grace, and that they shall be saved? *Answer:* Assurance of grace and salvation not being of the essence of faith (2 Pet. 1:10), true believers may wait long before they obtain it (1 John 5:13); and, after the enjoyment thereof, may have it weakened and intermitted, through manifold distempers, sins, temptations, and desertions (Ps. 77:7-9; 31:22, etc.); yet are they never left without such a presence and support of the Spirit of God, as keeps them from sinking into utter despair" (Ps. 73:13-15, 23; 1 John 3:9; Isa. 54:7-11). —Westminster Confession of Faith, Larger Catechism.

Just as the absence or loss of bodily health is not always attributable to the same cause or occasion, neither is the absence or diminution of assurance always to be accounted for in the same way; and just as any doctor who used only one medicine for the healing of all diseases would exhibit his crass incompetency, so any "Christian worker" who



prescribes the same treatment to all soul-diseases at once declares himself a physician "of no value" (Job 13:4). There are *degrees* of health, both of body and soul; and this is to be ascribed, in the first place, to the high sovereignty of God, who distributes His gifts, both natural and spiritual, as He pleases. Yet, while we cannot impart health to ourselves, we should use legitimate *means* which, under God's blessing, are conducive thereto. So too we may, through our sinful folly, undermine and destroy our health. The same holds good in the spiritual realm.

In many cases lack of Christian assurance, or a very low degree thereof, is due to a *poor state of health*. Bodily infirmities react on the mind. Low physical vitality is usually accompanied by lowness of spirits. A sluggish liver produces depression and despondency. Many a person whose soul is now "cast down" would be greatly benefited by more open-air exercise, a change of diet, and a few doses of castor oil. Yet we are far from saying that this course would result in the recovery or increase of assurance, for spiritual effects cannot be produced by material agents. Nevertheless, the removal of a physical hindrance is often an aid. Who can read the Word to profit while suffering from a nerve-racking headache! What we wish to make clear is that, in some instances at least, what is regarded as a lack of assurance is nothing more than physical inability to enjoy the things of God. Nor do we mean by this that none are blest with the joy of the Lord while their bodily health is at a low ebb. Not so: there are striking cases which show the contrary. But it still remains that many are missing much spiritual good through their disregard for the elementary laws of physical well-being.

The assurance of some of God's dear children has been hindered by a *defective ministry*. They have sat under teaching which was too one-sided, failing to preserve a due balance between the objective and the

subjective aspects of the Truth. They have been encouraged to be far more occupied with self than with Christ. Knowing that many are deceived, fearful lest they also should be, their main efforts are directed to self-examination. Disgusted too by the loud boastings of empty professors, perceiving the worthlessness of the carnal confidence voiced by the frothy religionists all around them, they hesitate to avow the assurance of salvation lest they be guilty of presumption or be puffed up by the Devil. Yea, they have come to regard doubtings, fears, and uncertainty as the best evidence of spiritual humility.

Now while we are by no means prepared to sanction the idea last named, yet we have no hesitation whatever in saying that we much prefer it to the presumptuous claims now being made by so many. Far rather would we cast in our lot with a company of lowly, pensive, self-distrustful people, who exclaim, "'Tis a point I long to know, Oft it causes anxious thought, Do I love the Lord or no, Am I His, or am I not?," than fraternize with those who never have a doubt of their acceptance with Christ, but who are self-complacent and haughty, and whose daily walk compares most unfavorably with the former. Better far to be weighed down by a sense of my vileness and go mourning all my days over lack of conformity to Christ, than to remain ignorant of my real state and go about light-hearted and light-headed, wearing a smile all the time.

But surely there is a happy medium between spending most of my days in Doubting Castle and the Slough of Despond so that I am virtually a stranger to "the joy of the Lord," and experiencing a false peace from Satan which is never disturbed by the voice of conscience. Holy assurance and lowly heartedness are not incompatible. The same apostle who cried, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24), also declared,

"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him" (2 Tim. 1:12). "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing" (2 Cor. 6:10) summed up his dual experience. We too are "sorrowful" daily if God has opened our eyes to see something of the mass of corruption which still indwells us; "sorrowful" too when we perceive how far, far short we come of the example which Christ has left us. Yet we also "rejoice" because God has not left us in ignorance of our dreadful state, that He has planted within us deep yearnings after holiness, and because we know these yearnings will be fully realized when we are freed from this body of death.

The assurance of other saints is greatly dampened by *the assaults of Satan*. There are three principal things which our great enemy seeks to accomplish: incite us to sin, hinder the exercise of our graces, and destroy our peace and joy. If he fails largely in the first two, he is often very successful in the third. Posing as an angel of light, he comes to the soul preaching the holiness of God and the exceeding sinfulness of sin, his object being to overwhelm the conscience and drive to despair. He presses upon the Christian the awfulness and prevalency of his unbelief, the coldness of his heart toward God, and the many respects in which his deportment and actions are un-Christ-like. He reminds him of numerous sins, both of omission and commission, and the more tender be his conscience, the more poignant are Satan's thrusts. He challenges him to compare *his* character with that given of the saints in Scripture, and then tells him his profession is worthless, that he is a hypocrite, and that it is mockery to take the holy name of Christ upon his polluted lips.

So many succumb to Satan's efforts to disturb their peace and destroy their assurance through not knowing how to meet his attacks, and through forgetting that Scripture is very far from

representing the earthly lives of God's children as flawless and perfect. As a general rule it is the best thing to *acknowledge the truth* of Satan's charges when he declares that I am still a great sinner in myself. When he asks me if such and such a lusting of the flesh be consistent with a heart in which a miracle of Divine grace has been wrought, I should answer, Yes, for the "flesh" in me has neither been eradicated nor refined. When he asks, How can such doubtings consist with a heart to which God has communicated saving faith? remind him how Scripture tells us of one who came to Christ saying, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

But the commonest hindrance to assurance is *the indulgence of some known sin*. When a Christian deliberately follows some course which God's Word forbids, when he lives in some unwarranted practice, and God has often touched him for it, and his conscience has been sorely pricked, and yet he perseveres in the same—then no wonder if he be destitute of assurance and the comfort of the Spirit. The cherishing of sin necessarily obscures *the evidences* of Divine sonship, for it so abates the degree of our graces as to make them indiscernible. Allowed sin dims the eye of the soul so that it cannot see its own state, and stupefies the heart so that it cannot feel its own condition. But more: it provokes God, so that He withdraws from us the benevolent light of His countenance: "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isa. 59:2).

The sad history of David presents a solemn case in point. His fearful fall brought with it painful consequences: "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long: for day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer" (Ps. 32:3,4). But, blessed be God, his earthly life did not end while he was in this lamentable state: "I acknowledged

my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Ps. 32:5). Further light on the deep exercises of soul through which David passed is given us in Psalm 51. There we hear him crying, "Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clear heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation" (vv. 9-12). This leads us to consider the *maintenance* of assurance.

## **17. ITS MAINTENANCE**

Here again there are two extremes to be guarded against: the fatalistic lethargy of I cannot help myself, and the humanistic effrontery which affirms that the remedy lies in my own hands. Spiritual assurance is a Divine gift, nevertheless the Christian has a responsibility for preserving the same. It is true that I cannot speak peace to my own conscience, or apply the balm of Gilead to my wounded heart, yet I can do many things to grieve and repel the great Physician. We cannot bring ourselves near to God, but we can and do wander from Him. Of ourselves we cannot live to God's glory, but we can to our own. Of ourselves we cannot walk after the Spirit, but we can after the flesh. We cannot make ourselves fruitful unto every good word and work, but we may by disobedience and self-indulgence bring leanness into our souls and coldness into our affections. We cannot impart health to our bodies, but we can use *means* which, by God's blessing, further the same.

1. Holy assurance cannot be maintained unless the Christian keeps his heart with "all diligence" (Prov. 4:23). "Watch ye and pray *lest* ye enter into temptation" (Mark 14:38). "Take heed, brethren, lest there

be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Heb. 3:12). There must be "A watchful fighting, and contending against the whole work of sin, in its deceits and power, with all the contribution of advantage and efficacy that it hath from Satan and the world. This the apostle peculiarly applies it unto, in the cautions and exhortations given us, to take heed of it, that we be not hardened by it; seeing its whole design is to impair or destroy our interest and persistency in Christ, and so to draw us off from the living God" (John Owen).

More especially does the Christian need to pray and strive against *presumptuous* sins. Right hands must be cut off, right eyes plucked out (Matt. 5:29); a gangrened member must be amputated, or death will soon ensue. Cry mightily unto God for enabling grace to mortify besetting sins. Remember that a deliberate running into the place of danger, a willful exposing of myself to sin's attacks, is a tempting of the Lord. "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away" (Prov. 4:14, 15). O what circumspect walking is called for in a world which abounds with pitfalls on every side!

2. Holy assurance cannot be maintained unless the Christian be diligent in *cherishing his graces*. A Christian is one who had been made a partaker of those spiritual graces which "accompany salvation" (Heb. 6:9), and for the establishing of his comfort and joy it is necessary that he *know* himself to be in possession of them. The best evidence that we *are* in a state of grace, is to *grow in grace*. For this there needs to be a "daily constant cherishing, and laboring to improve and strengthen every grace by which we abide in Christ. Neglected grace will wither, and be ready to die (Rev. 3:2); yea, as to some degrees of it, and as to its work in evidencing the love of God unto us, or our union with Christ, it will utterly decay. Some of the

churches in the Revelation had lost their first love, as well as left their first works. Hence is that command that we should grow in grace, and we do so when grace grows and thrives in us. And this is done two ways:

"First, when any individual grace is improved. When that faith which was weak, becomes strong; and that love which was faint and cold, becomes fervent and is inflamed; which is not to be done but in and by the sedulous exercise of these graces themselves, and a constant application of our souls by them to the Lord Christ. Secondly, by adding one grace unto another: 'and besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; to virtue, knowledge; etc.' (2 Pet. 1:5); this is the proper work of spiritual diligence. This is the nature of Gospel-graces, because of their linking together in Christ, and as they are wrought in us by one and the self-same Spirit, the exercise of one leads us to the stirring up and bringing in the exercise of another into the soul" (John Owen).

3. *By keeping short accounts with God.* "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb. 10:22). Note the intimate connection there is between these things. There cannot be a sincere and hearty approach unto God as worshippers while the guilt of sin be resting upon our consciences. Nothing more effectually curtails our freedom in drawing nigh to the thrice Holy One than the painful realization that my conduct has been displeasing to him. "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then we have confidence toward God" (1 John 3:21).

But strive as he may, walk as cautiously and carefully as he will, in "many things" the Christian "offends" (James 3:2) daily, both by sins of omission and commission. Yet, blessed be God, provision has been

made by our loving Father even for this sad failure of ours. "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). As soon as we are conscious of having done wrong, we should tin-bosom ourselves to God: holding nothing back, but freely acknowledging each offence. Nor should we fear to do this frequently, daily, yea constantly. If the Lord bids us to forgive our sinning brethren "until seventy times seven" (Matt. 18:22), is He less merciful? "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them (in heart and purpose) shall have mercy" (Prov. 28:13).

4. *By cultivating daily communion with God.* "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full" (1 John 1:3, 4). Observe the connection between these two statements: fulness of joy (which, in this epistle, largely has reference to walking in the unclouded assurance of our Divine sonship) is the fruit of fellowship with the Father and His Son. But what is signified by the term "fellowship"? Many seem to have but vague and visionary ideas of its meaning. Oneness of heart and mind, common interests and delights, unity of will and purpose, reciprocal love, is what is denoted. It is a fellowship "in the light" (1 John 1:5-7). This was perfectly realized and exemplified by the Lord Jesus. He walked in uninterrupted communion with the Father: delighting in His will (Ps. 40:8), keeping His commandments (John 14:31), always doing those things which were pleasing in His sight (John 8:29). And this very epistle declares "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (2:6). What a standard is here set before us! Yet after it we should prayerfully and constantly strive.

Fellowship is *participation* in the light and love of God. It is a refusing of the things He hates and a choosing of the things in which



He delights. It is the losing of my will in His. It is a going out of self, and an embracing of God in Christ. It is the acceptance of His estimate of things, thinking His thoughts after Him, viewing the world and all in it, life both present and future, from His viewpoint. It is therefore a being moulded into conformity with His holy nature. It is living to His glory. And thus it is a fellowship of *joy*, and "the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh. 8:10): strength to overcome temptations, to perform the duties of life, to endure its sorrows and disappointments. The closer we walk with the Lord, the brighter will be the evidences of our Divine sonship.

## **18. ITS FRUITS**

Holy assurance delivers from those doubts and fears which rob many a Christian of his legitimate joy in the Lord. This is clear from the contrast presented in Romans 8:15, "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father." Suspense is bad enough in any of our concerns, but most of all in connection with our eternal interests. But true assurance sets us free from the painful bondage of uncertainty, and even robs death of its terrors. It enables the soul to say, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in *my* God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation" (Isa. 61:10).

Holy assurance produces patience in tribulation: "And took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, *knowing in yourselves* that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance" (Heb. 10:34). Where the heart is anchored in God, basking in the sunshine of His countenance, the Christian will not be afraid of evil tidings, remains calm under bereavements, is unmoved by persecutions. "When I live

in a settled and steadfast assurance about the state of my soul, methinks I am as bold as a lion. I can laugh at all tribulation: no afflictions daunt me. But when I am eclipsed in my comforts, I am of so fearful a spirit that I can run into a very mouse-hole" (Latimer to Ridley, 1551).

Holy assurance results in a joy in God, which causes its possessor to despise those vaporous pleasures after which the worldling so much dotes. "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yd I will rejoyce in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Hab.. 3:17, 18). "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure . . . *for so* an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly (both now and in the future) into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:10, 11).

(The previous chapter really completed Mr. Pink's present treatment of this theme. He decided to further amplify one or two of the leading points with the hope that some might be helped thereby. The following completes chapter 18.)

In view of the error which now so widely abounds, and the confusion which beclouds so many minds, it is hardly to be expected that one can unlearn in a few hours what he has been mistakenly receiving as God's Truth for so many years. Doubtless not a few of our readers wish they had the opportunity for a personal conversation on the subject, so that they could state their difficulties and ask questions on anything that is not yet clear to them. We have therefore decided to write two further articles in the form of dialogues, introducing

widely different characters, who express a desire to discuss the subject.

## **DIALOGUE 1**

### **Mr. Carnal Confidence**

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "Good morning, Mr. Editor, I wish to have a talk with you about those articles on 'Assurance' which you published in last year's *Studies*." The Writer: "Be seated, please. First of all, may we courteously but frankly inform you that our time is already fully occupied in seeking to minister unto God's dear children, yet we are never too busy to do all in our power to help a needy soul."

Carnal Confidence: "O, I am not seeking help; my purpose in calling is to point out some things in your articles where I am quite sure you erred." The Writer: "It is written, dear friend, 'If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know' (1 Cor. 8:2), therefore I trust that God will ever give me grace to willingly consider and weigh the views of others, and receive through them anything *He* may have for me. Yet, on the other hand, I am not prepared to *debate* with any man upon Divine things."

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "Well, I am quite sure that I am right, and you are wrong, and I feel it my duty to tell you so." The Writer: "Very good, I am ready to listen unto what you have to say, only reminding you again that I cannot enter into a debate with you, for the things of God are too holy to *argue* about; though a friendly discussion, in the right spirit, may prove mutually helpful. Before beginning, shall we seek the help of the Holy Spirit, that He may graciously subdue the flesh in each of us, guide our conversation so that the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts may be 'acceptable' in

God's sight (Ps. 19:14); remembering that for every idle word each of us will yet have to give an account."

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "I consider that in your articles you have made a very difficult and complicated matter out of what is really very simple. According to your ideas a person has to go to a lot of trouble in order to discover whether or not he is saved, whereas if a man believes God's Word he may be sure in a moment." The Writer: "But are all those who believe God's Word really *saved*? Did not the Jews of Christ's day believe implicitly in the Divine authorship of the O. T.? Do not Russelites ("Jehovah's Witnesses" - Ed.) and others today insist loudly upon their faith in the Divine inspiration of the Bible? Does not the Devil himself believe the same?" Mr. Carnal Confidence: "That is not what I meant; my meaning is that, if I rest upon some verse of Holy writ as God's promise to me, then I know He cannot disappoint me." The Writer: "That is just the same in principle: does not the Romanist rest with full confidence upon that declaration of Christ's 'this is my body'? Saving faith is not faith in the authenticity of any verse of Scripture, but rather faith in the Person of Him who gave us the Scriptures, faith in the Christ who is made known in the Scriptures."

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "Yes, I know that, and I *do* believe in God and in His Son, and I *know* that I am saved because He says so." The Writer: "Where in Scripture does God say that *you* are saved?" Mr. Carnal Confidence: "In John 5:24, in Acts 16:31, and many other places." The Writer: "Let us turn to these passages, please. In John 5:24 the Lord Jesus describes one who has 'passed from death unto life.' He tells us two things about that individual, which serve to *identify* him. First, 'he that heareth my word.' That is definite enough. But of course it means far more than simply listening to His Word with the outward ear." Mr. Carnal Confidence: "Ah, right there

you want to mystify what is simple, and perplex souls with what is quite clear." The Writer: "Pardon me, you are mistaken. I only wish to *rightly understand* the words God has used, and to do this it is necessary to carefully compare Scripture with Scripture and discover how each word is *used* by the Spirit." Mr. Carnal Confidence: "I object; that may be all right for you, but common people do not have the leisure for deep study: God knew this, and has written His word in plain language that ordinary folk can understand: 'Hear' means 'hear,' and that is all there is to it."

The Writer: "I believe you are quite sincere in what you have said, and you have expressed the view which a great many hold today; but, if you will allow me to say so, it is a very defective one. God places no premium upon laziness. God has so ordered things that nothing is obtained without diligence and industry. Much work and care has to be devoted to a garden if anything is obtained from it. The same holds good every where else: what time and trouble is required to keep our bodies in working order! Can, then, the eternal concerns of our *souls* be more lightly dismissed, or more easily secured? Has not God bidden us '*Buy* the truth' (Prov. 23:23)? Has He not plainly told us 'If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and *searchest* for her as for hid treasures; then thou shalt understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God' (Prov. 2:3-5)?"

The Writer: "Mark *how* the Israelites were fed of old in the wilderness: Exodus 16. God did not provide them with baken loaves of bread ready to eat. No, instead, He gave the manna from heaven, which was 'a *small* round thing' (v. 14). Work and patience were called for in order to 'gather' (v. 17) it. Note too 'when the sun waxed hot, it melted'(v. 21), so that they had to get up early to secure it! Moreover, the manna would not keep: 'let no man leave of it till the

morning': it 'bred worms and stank' (vv. 19, 20) if they tried to preserve it for another day. Then, after it had been gathered, the manna had to be 'ground in mills or beaten in a mortar' and baked in pans and made into cakes (Num. 11:8). All of this typified the fact that if a soul is to eat the Bread of life, he must devote himself in earnest, and, as Christ says, '*Labour . . . for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life*'" (John 6:27).

The Writer: "Thus it is in connection with the obtaining of a right understanding of any verse of Scripture: pains have to be taken with it, patience has to be exercised, and prayerful study engaged in. Returning to John 5:24: the one who has passed from death unto life, says Christ, is 'he that *heareth* My word.' Let us turn then to other passages where this term is found: 'they are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, which refused to *hear* my words' (Jer. 11:10); 'because ye have *not heard* my words, behold, I will send and take all the families of the north,' etc. (Jer. 25:8, 9); and see 35:17; Zechariah 1:4; Matthew 7:24; John 10:27. In all of these verses, and in many others which might be given, to 'hear' means to *heed* what God says, to *act upon* it, to *obey* Him. So he who 'hears' the voice of Christ *heeds* His command to turn away from all that is opposed to God and become in subjection to Him."

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "Well, let us turn to Acts 16:31, that is simple enough. There is no room allowed there for any quibbling. God says 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved': God says that to *me*; I have believed on Christ, and so I must be saved." Writer: "Not so fast, dear friend. How can you prove God says that to *you*?"

Those words were spoken under unusual circumstances, and to a particular individual. That individual had been brought to the end of

himself; he was deeply convicted of his sins; he was in terrible anguish of soul; he had taken his place in the dust, for we are told that he 'came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas' (Acts 16:29). Now is it fair to take the words of the apostles to *such* a man and apply them indiscriminately to anybody? Are we justified in ignoring the whole setting of that verse, wrenching it from its context, and giving it to those who have not any of the characteristics which marked the Philippian jailor?"

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "I refuse to allow you to browbeat me, and move me from the simplicity of the Gospel. John 3:16 says, '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.' Now I *have* believed on the Son, and therefore am fully assured that I possess eternal life." Writer: "Are you aware of the fact that in this same Gospel of John we are told 'Many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them' (John 2:23, 24)? There were many who 'believed' in Christ who were not saved by Him: see John 8:30 and note verse 59! John 12:42, 43! There is a believing in Christ which saves, and there is a believing in Him which does not save; and therefore it behooves every sincere and earnest soul to diligently examine *his* 'faith' by Scripture and ascertain *which* kind it is. There is too much at stake to take anything for granted. Where eternal destiny is involved surely no trouble can be too great for us to make sure."

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "I *am* sure, and no man can make me doubt." Writer: "Is your faith purifying your heart (Acts 15:9)? Is it evidenced by those works which God requires (James 2:17)? Is it causing you to overcome the world (1 John 5:4)?" Mr. Carnal Confidence: "O I don't claim to be perfect, but I *know* whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto

Him against that day." Writer: "We did not ask if you were perfect; but have you been made a new creature in Christ, have old things passed away, and all things become new (2 Cor. 5:17)? Are you treading the path of obedience? For God's Word says, 'He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him' (1 John 2:4)."

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "I am not occupied with myself, but with Christ; I am not concerned about my walk, but with what He did for poor sinners." Writer: "To be 'occupied with Christ' is rather a vague expression. Are you occupied with His authority, have you surrendered to His Lordship, have you taken His yoke upon you, are you following the example which He has left His people? Christ cannot be *divided*: He is not only Priest to be trusted, but is also Prophet to be heeded, and King to be subject unto. Before He can be truly 'received,' the heart must be emptied of all those idols which stand in competition with Him. It is not the adulation of our lips, but the affection of our souls, which He requires; it is not an intellectual assent, but the heart's surrender to Him which saves."

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "You are departing from the simplicity of the Gospel; you are making additions unto its one and only stipulation. There is nothing that God requires from the sinner except that he believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." Writer: "You are mistaken. The Lord Jesus said, '*Repent ye*, and believe the Gospel' (Mark 1:15)." Mr. Carnal Confidence: "That was *before* the Cross, but in *this* dispensation repentance is not demanded." Writer: "Then according to your ideas God has changed the plan of salvation. But you err. *After* the Cross, Christ charged His disciples, 'That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations' (Luke 24:47). If we turn to the book of Acts we find that the apostles preached repentance in this dispensation. On the day of Pentecost,



Peter bade the convicted Jews to ‘repent’ (2:38). Reviewing his ministry at Ephesus Paul declared that he had testified both to the Jews and also to the Greeks ‘repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ’ (Acts 20:21); while in 17:30 we are told that God ‘now commandeth *all* men every where to *repent*.’”

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "Then do you insist that if a person has not repented, he is still unsaved?" Writer: "Christ Himself says so: ‘Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish’ (Luke 13:5). So too if a man has not been converted, he is yet unsaved: ‘Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out’ (Acts 3:19). There must be a right-about-face: there must be a turning from Satan unto God, from the world unto Christ, from sin unto holiness. Where *that* has not taken place, all the believing in the world will not save one. Christ saves none who is still in love with sin; but He is ready to save those who are sick of sin, who long to be cleansed from its loathsome foulness, who yearn to be delivered from its tyrannizing power. Christ came here to save His people *from* their sins."

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "You talk to me as though I were the helpless slave of strong drink or some other appetite, but I want you to know I was never the victim of any such thing." Writer: "There are other lusts in fallen man besides those which break forth in gross outward sins: such as pride, covetousness, selfishness, self-righteousness; and unless they be mortified, they will take a man to Hell as surely as will profanity, immorality, or murder. Nor is it enough to mortify these inordinate affections: the fruit of the Spirit, the graces of godliness, must also be brought forth in the heart and life; for it is written, ‘follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord’ (Heb. 12:14). And therefore it is a pressing duty for each of us to heed the Divine exhortation ‘Examine yourselves, whether ye

be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?' (2 Cor. 13:5).

"Notice very carefully, dear friend, that the one point pressed upon the Corinthians was 'that Jesus Christ is *in* you,' and not their trusting that He died for them. Just as the Christian can only discover that his name was written in the Book of Life before the foundation of the world, by discerning that God has written His laws in his heart (Heb. 10:16), so I can ascertain that Christ *died for me* only by making sure that He now *lives in me*. And it is obvious that if the Holy One indwells me that His presence must have wrought a radical change both in character and in conduct. *This*, above everything else, is what we sought to make clear and emphasized in our articles on 'Assurance,' namely the imperative necessity of our making sure that the Lord Jesus occupies the throne of our hearts, has the supreme place in our affections, and regulates the details of our lives. Unless *this* be the case with us, then our profession is vain, and all our talk of trusting in Christ's finished work is but idle words."

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "I consider all you have said to be but the language of a Pharisee. You are occupied with your own fancied goodness and delighting in your own worthless righteousness." Writer: "Pardon me, but I rather rejoice in what Christ's Spirit has wrought in me, and pray that He will carry forward that work of grace to the glory of His name. But we must bring our discussion to a close. I would respectfully urge you to attend unto that exhortation addressed to all professing Christians, 'Give diligence to make your calling and election sure' (2 Pet. 1:10). Mr. Carnal Confidence: "I shall do nothing of the sort: I *hate* the very word 'election.' I know that I am saved, though I do not measure up to the impossible

standard you want to erect." Writer: "Fare thee well; may it please the Lord to open your blind eyes, reveal to you His holiness, and bring you to His feet in godly fear and trembling."

## **DIALOGUE 2**

### **Mr. Humble Heart Questions**

Mr. Humble Heart: Good morning, Sir. May I beg the favour of an hour of your valuable time?" Editor: "Come in, and welcome. What can I do for you?" Humble Heart: "I am sore troubled in spirit: I long so much to be able to call God 'my Father,' but I fear I might be guilty of lying were I to do so. There are many times when I have a little hope that He has begun a good work within me, but alas, for the most part, I find such a mass of corruption working within, that I feel sure I have never been made a new creature in Christ. My heart is so cold and hard toward God, that it seems impossible the Holy Spirit could have shed abroad God's love in me; unbelief and doubtings so often master me, that it would be presumptuous to think I possess the faith of God's elect. Yet I *want to* love Him, trust Him, serve Him; but it seems I cannot."

Editor: "I am very glad you called. It is rare indeed to meet with an honest soul these days." Humble Heart: "Excuse me, Sir, but I do not want you to form a wrong impression of me: an *honest* heart is the very blessing I crave, but I am painfully conscious, from much clear evidence, that I possess it not. *My* heart is deceitful above all things, and I am full of hypocrisy. I have often begged God to make me holy, and right after, my actions proved that I did not mean what I said. I have often thanked God for His mercies, and then have soon fretted and murmured when His providence crossed my will. I had quite a battle before I came here to see you tonight, as to whether I was

really seeking help, or as to whether my secret desire was to win your esteem; and I am not sure now which was my real motive."

Humble Heart: "To come to the point, Sir, if I am not intruding. I have read and re-read your articles on 'Assurance' which appeared in last year's magazines. Some things in those articles seemed to give me a little comfort, but other things almost drove me to despair. Sometimes your description of a born-again soul agreed with my own experience, but at other times I seemed as far from measuring up to it as the poles are asunder. So I do not know where I am. I have sought to heed 2 Corinthians 13:5 and 'examine' myself, and when I did so, I could see nothing but a mass of contradictions; or, it would be more accurate to say, for each one thing I found which seemed to show that I was regenerate, I found ten things to prove that I could not be so. And now, Sir, I'm mourning night and day, for I feel of all men the most miserable."

Editor: "Hypocrites are not exercised about their motives, nor troubled over the deceitfulness of their hearts! At any rate, I am thankful to see you so deeply concerned about your soul's eternal interests." Humble Heart: "alas, Sir, I am not half as much concerned about them as I ought to be. That is another thing which occasions me much anguish. When the Lord Jesus tells us that the human soul is worth more than the whole world put together (Mark 8:36), I feel that I must be thoroughly blinded by Satan and completely under the dominion of sin, seeing that I am so careless. It is true that at times I am alarmed about my state and fearful that I shall soon be in Hell; at times too, I seem to seek God more earnestly and read His Word more diligently; but alas, my goodness is 'as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away' (Hosea 6:4). The cares of this life soon crowd out thoughts of the life to come. O Sir, I want reality, not pretense; I want to make sure, yet I cannot."

Editor: "That is not so simple a task as many would have us believe."  
Humble Heart: "It certainly is not. I have consulted several Bible-teachers, only to find them 'physicians of no value' (Job 13:4); I have also conferred with some who boasted that they never have a doubt, and they quoted to me Acts 16:3 1, and on telling them I did believe, they cried 'Peace, peace,' and there was no peace in my heart."  
Editor: "Ah, dear friend, it is not without reason that God has bidden us '*give diligence* to make your calling and election sure' (2 Pet. 1:10). And even after we have given diligence, we still need the Holy Spirit to bear 'witness with our spirit that we *are* the children of God' (Rom. 8:16). Moreover, spiritual assurance may easily be lost, or at least be clouded, as is evident from the case of him who wrote the 23rd Psalm, for at a later date he had to cry unto God, 'Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.'"

Editor: "Before proceeding further, had we not better seek the help of the Lord? His holy Word says, 'In *all* thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths' (Prov. 3:6). And now, dear Brother, for such I am assured you really are, What is it that most causes you to doubt that you have passed from death unto life?" Humble Heart: "My inward experiences, the wickedness of my heart, the many defeats I encounter daily." Editor: "Perhaps you are looking for perfection in the flesh." Humble Heart: "No, hardly that, for I know the 'flesh' or old nature is still left in the Christian. But I have met with some who claim to be living 'the victorious life,' who say they never have a doubt, never a rising of anger, discontent, or any wicked feelings or desires; that Christ so controls them that unclouded peace and joy is theirs all the time.

Editor: "Bear with me if I speak plainly, but such people are either hypnotized by the Devil, or they are fearful liars. God's Word says, 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not

in us' (1 John 1:8). And again, 'There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not' (Eccl. 7:20). And again, 'In many things we offend all' (James 3:2). The beloved apostle Paul, when well advanced in the Christian life, declared, 'I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members'" (Rom. 7:21-23).

Humble Heart: "That relieves my mind somewhat, yet it scarcely reaches the root of my difficulty. What troubles me so much is this: when God regenerates a man, he becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus: the change wrought in him is so great that it is termed a 'passing from death unto life.' It is obvious that if God the Holy Spirit dwells in a person, there must be a radical difference produced, both inwardly and outwardly, from what he was before. Now it is *this* which I *fail* to find in myself. Instead of being any better than I was a year ago, I feel I am worse. Instead of humility filling my heart, so often pride rules it; instead of lying passive like clay in the Potter's hand to be moulded by Him, I am like a wild ass's colt; instead of rejoicing in the Lord alway, I am frequently filled with bitterness and repinings."

Editor: "Such experiences as you describe *are* very sad and humbling, and need to be mourned over and confessed to God. They must *never* be excused nor glossed over. Nevertheless, they are not incompatible with the Christian state. Rather are they so many proofs that he who is experimentally acquainted with the 'plague of his own heart' (1 Kings 8:38) is one in experience with the most eminent of God's saints. Abraham acknowledged he was 'dust and ashes' (Gen. 18:27). Job said, 'I abhor myself' (42:6). David prayed 'Have mercy upon me, O Lord; for I am weak: O Lord, heal me; for

my bones are vexed' (Ps. 6:2). Isaiah exclaimed 'Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips' (6:5). In the anguish of his heart, Jeremiah asked, 'Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labour and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?' (20:18). Daniel once owned, 'There remained no strength in me, for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption' (10:8). Paul cried, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' (Rom. 7:24).

"One of the principal things which distinguishes a regenerate person from an unregenerate one may be likened unto two rooms which have been swept but not dusted. In one, the blinds are raised and the sunlight streams in, exposing the dust still lying on the furniture. In the other, the blinds are lowered, and one walking through the room would be unable to discern its real condition. Thus it is in the case of one who has been renewed by the Spirit: his eyes have been opened to see the awful filth which lurks in every corner of his heart. But in the case of the unregenerate, though they have occasional twinges of conscience when they act wrongly, they are very largely ignorant of the awful fact that they are a complete mass of corruption unto the pure eyes of the thrice holy God. It is true that an unregenerate person may be instructed in the truth of the total depravity of fallen man, and he may 'believe' the same, yet his belief does not humble his heart, fill him with anguish, make him loathe himself, and feel that Hell is the only place which is fit for him to dwell in. But it is far otherwise with one who sees light in *God's* light (Ps. 36:9); he will not so much as lift up his eyes to Heaven, but smites upon his leprous breast, crying 'God be merciful to me the sinner.'"

Humble Heart: "Would you kindly turn to the positive side, and give me a brief description of what characterizes a genuine Christian."

Editor: "Among other gifts, every real Christian has such a

knowledge of God in Christ, as works by love, that he is stirred up to earnestly inquire after *the will of God* and studies His Word to learn that will, having a sincere desire and making an honest endeavour to live in the faith and practice of it." Humble Heart: "I cannot boast of my knowledge of God in Christ, yet by Divine grace this I may say: that I desire no other Heaven on earth than to know and to do God's will, and be assured that I have *His* approval." Editor: "That is indeed a good sign that your soul has been actually renewed, and doubtless He who has begun a work of grace in your heart, will make the great change manifest in your life and actions. No matter what he thinks or says, no unregenerate man *really* desires to live a life which is pleasing *to God*."

Humble Heart: God forbid that I should flatter myself, yet I hope I have often found delight when reading God's Word or hearing it preached, and I do sincerely meditate upon it, and long that I may 'grow in grace.' Yet, at times, I am tempted with vain and vile thoughts, and I strive to banish them, my heart rising up against them; yet sometimes I yield to them. I loathe lying and cursing, and cannot endure the company of those who hate practical godliness; yet my withdrawal from them seems nothing but pharisaical hypocrisy, for I am such a miserable failure myself. I pray to God for deliverance from temptation and for grace to resist the Devil, but I fear that I do not have His ear, for more often than not I am defeated by sin and Satan."

Editor: "When you thus fail in your duty, or fall into sin, what do you think of yourself and your ways? How are you affected therewith?"

Humble Heart: "When I am in this deplorable condition, my soul is grieved; my joy of heart and peace of conscience gone. But when I am a little recovered out of this sinful lethargy, my heart is melted with sorrow over my folly; and I address myself to God with great fear and



shame, begging Him to forgive me, pleading 1 John 1:9, and humbly imploring Him to ‘renew a right spirit within me.’” Editor: "And *why* is it that you are so troubled when sin conquers you?" Humble Heart: "Because I truly wish to please the Lord, and it is my greatest grief when I realize that I have dishonored and displeased Him. His mercy has kept me, thus far, from breaking out into open and public sins, yet there is very much *within* which I know He hates."

Editor: "Well, my dear brother and companion in the path of tribulation, God has ordained that the Lamb shall be eaten with ‘*bitter* herbs’ (Ex. 12:8). So it was with the apostle: ‘As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing’ (2 Cor. 6:10) summed up his dual experience: ‘sorrowful’ over his sinful failures, both of omission and commission; yet ‘rejoicing’ over the provisions which Divine grace has made for us while we are in this dreary desert—the Mercy-seat ever open to us, whither we may draw near, unburden our heavy hearts, and pour out our tale of woe; the Fountain which has been opened ‘for sin and for uncleanness’ (Zech. 13:1), whither we may repair for cleansing. I am indeed thankful to learn that your conscience confirms what your tongue has uttered. You have expressed enough to clearly evidence that the Holy Spirit has begun a good work in your soul. But I trust you also have faith in the Lord Jesus, the Mediator, by whom alone any sinner can draw near unto God."

Humble Heart: "By Divine grace I do desire to acknowledge and embrace the Lord Jesus upon the terms on which He is proclaimed in the Gospel: to believe all his doctrine as my Teacher, to trust in and depend upon the atoning sacrifice which He offered as the great High Priest, and to submit to His rule and government as King. But, alas, in connection with the last ‘to *will* is present with me; but how to *perform* that which is good I find not’" (Rom. 7:18). Editor: "No real Christian ever attains his ideal in this life; he never reaches that

perfect standard which God has set before us in His Word, and which was so blessedly exemplified in the life of Christ. Even the apostle Paul, near the close of his life, had to say, 'Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus' (Phil. 3:12). But may I ask if you are sensible of how you arrived at the good desires you mentioned? Do you suppose that such a disposition is *natural* to you, or that it has resulted from your own improvement of your faculties?"

Humble Heart: "No, Sir, I dare not ascribe to nature that which is the effect and fruit of Divine grace. If I have any measure of sanctification (which is what I long to be assured of), then it can only be by the gift and operation of God. I am too well acquainted with my wretched self: I know too well that by nature I am alive to vanity and sin, but dead to God and all real goodness; that folly possesses my soul, darkness shrouds my understanding; that I am utterly unable to will or to do what is pleasing in God's sight, and that my natural heart is set contrary to the way of salvation proposed in the Gospel, rising up against its flesh—condemning precepts and commandments. I see, I know, I feel that in me, that is in my flesh, there dwelleth *no* good thing."

Editor: "Then do you realize what must be the outcome if God were to leave you unto yourself?" Humble Heart: "Yes, indeed. Without the assistance of His Holy Spirit, I should certainly make shipwreck of the faith. My daily prayer is 'Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe' (Ps. 119:117). My earnest desire is that I may watch and pray against every temptation. There is nothing I dread more than apostatizing, relaxing in my duty, returning to wallow in the mire." Editor: "These are all *plain evidences of the saving grace of God at work within you*, which I beseech Him to continue, so that you may be preserved

with a tender conscience, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, and obtain a full assurance of His love for you."

Humble Heart: "I thank you kindly, Sir, for your patience and help. What you have said makes me feel lighter in heart, but I wish to go home and prayerfully ponder the same, for I dare take no *man's* word for it. I want God Himself to 'say unto my soul, I am *thy* salvation' (Ps. 35:3). Will you not pray that it may please Him to do so?" Editor: "You shall certainly have a place in my feeble petitions. The Lord be very gracious unto you."

### **DIALOGUE 3**

#### **Editor Visits Humble Heart**

In the communicating of His Word God was pleased to speak 'at sundry times and in divers manners' (Heb. 1:1). In the Scriptures of Truth we have clear doctrinal instruction and plain precepts for the regulation of conduct, but we also find "dark parables' and mysterious symbols. Side by side are history and allegory, hymns of praise and practical proverbs, precious promises and intricate prophecies. Variety stamps all the works and ways of God. This illustrates a principle which should guide those whom the Lord has called to teach His Word: there should be variety both in the matter of their messages and the methods employed in delivering them. Many are unable to apprehend abstract statements, comparatively few have minds trained to follow a course of logical reasoning. The teacher then, ought to adapt himself to the capacity of his hearers. Blessedly do we find this exemplified in the ministry of the perfect Teacher. The teaching of the Lord Jesus was largely by question and answer. Having this in mind, we feel it may be wise to follow the last two articles on "Assurance" by another one in dialogue form.

"Good evening, friend Humble Heart." "Good evening, Mr. Editor. This is a pleasant surprise for I was not expecting to be favored with a visit from one of God's servants: I do not feel worthy of their notice."

Editor: "According to my promise, I have been seeking to remember you before the Throne of Grace, and while in prayer this morning there was impressed on my mind those words, 'lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees' (Heb. 12:12). I have been impressed of late by that lovely prophetic picture of Christ found in Isaiah 40:11, 'He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.' The Saviour devotes special care and tenderness upon the weak of the flock, and in this He has left an example which the under-shepherds need to follow.

Brother Humble Heart: "It is indeed kind of you, Sir, to bestow any trouble upon such a poor, worthless creature as I am: I should have thought your time had been more profitably employed in ministering to those who *can* take in the Truth quickly, and who grow in it by leaps and bounds; as for me, I am so dull and stupid, so full of doubtings and fears, that your labours on me are wasted." Editor: "Ah, my friend, all is not gold that glitters. The great majority of those who 'take in the Truth quickly' only do so intellectually—it has no power over the heart; and those who 'grow by leaps and bounds,' grow too swiftly for it to be real, or worth anything spiritually. Truth has to be *bought* (Prov. 23:23): *bought* by frequent meditation thereon, by taking it home unto ourselves, by deep exercises of conscience, by wrestling with God in prayer, that He would apply it in power to the soul."

Brother H. H.: "Yes, I realize that, and it makes me feel so bad because God's Word has not been written on *my* heart. I have gone over in my mind, again and again, all that you said at our last interview, and I am sure that I am unregenerate." Editor: "What leads you to such a conclusion?" Bro. H. H.: "This, if I had been regenerated the Holy Spirit would be dwelling within me, and in that case He would be producing His blessed fruit in my heart and life. It is written, 'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance' (self-control)—Galatians 5:22-23; and as I have endeavored to examine and search myself, I discover in me the very opposite of these heavenly graces."

Editor: "God's workings in grace and His ways in the material creation have much in common, and if we observe closely the latter, we may learn much about the former. Now in the natural realm the production of fruit is often a slow process. Glance out now at the trees, and how do they look? They are lifeless, and seem to be dead. Yet they are not; the vital sap is still in their roots, even though no signs of it be apparent to us. But in a little while, under the genial warmth of the sun, those trees will be covered with blossoms. Then, after a few days, those pretty blossoms will all have disappeared—blown off by the winds. Nevertheless, if those trees be examined closely it will be found that where those blossoms were are now little green buds. Many weeks have to pass before the owner of those trees is gladdened by seeing the buds develop into fruit.

"A further lesson may be learned from our gardens. The orchard teaches us the need for patience: the garden instructs us to expect and overcome disappointments. Here is a bed, which has been carefully prepared, and sown with seed. Later, the seed springs up and the plants appear, from which the flowers are to grow. But side by side there spring up many weeds too. The uninstructed gardener

was not expecting this, and is apt to be discouraged. Before he sowed the flower-seed, he thought he had carefully rooted up every nettle, thistle, and obnoxious plant; but now the bed has in it more weeds than flowers. So it is, my Brother, with the heart of the Christian. Though the incorruptible seed of God's Word is planted there (1 Peter 1:23), yet the heart—neglected all through the years of unregeneracy—is overgrown with weeds (the lusts of the flesh), and to the anointed eye the heart looks more like the Devil's weed plot than 'the king's garden'" (2 Kings 25:4).

Brother Humble Heart: "What you have just referred to in the natural realm is quite obvious, but I am not so clear about the spiritual application. Does not your last illustration belittle the work and power of the Holy Spirit? You have often quoted in your articles that Christ saves His people '*from* their sins' (Matt. 1:21); how, then, can any person rightfully regard himself as saved, while he is conscious that many sins still have dominion over him?" Editor: "I am glad you raised this point, for many dear souls are often troubled over it. Concerning the work and power of the Holy Spirit: light is thrown on this by various expressions which God has used in His Word. For example, in 2 Corinthians 1:22 (cf. Eph. 1:13, 14)) we read that God has 'given *the earnest* of the Spirit in our hearts.' Now an 'earnest' means a part, and not the whole—an installment, as it were; the fullness of the Spirit's power and blessing is communicated to no Christian in this life. So again in Romans 8:23, 'ourselves also, which have received *the firstfruits* of the Spirit'—a pledge, a sample only, of future greater abundance.

"Let me call your attention to the words which immediately follow those just quoted from Romans 8:23, namely, 'even we ourselves groan within ourselves' which is the more striking because this same thing is seen again in 2 Corinthians 5:4, 5. So those who *are* indwelt

by the Spirit of God are a 'groaning' people! It is true that the unregenerate 'groan' at times: when suffering great bodily pain, or over some heavy loss; but the 'groaning' of the Christian is occasioned by something very different: he groans over the remains of depravity still left within him, over the flesh so often successfully resisting the Spirit, over seeing around him so much that is dishonoring to Christ. This is clear from Romans 7:24 and its context, Philippians 3:18, etc."

Brother Humble Heart: "But only a few days ago I mentioned some of these very scriptures to one whom I regard as an eminent saint, and he told me that he had 'got out of Romans 7 into Romans 8' long ago." Editor: "But as we have seen, the Christian in Romans 8 'groans' (v. 23)!" Brother H. H.: "The one I had reference to laughed at me for my doubts and fears, told me I was dishonoring God by listening to the Devil." Editor: "It is much to be feared that he is a complete stranger to those exercises of heart which are experienced by every regenerate soul, and knows nothing of that heart-anguish and soul-travail which ever precedes *spiritual* assurance. The Lord Jesus did not laugh at fearing souls, but said, 'Blessed are they that mourn.' It is clear that your acquaintance does not understand your case.

Brother H. H.: "But do you mean to say that all of God's children are as wretched in soul as I am?" Editor: "No, I would not say that. The Holy Spirit does not give the same degree of light on the exceeding sinfulness of sin to all alike, nor does He reveal so fully unto all their own inward depravity. Moreover, just as God has appointed different seasons to the year, so no true Christian is always the same in his soul: there are cheerful days of spring and gloomy days of autumn, both in the natural and in the spiritual. 'But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day'

(Prov. 4:18), nevertheless, 'We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God,' (Acts 14:22). Both are true, though we are not always conscious of them both."

Brother H. H.: "I do not believe that any real Christian is ever plagued as I am: plagued so often with a spirit of rebellion, with unbelief, with pride, with such vile thoughts and desires that I would blush to mention them." Editor: "Ah, my Brother, few unregenerate souls would be honest enough to acknowledge as much! The very fact that these inward workings of sin plague you, is clear proof that you *are* regenerate, and there is within you a nature or principle of holiness which loathes all that is unholy. It is this which causes the Christian to 'groan,' nevertheless this brings him into fellowship with the sufferings of Christ. While here the Lord Jesus was 'the Man of sorrows,' and that which occasioned all His grief was sin—not His own, for He had none: but the sins of others. This then is one reason why God leaves the sinful nature in His people even after regeneration: that mourning over it they may be conformed to their suffering Head."

Brother H. H.: But how does this tally with Christ's saving His people from their sins?" Editor: "Matthew 1:21 in nowise clashes with what I have been saying. Christ saves His people from the guilt and punishment of their sins, because that was transferred to and vicariously suffered by Him. He saves us too from the pollution of sin: His Spirit moves us to see, grieve over, confess our sins, and plead the precious blood; and as this is done in faith, the conscience is cleansed. He also saves us from the reigning power of sin, so that the Christian is no longer the absolute and abject slave of sin and Satan. Moreover, the ultimate fulfillment of this blessed promise (like that of many others) is yet future: the time is coming when the Lord Jesus shall rid His people of the very presence of sin, so that



they shall be done with it forever." (See *A Fourfold Salvation* by NW. Pink)

Brother H. H.: "While on that point I wish you would explain to me those words 'sin shall not have dominion over you' (Rom. 6:14). Editor: "Observe first what that verse does not say: it is not 'sin shall not haunt and harass you' or 'sin shall not trip you and occasion many a fall': had it said *that*, every Christian might well despair. To 'have dominion over' signifies the legal right to command another, such as a parent over his child, or as one nation has over another which has been completely conquered in war. Such *legal* 'dominion' sin has not over any Christian: Christ alone is his rightful Lord. But sin oftentimes usurps authority over us, yet even experimentally it has not complete 'dominion': it can lead no Christian to apostatize, that is, utterly and finally renounce Christ. It can never so dominate the believer that he is thoroughly in love with sin and repents not when he offends."

Brother H. H.: Thank you; but may I ask another question: Why is it that some of God's children are not plagued by sin as I am?" Editor: "How can you be sure that they are not? 'The heart knoweth his own bitterness'" (Prov. 14:10). Brother H. H.: 'But I can tell from their peaceful countenances, their conversation, their joy in the Lord, that it cannot so be the case with them.' Editor: "Some are blest with a more cheerful natural disposition than others. Some keep shorter accounts with God, making it a point of conscience to confess every known sin to Him. Some are more diligent in using the means of grace: they who neglect the reading of God's Word, meditation thereon, and approach the throne of grace only occasionally and formally, cannot expect to have healthy souls."

Brother H. H.: "I admit I cannot meet your arguments. What you say is doubtless true of God's people, but my case is far worse than you realize: I have such a sink of iniquity within, and so often find myself listless toward all that is spiritual, that I greatly fear there can be no assurance for me." Editor: "It is the Devil who tells you that." Brother H. H.: "How can one distinguish between the harassing doubts which the Devil injects, and the convictions of sin and piercings of conscience which the Holy Spirit produces?" Editor: "*By the effects produced*. Satan will tell you that it is no use to resist indwelling sin any longer, that it is useless to pray any more. He seeks to produce despair, and tells many harassed souls they might as well commit suicide and put an end to their misery. But when the Holy Spirit convicts a Christian, He also works in his heart a godly sorrow, and moves him to acknowledge his transgressions to God. He leads to the throne of grace and gives again a sight of the cleansing blood of Christ; and this not once or twice, but to the end of our earthly lives. 'For a just man falleth seven times, *and riseth up again*' (Prov. 24:16). If then this agrees with your own experience, you must be a Christian."

Brother H. H.: "I cannot but be struck with the fact that *your* counsel and instruction is the very opposite of what was given to me by the last person I spoke to about my sorrows. He is a man very wise in the Scriptures, having scores of passages at his finger's end. He told me that the only way to get rid of my doubting was to believe the Word, and that every time I felt miserable to lay hold on one of the promises." Editor: "I think I know the company to which that man belongs. All they believe in is a *natural* faith, which lies in the power of the creature; a faith which is merely the product of our own will-power. But *that* is not the 'faith of God's elect.' Spiritual faith is the gift of God, and only the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit can call it forth into action in any of us. Shun such a people, my Brother.

Avoid all who give no real place to the Holy Spirit, but would make you believe that the remedy lies in your own 'free-will.' Seek more the company and communion of God Himself, and beg Him for Christ's sake to increase your faith and stay your mind upon Himself."

## **DIALOGUE 4**

### **Humble Heart's Spirit's Lifted**

"Good evening, Mr. Editor. I trust I am not intruding." "No, indeed, you are very welcome Bro. Humble Heart, and I am thankful to see from your countenance that your heart is lighter" (Prov. 15:13). Bro. H. H.: "I am glad to say it is so at present, for the Lord has been very gracious to me, and I cannot but think that it is in answer to your prayers, for the Scriptures declare, 'The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much'" (James 5:16). Editor: 'If the Lord has deigned to hear my feeble intercessions on your behalf, all the praise alone to Him. But tell me something of His goodness towards you.'" Brother H. H.: "May it please the Lord to direct my thoughts, anoint my lips, and help me to do so. My story is rather a long one, but I will be as concise as the case allows."

"A poor woman, known among the Lord's people as Sister Fearing, was left a widow some months ago, and having buried all her children, I knew she had no one to spade her garden; so this spring I called on her, and asked if she would allow me to do it." Editor: "I am glad to hear that: if godliness be not intensely practical, then it is only a name without the reality. It is written 'Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world' (James 1:27). And did this poor sister avail herself of your

kind offer?" Bro. Humble Heart: "Yes, with tears running down her face, she told me she was quite unable to express her gratitude. After a while she said, It was not so much my offer to help which moved her so deeply, but that it gave her a little hope she was not completely abandoned by God.

"I asked her why she ever entertained the thought that God had cast her off? She told me that most of the time she felt herself to be such a vile and polluted creature that a holy God could not look with any complacency upon her. She said she was so constantly tormented by doubts and fears that God must have given her over to an evil heart of unbelief. She added that, in spite of all her reading of the Word and crying unto the Lord for strength, her case seemed to grow worse and worse, so that it appeared Heaven *must* be closed against her." Editor: "And what reply did you make to her sorrowful complaint?" Bro. H. H.: "Why, there flowed into my mind a verse which I had not thought of for a long time: I felt it was from the Lord, and looking to Him for wisdom and tenderness, I addressed the dear soul as follows:

"Sister Fearing, I think you are too hasty in your conclusion. I have been just where you now are. I read in God's Word, 'the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power' (1 Cor. 4:20), and I reasoned that if God had set up His kingdom in my heart, then the power of sin would be broken; but alas, I found sin in me stronger than ever. I read 'he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him' (1 John 4:16), but I could not believe He dwelt in me while I was in such bondage to slavish fear. I read 'Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry "Abba, Father"' (Rom. 8:15), but I could not cry 'Abba, Father': so I was afraid God had nothing to do with me. I read, 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin' (1 John 3:9), and though I was preserved from bringing public reproach

upon the name of Christ, yet I found myself continually overcome by sin within. My guilty conscience daily condemned me, and unto peace I was a stranger."

Sister Fearing: "You have accurately described my sad lot; but go on please." Bro. H. H.: "Suffer me, then, to ask you a few honest questions. Have you been chastised, rebuked, made tender and sore for sin? And after feeling God's reproofs, was your spirit revived and refreshed under the Word, so that you hoped for better days?" Sister Fearing: "Yes, I have been conscious of God's rod upon me, and have owned with David, 'Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me' (Ps. 119:75). And there have been times, all too brief, when it seemed I was softened and revived, and had a little hope; but the sun was soon again hidden behind dark clouds." Bro. H. H.: "Well, *that* proves God *does* dwell within you, for He declares, 'Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, and with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, *to revive* the spirit of the humble, and *to revive* the heart of the contrite ones'" (Isa. 57:15)!

Sister Fearing: "Yes, I am familiar with that verse, but it makes against *me*, for had God truly 'revived' me, the *effects* of it would remain; instead, I am dry and parched, lifeless and barren." Bro. H. H.: "Again you are too hasty in writing 'bitter things against' yourself (Job 13:26). Such 'revivings' of faith, hope, and love in the soul *are* evidences of the Spirit's indwelling. But let me now give you the verse which flowed into my mind at the beginning of our conversation: it exactly fits your case, 'And now *for a little space* grace hath been showed from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us *a little reviving* in our bondage' (Ezra 9:8). Ah, dear Sister, do you not see that this 'little reviving,' even though it be for 'a

little space,' is a manifestation of God's dwelling in a broken and contrite heart?"

Editor: "That was indeed a word in season, and evidently given you by the Spirit. There are many hindered from enjoying assurance through unnecessary fears; because sin is in them as an active and restless principle, they imagine they have no contrary principle of holiness; and because in part they are carnal, judge that they are not spiritual. Because grace is but feebly active, they conclude they are void of it; and because for a long season they enjoy not strong consolation, suppose they have no title to it. They fail to distinguish between the motions of the flesh and the motions of the spirit: as surely as sin manifests the flesh to be in us, so does grieving over it, striving against it, repenting for it, and the confessing of it to God, show the spirit or new nature indwells us. The Christian's sighs and groans are among his best evidences that he is regenerate."

Bro. H. H.: "May I ask, exactly what you meant when you said, Many are hindered from enjoying assurance through *unnecessary fears*? My reason for asking is, because in Philippians 2:12 God bids His people work out their salvation *with fear and trembling*." Editor: "Your question is well taken. We must distinguish sharply between the fears of *godly jealousy* and the fears of *unbelief* the one is a distrusting of self, the other is a doubting of God; the former is opposed to pride and carnal confidence, the latter is the enemy of true peace. The eleven apostles manifested the fear of godly jealousy when the Saviour announced that one would betray Him, and each of them inquired, 'Lord, is it I?' David gave way to the fear of unbelief when he said, 'I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul' (1 Sam. 27:1). But I have interrupted your narrative; tell me how Sister Fearing responded to your giving her Ezra 9:8."

Bro. H. H.: "Really, it seemed to make little impression. She sighed deeply, and for a while said nothing. Then she continued, I fear it would be presumption for me to say that I have ever been *revived* for a dead soul cannot be—he must first be quickened; probably the raising of my spirits under the reading or hearing of the Word is nothing more than the joy of the stony-ground hearer (Matt. 13:20, 21). To which I replied, But one who has never been quickened has *no* pantings after God, never seeks Him at all, but seeks to banish Him entirely from his thoughts. True, he may go to church, and keep up a form of godliness before others, but there is no diligent seeking after Him in private, no yearnings for communion with Him.

"Perhaps, dear Sister, it may be a day of 'small things' (Zech. 4:10) with you. Often there is life where there is not strength. A child may breathe and cry yet cannot talk or walk. If God be the object of your affection, if sin be the cause of your grief, if conformity to Christ be the longing of your heart, then a good work *has* begun in you (Phil. 1:6). If it is indwelling sin which makes you so wretched from day to day, if it be deliverance from its polluting effects you yearn and pray for, if it be the lustings of the flesh you are struggling against, then it must be because a principle of holiness has been implanted in your heart. Such godly exercises are not in us by nature; they are the products of indwelling grace. Despair not, for it is written of Christ, 'a bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench'" (Matt. 12:20).

Sister Fearing: "Yes, it is one thing to understand these things intellectually, but it is quite another for God to apply them in power to the heart: *that* is what I long for, and that is what I lack. My wound is far too deadly for any man to heal. O that I could be sure as to whether my disrelish of sin arises from mere natural convictions of conscience that every ungodly person feels more or less, whether

they are suggestions from Satan for the purpose of deceiving me, or whether they actually are the strivings of the new nature against the old. Nothing short of the personal, mighty, and saving power of the Holy Spirit realized in my heart will or can give me genuine relief."

Bro. H. H.: "I am thankful to hear you say this. Human comforts may satisfy an empty professor, but such a plaster will not heal one of the elect when stricken by God. It is His purpose to cut off *every* arm of flesh from them, to strip them and bring them, in their helplessness, as empty-handed beggars before the throne of His grace. As to whether or not the life of God be actually planted in the soul, *therein* lies the grand mystery: *that* is the pivot on which eternal destiny must turn. And no verdict from man can satisfy on that point. Only the Lord Himself can give such a testimony or witness as will satisfy one of His children. But when He *does* shine into the soul, when He applies His Word in power, when *He* says 'thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace,' then no word from a preacher is needed. The Lord keep you at His feet till He grants this.

"Until very recently I too was much exercised over the great danger of Satan instilling a false peace, and making me believe that all was well, when it was not so; as I was also much perplexed to know how to distinguish between the convictions of *natural* conscience and the exercises of a *renewed* conscience. But the Lord has shown me that as a tree is known by its fruits, so the nature of a cause may be determined by the *character of the effects* it produces. They who are deluded by the false peace which Satan bestows are filled with conceit, presumption, and carnal confidence: they do not beg God to search them, being so sure of Heaven they consider it quite unnecessary. The convictions of natural conscience harden, stop the mouth of prayer, and lead to despair. The convictions of a renewed



conscience produce penitent confession, lead to Christ, and issue in honesty and uprightness before God.

"In conclusion, let me earnestly counsel you, dear Sister, to have nothing to do with those who profess their experience to be all peace and joy; and who, if you ask them whether they are tormented by the plague of their own heart, or whether they have *felt* the blood of Christ applied to their own conscience, laugh, and say they have nothing to do with feelings, but live above them. Such deluded creatures can be of no more help to a groaning saint than one suffering anguish from bodily ills would receive any relief from the so-called Christian Scientists, who tell him his pains are mental delusions, and to think only of health and happiness: one and another are equally physicians of no value. Instead, pour out your woes into the ears of the great Physician, and in His own perfect time He will pour oil and wine into your wounds, and put a new song into your mouth."

Bro. H. H.: "Since then I have said nothing more to her on the subject, believing it best to leave her alone with God." Editor: "I am glad to hear that: none but blind zealots will attempt to do the Holy Spirit's work for Him. Much damage is often done to souls trying to force things: when God begins a work, we may safely leave it in *His* hands to continue and complete the same. And how happy am I, dear Bro., to perceive the dew of the Spirit upon your own soul. It appears that 'the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear.' and 'the time of the singing of birds is come' (Song of Sol. 2:11, 12) with you."

Bro. H. H.: "Thanks be unto God for taking pity upon such a wretch: it is much better with me now. The strange thing is, though, I had little or no real assurance myself when I commenced speaking to

Sister Fearing, but as she mentioned the different things which so troubled her, God seemed to put into my mouth the very words most needed, and as I spoke them to her, He sealed them unto my own heart." Editor: "Yes, it is as we read in Proverbs 11:25, 'The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself': in communicating the Word of God to His children, our own hearts are refreshed and our own faith is established. To him that useth what he hath shall more be given.

"I have long perceived the truth of what the apostle says in 2 Corinthians 1:4, 'Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.' It is God's way to take His people, *and especially His servants*, through trying and painful experiences, in order that they may *use* to His glory the consolation wherewith He has comforted them. It is those who know most of the plague of their own heart, who are best fitted to speak a word in season to weary souls. It is out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, and it is he who has passed through the furnace who can best deal with those now in the fire. Let us pray that it may please God to be equally gracious unto Sister Fearing."

**THE END**

# **The “Almost Christian”**

## **A Sermon by George Whitefield**

“Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.” Acts xxvi. 28

THE chapter, out of which the text is taken, contains an admirable account which the great St. Paul gave of his wonderful conversion from Judaism to Christianity, when he was called to make his defence before Festus a Gentile governor, and king Agrippa. Our blessed Lord had long since foretold that when the Son of man should be lifted up, “his disciples should be brought before kings and rulers, for his name’s sake, for a testimony unto them.” And very good was the design of infinite wisdom in thus ordaining it; for Christianity being, from the beginning, a doctrine of the Cross, the princes and rulers of the earth thought themselves too high to be instructed by such mean teachers, or too happy to be disturbed by such unwelcome truths; and therefore would have always continued strangers to Jesus Christ, and Him crucified, had not the Apostles, by being arraigned before them, gained opportunities of preaching to them “Jesus and the resurrection.” St. Paul knew full well that this was the main reason why his blessed Master permitted his enemies at this time to arraign him at a public bar; and therefore, in compliance with the Divine Will, thinks it not sufficient barely to make his defence, but endeavours at the same time to convert his judges. And this he did with such demonstration of the Spirit, and of power, that Festus, unwilling to be convinced by the strongest evidence, cries out with a loud voice, “Paul, much learning doth make thee mad.” To which the brave Apostle (like a true follower of the holy Jesus) meekly replies, “I am not mad, most noble Festus,

but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.” But in all probability, seeing king Agrippa more affected with his discourse, and observing in him an inclination to know the truth, he applies himself more particularly to him. “The king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely; for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him.” And then, that if possible he might complete his wished-for conversion, he, with an inimitable strain of oratory, addresses himself still more closely—“King Agrippa, be-lievest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest them.” At which the passions of the king began to work so strongly that he was obliged in open court to own himself affected by the prisoner’s preaching, and ingenuously to cry out, “Paul, almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.”

These words, taken with the context, afford us a lively representation of the different reception which the doctrine of Christ’s ministers, who come in the power and Spirit of St. Paul, meets with now-a-days in the minds of men. For notwithstanding they, like this great apostle, “speak forth the words of truth and soberness,” and with such energy and power, that all their ad-versaries cannot justly gainsay or resist. Yet, too many, with the noble Festus before-mentioned, being, like him, either too proud to be taught, or too sensual, too careless, or too worldly-minded to live up to the doctrine, in order to excuse themselves, cry out, that “much learning, much study, or, what is more unaccountable, much piety, hath made them mad.” And though, blessed be God! all do not thus disbelieve our report, yet amongst those who gladly receive the word, and confess that we speak the words of truth and soberness, there are so few, who arrive at any higher degree of piety than that of Agrippa, or are any farther persuaded than to be almost Christian that I cannot but think it highly necessary to warn my dear hearers of the danger of such a state. And therefore, from the words of the text, I shall

endeavour to show these three things:

FIRST, What is meant by an almost Christian?

SECONDLY, What are the chief reasons, why so many are no more than almost Christian.

THIRDLY, I shall consider the ineffectualness, danger, absurdity, and uneasiness which attends those who are but almost Christian; and then conclude with a general exhortation, to set all upon striving not only be almost, but altogether Christians.

I. And, FIRST, I am to consider what is meant by an almost Christian.

An almost Christian, if we consider him in respect to his duty to God, is one that halts between two opinions; that wavers between Christ and the world; that would reconcile God and Mammon, light and darkness, Christ and Belial. It is true, he has an inclination to religion, but then he is very cautious how he goes too far in it: his false heart is always crying out, Spare thyself, do thyself no harm. He prays indeed that “God’s will may be done on earth, as it is in heaven.” But notwithstanding, he is very partial in his obedience, and fondly hopes that God will not be extreme to mark everything that he wilfully does amiss; though an inspired apostle has told him, that “he who offends in one point is guilty of all.” But chiefly, he is one that depends much on outward ordinances, and on that account looks upon himself as righteous, and despises others—though at the same time he is as great a stranger to the divine life as any other person whatsoever! In short, he is fond of the form, but never experiences the power of godliness in his heart. He goes on year after year, attending on the means of grace, but then, like Pharaoh’s lean kine [cows], he is never the better, but rather the worse for them.

If you consider him in respect to his neighbour, he is one that is strictly just to all; but then this does not proceed from any love to

God or regard to man, but only through a principle of self-love. He knows dishonesty will spoil his reputation, and consequently hinder his thriving in the world.

He is one that depends much upon being negatively good, and contents himself with the consciousness of having done no one any harm; though he reads in the gospel, that “the unprofitable servant was cast into outer dark-ness,” and the barren fig-tree was cursed and dried up from the roots, not for bearing bad, but no fruit.

He is no enemy to charitable contributions in public, if not too frequently recommended: but then he is unacquainted with the kind offices of visiting the sick and imprisoned, clothing the naked, and relieving the hungry in a private manner. He thinks that these things belong only to the clergy, though his own false heart tells him that nothing but pride keeps him from exercising these acts of humility; and that Jesus Christ, in the 25th chapter of St. Matthew, condemns persons to everlasting punishment, not merely for being fornicators, drunkards, or extortioners, but for neglecting these charitable offices, “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, he shall set the sheep on his right-hand, and the goats on his left. And then shall he say unto them on his left hand, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also say, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or a-thirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have not done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not unto me: and these shall go away into everlasting punishment.” I thought proper to give you this whole passage of scripture at large,

because our Saviour lays such a particular stress upon it; and yet it is so little regarded that were we to judge by the practice of Christians, one should be tempted to think there were no such verses in the Bible.

But to proceed in the character of an almost Christian. If we consider him in respect of himself; as we said he was strictly honest to his neighbour, so he is likewise strictly sober in himself: but then both his honesty and sobriety proceed from the same principle of a false self-love. It is true, he runs not into the same excess of riot with other men; but then it is not out of obedience to the laws of God, but either because his constitution will not away with intemperance; or rather because he is cautious of forfeiting his reputation, or unfitting himself for temporal business. But though he is so prudent as to avoid intemperance and excess, for the reasons before-mentioned, yet he always goes to the extremity of what is lawful. It is true, he is no drunkard; but then he has no CHRISTIAN SELF-DENIAL. He cannot think our Saviour to be so austere a Master, as to deny us to indulge ourselves in some particulars: and so by this means he is destitute of a sense of true religion, as much as if he lived in debauchery, or any other crime whatever. As to settling his principles as well as practice, he is guided more by the world, than by the Word of God. For his part, he cannot think the way to heaven so narrow as some would make it; and therefore considers not so much what scripture requires, as what such and such a good man does, or what will best suit his own corrupt inclinations. Upon this account, he is not only very cautious himself, but likewise very careful of young converts, whose faces are set heavenward; and therefore is always acting the devil's part, and bidding them spare themselves, though they are doing no more than what the Scripture strictly requires them to do. The consequence of which is, that "he suffers not himself to enter into the kingdom of God, and those that are entering in he

hinders.”

Thus lives the almost Christian: not that I can say I have fully described him to you; but from these outlines and sketches of his character, if your con-sciences have done their proper office, and made a particular application of what has been said to your own hearts, I cannot but fear that some of you may observe some features in his picture, odious as it is, to near resembling your own; and therefore I cannot but hope, that you will join with the apostle in the words immediately following the text, and wish yourselves “to be not only almost, but altogether Christians.”

II. I proceed to the second general thing proposed; to consider the reasons why so many are no more than almost Christian.

1. And the first reason I shall mention is, because so many set out with false notions of religion; though they live in a Christian country, yet they know not what Christianity is. This perhaps may be esteemed a hard saying, but experience sadly evinces the truth of it. For some place religion in being of this or that communion; more in morality; most in a round of duties, and a model of performances; and few, very few acknowledge it to be, what it really is, a thorough inward change of nature, a divine life, a vital participation of Jesus Christ, an union of the soul with God; which the apostle expresses by saying, “He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.” Hence it happens that so many, even of the most knowing professors, when you come to converse with them concerning the essence, the life, the soul of religion, I mean our new birth in Jesus Christ, confess themselves quite ignorant of the matter, and cry out with Nicodemus, “How can this thing be?” And no wonder then, that so many are only almost Christian, when so many know not what Christianity is.

No marvel that so many take up with the form, when they are quite



strangers to the power of godliness; or content themselves with the shadow, when they know so little about the substance of it. And this is one cause why so many are almost, and so few are altogether, Christians.

2. A second reason that may be assigned why so many are no more than almost Christian is a servile fear of man. Multitudes there are and have been, who, though awakened to a sense of the divine life, and have tasted and felt the powers of the world to come, yet out of a base sinful fear of being counted singular, or contemned by men, have suffered all those good impressions to wear off. It is true, they have some esteem for Jesus Christ; but then, like Nicodemus, they would come to him only by night. They are willing to serve him; but then they would do it secretly, for fear of the Jews. They have a mind to see Jesus, but then they cannot come to Him because of the press, and for fear of being laughed at, and ridiculed by those with whom they used to sit at meat. But well did our Saviour prophesy of such persons, “How can ye love me, who receive honour one of another?” Alas! have they never read that “the friendship of this world is enmity with God;” and that our Lord Himself has threatened, “Whosoever shall be ashamed of me or of my words, in this wicked and adulterous generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father and of his holy angels?” No wonder that so many are no more than almost Christian, since so many “love the praise of men more than the honour which cometh of God.”

3. A third reason why so many are no more than almost Christian, is a reigning love of money. This was the pitiable case of that forward young man in the gospel, who came running to our blessed Lord, and kneeling before him, inquired “what he must do to inherit eternal life?” to whom our blessed Master replied, “Thou knowest the

commandments, Do not kill, Do not com-mit adultery, Do not steal:" To which the young man replied, "All these have I kept from my youth." But when our Lord proceeded to tell him, "Yet lackest thou one thing; Go sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor; he was grieved at that saying, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions!" Poor youth! He had a good mind to be a Christian, and to inherit eternal life, but thought it too dear, if it could be purchased at no less an expense than of his estate! And thus many, both young and old, now-a-days come running to worship our blessed Lord in public, and kneel before Him in private, and in-quire at His Gospel, what they must do to inherit eternal life: but when they find they must renounce the self-enjoyment of riches, and forsake all in affection to follow Him, they cry, "The Lord pardon us in this thing! We pray thee, have us excused."

But is heaven so small a trifle in men's esteem, as not to be worth a little gilded earth? Is eternal life so mean a purchase, as not to deserve the temporary renunciation of a few transitory riches? Surely it is. But however inconsistent such a behaviour may be, this inordinate love of money is too evidently the common and fatal cause why so many are no more than almost Christian.

4. Nor is the love of pleasure a less uncommon, or a less fatal cause, why so many are no more than almost Christian. Thousands and ten thousands there are who despise riches, and would willingly be true disciples of Jesus Christ, if parting with their money would make them so; but when they are told that our blessed Lord has said, "Whosoever will come after him must deny himself;" like the pitiable young man before-mentioned, "they go away sorrowful" for they have too great a love for sensual pleasures. They will perhaps send for the ministers of Christ, as Herod did for John, and hear them gladly. But touch them in their Herodias, tell them they must part

with such or such a darling pleasure, and with wicked Ahab they cry out, “Hast thou found us, O our enemy?” Tell them of the necessity of mortification and self-denial, and it is as difficult for them to hear, as if you were to bid them “cut off a right-hand, or pluck out a right-eye.” They cannot think our blessed Lord requires so much at their hands, though an inspired apostle has commanded us to “mortify our members which are upon earth.” And who himself, even after he had converted thousands, and was very near arrived to the end of his race, yet professed that it was his daily practice to “keep under his body, and bring it into subjection, lest after he had preached to others, he himself should be a castaway!”

But some men would be wiser than this great apostle, and chalk out to us what they falsely imagine an easier way to happiness. They would flatter us. We may go to heaven without offering violence to our sensual appetites; and enter into the strait gate without striving against our carnal inclinations. And this is another reason why so many are only almost and not altogether Christians.

5. The fifth and last reason I shall assign why so many are only almost Christian, is a fickleness and instability of temper.

It has been, no doubt, a misfortune that many a minister and sincere Christian has met with, to weep and wail over numbers of promising converts, who seemingly began in the Spirit, but after a while fell away, and basely ended in the flesh, and this not for want of right notions in religion, nor out of a servile fear of man, nor from the love of money, or of sensual pleasure, but through an instability and fickleness of temper. They looked upon religion merely for novelty, as something which pleased them for a while; but after their curiosity was satisfied, they laid it aside again—like the young man that came to see Jesus with a linen cloth about his naked body, they have

followed him for a season, but when temptations came to take hold on them, for want of a little more resolution, they have been stripped of all their good intentions, and fled away naked. They at first, like a tree planted by the water-side, grew up and flourished for a while, but having no root in themselves, no inward principle of holiness and piety, like Jonah's gourd, they were soon dried up and withered. Their good intentions are too like the violent motions of the animal spirits of a body newly beheaded, which, though impetuous, are not lasting. In short, they set out well in their journey to heaven, but finding the way either narrower or longer than they expected, through an unsteadiness of temper, they have made an eternal halt, and so "returned like the dog to his vomit", or like the sow that was washed to her "wallowing in the mire!"

But I tremble to pronounce the fate of such unstable professors, who, having put their hands to the plough, for want of a little more resolution, shamefully look back. How shall I repeat to them that dreadful threaten-ing—"If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." And again, "It is impossible (that is, exceeding difficult at least) for those that have been once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and the powers of the world to come, if they should fall away, to be renewed again unto repentance." But notwithstanding the Gospel is so severe against apostates, yet many that begun well, through a fickleness of temper—O that none of us here present may ever be such—have been by this means of the number of those that turn back unto perdition. And this is the fifth, and the last reason I shall give, why so many are only almost, and not altogether Christians.

III. Proceed we now to the general thing proposed, namely, to consider the folly of being no more than an almost Christian.

1. And the FIRST proof I shall give of the folly of such a proceeding is that it is ineffectual to salvation. It is true, such men are almost good; but almost to hit the mark, is really to miss it. God requires us “to love him with all our hearts, with all our souls, and with all our strength.” He loves us too well to admit any rival; because, so far as our hearts are empty of God, so far must they be unhappy. The devil, indeed, like the false mother that came before Solomon, would have our hearts divided, as she would have had the child; but God, like the true mother, will have all or none. “My Son, give me thy heart,” thy whole heart, is the general call to all: and if this be not done, we never can expect the divine mercy.

Persons may play the hypocrite; but God at the great day will strike them dead, (as he did Ananias and Sapphira by the mouth of his servant Peter) for pretending to offer him all their hearts, when they keep back from Him the greatest part. They may perhaps impose upon their fellow-creatures for a while, but He that enabled Elijah to cry out, “Come in thou wife of Jeroboam,” when she came disguised to inquire about his sick son, will also discover them through their most artful dissimulations; and if their hearts are not wholly with Him, appoint them their portion with hypocrites and unbelievers.

2. But, SECONDLY, What renders a half-way-piety more inexcusable is, that it is not only insufficient to our own salvation, but also very prejudicial to that of others.

An almost Christian is one of the most hurtful creatures in the world; he is a wolf in sheep’s clothing. He is one of those false prophets our blessed Lord bids us beware of in his sermon on the mount, who would persuade men, that the way to heaven is broader than it really is; and thereby, as it was observed before, “enter not into the kingdom of God yourselves, and those that are entering in they

hinder.” These, these are the men that turn the world into a lukewarm Laodicean spirit that hang out false lights, and so shipwreck un-thinking benighted souls in their voyage to the haven of eternity. These are they who are greater enemies to the Cross of Christ, than infidels themselves: for of an unbeliever every one will be aware, but an almost Christian, through his subtle hypocrisy, draws away many after him, and therefore must expect to receive the greater damnation.

3. But, THIRDLY, As it is most prejudicial to ourselves and hurtful to others, so it is the greatest instance of ingratitude we can express towards our Lord and Master Jesus Christ. For did He come down from heaven, and shed his precious blood to purchase these hearts of ours, and shall we only give Him half of them? O how can we say we love him, when our hearts are not wholly with Him? How can we call him our Saviour, when we will not endeavour sincerely to approve ourselves to him, and so let him see the travail of his soul, and be satisfied!

Had any of us purchased a slave at a most expensive rate, and who was before involved in the utmost miseries and torments, and so must have continued forever, had we shut up our bowels of compassion from him; and was this slave afterwards to grow rebellious, or deny giving us but half his service; how, how should we exclaim against his base ingratitude! And yet this base ungrateful slave thou art, O man, who acknowledgest thyself to be redeemed from infinite unavoidable misery and punishment by the death of Jesus Christ, and yet wilt not give thyself wholly to him. But shall we deal with God our Maker in a manner we would not be dealt with by a man like ourselves? God forbid no! Suffer me, therefore, to add a word or two of exhortation to you, to excite you to be not only almost, but altogether Christians. O let us scorn all base and

treacherous treatment of our King and Saviour, of our God and Creator. Let us not take some pains all our lives to go to heaven, and yet plunge ourselves into hell at last. Let us give to God our whole hearts, and no longer halt between two opinions. If the world be God, let us serve that; if pleasure be a God, let us serve that; but if the Lord He be God, let us, O let us serve him alone. Alas! why, why should we stand out any longer? Why should we be so in love with slavery, as not wholly to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil, which, like so many spiritual chains, bind down our souls and hinder them from flying up to God. Alas! what are we afraid of? Is not God able to reward our entire obedience? If he is, as the almost Christian's lame way of serving him, seems to grant, why then will we not serve him entirely? For the same reason we do so much, why do we not do more? Or do you think that being only half religious will make you happy, but that going farther, will render you miserable and uneasy? Alas! this, my brethren, is delusion all over. For what is it but this half piety, this wavering between God and the world, that makes so many that are seemingly well disposed, such utter strangers to the comforts of religion? They choose just so much of religion as will disturb them in their lusts, and follow their lusts so far as to deprive themselves of the comforts of religion. Whereas on the contrary, would they sincerely leave all in affection, and give their hearts wholly to God, they would then (and they cannot till then) experience the unspeakable pleasure of having a mind at unity with itself, and enjoy such a peace of God, which even in this life passes all understanding, and which they were entire strangers to before. It is true, if we will devote ourselves entirely to God, we must meet with contempt; but then it is because contempt is necessary to heal our pride. We must renounce some sensual pleasures, but then it is because those unfit us for spiritual ones, which are infinitely better. We must re-nounce the love of the world; but then it is that we may be filled with the love of God: and when that has once enlarged our

hearts, we shall, like Jacob when he served for his beloved Rachel, think nothing too difficult to undergo, no hardships too tedious to endure, because of the love we shall then have for our dear Redeemer. Thus easy, thus delightful will be the ways of God even in this life. But when once we throw off these bodies, and our souls are filled with all the fullness of God, O! what heart can conceive, what tongue can express, with what unspeakable joy and consolation shall we then look back on our past sincere and hearty services? Think you then, my dear hearers, we shall repent we had done too much; or rather think you not, we shall be ashamed that we did no more; and blush we were so backward to give up all to God; when He intended hereafter to give us Himself?

Let me therefore, to conclude, exhort you, my brethren, to have always before you the unspeakable happiness of enjoying God. And think withal that every degree of holiness you neglect, every act of piety you omit is a jewel taken out of your crown, a degree of blessedness lost in the vision of God. O! do but always think and act thus! You will no longer be labouring to compound matters between God and the world. But, on the contrary, be daily endeavouring to give up yourselves more and more unto Him. You will be always watching, always praying, always aspiring after farther degrees of purity and love, and consequently always preparing yourselves for a fuller sight and enjoyment of that God, in Whose presence there is fullness of joy, and at Whose right hand there are pleasures for ever more. Amen! Amen!

## **The PROPERTIES of grace.**



**It is free, sufficient, unselfish, rich in blessings.**

**William S. Plumer, 1853**

In many things the grace of God differs from all other manifestations of favor. We should not be surprised at this when we reflect that as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts. There are none like Jehovah in love, or in majesty, in glory or in condescension. Beyond everything else, grace is **FREE**. It is beyond the power of man to earn it, to deserve it, to purchase it. No price is to be paid for it. To offer anything as an equivalent for it is to insult God. "Without money and without price" is the sole method of its bestowment. This grace is absolutely, everlastingly, immutably free. If you ever secure it, it will not be by paying for it thousands of rivers of oil, the cattle on a thousand hills, or the wealth of the world.

This grace is, moreover, **ALL-SUFFICIENT**. It alone does all. He, who has it, is **rich** beyond the power of need, is **strong** beyond the possibility of being finally vanquished, is **justified** so that he can never come into condemnation. It meets every demand of justice, every temptation, every emergency. "My grace is sufficient for you," are words as sweet as ever reached the ears of mortals.

Another property of divine grace is that it is **UNSELFISH**. It is pure grace. The happiness of the King of kings is not augmented by having kings and priests to bow before him. God is, and was, and shall be blessed for evermore. God's almightiness excludes all need, by excluding all weakness. If God could fail in anything, he might cease

to be blessed and so cease to be God. When there was as yet no created spirit, and the eternal God existed in solitary grandeur in the universe, that Infinite and Eternal Mind was as happy as it is now, or ever shall be. To the divine blessedness there is no limit, there comes no change. Like his wisdom, power, holiness and truth, his happiness cannot vary. Neither creation nor redemption was undertaken to heighten the bliss of the Godhead.

The Bible teaches that if men were even spotlessly holy, they would still be unprofitable servants. "If you sin, how does that affect him? If your sins are many, what does that do to him? If you are righteous, what do you give to him, or what does he receive from your hand? Your wickedness affects only a man like yourself, and your righteousness only the sons of men. Can a man be of benefit to God? Can even a wise man benefit him? What pleasure would it give the Almighty if you were righteous? What would he gain if your ways were blameless?" Job 35:6-8 and 22:2-3. God does indeed order all things for his own honor and glory; but that is not for the increase of his infinite blessedness. Pure grace and unbought love have done all for sinners. There is no mixture of God's grace and man's goodness in salvation. God owed nothing, could owe nothing to apostate man. It is a shameful and wicked derogation from the grace of the Gospel to assert that God intended thereby to make amends to our race for the defects of the covenant of works. That covenant was wise, holy, just and good. Under it the angels enjoy all their bliss. As long as man kept it, he was unspeakably happy. And when he fell under the curse of that covenant, he did it not by any inevitable necessity of nature, but by his own voluntary choice of that which had been forbidden.

Nowhere in the Bible is it hinted that God originated the covenant of grace as something due to us. On the contrary, it traces all to divine

bountifulness and mercifulness. It speaks on this wise: "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast. Ephesians 2:4-9. Many other portions of Scripture teach the same truth, but this one is so full and explicit that nothing but perversity and blindness can misconstrue its precious doctrine.

The peculiar sweetness and excellence of this view of the subject is, first, that it renders illustrious beyond a parallel, the mercy of God in Christ, and thus lays a sure foundation for the temple of praise which is now rising to the sovereign love of God. Secondly, this view brings strong consolation to the godly, because if God had gracious regards towards them when they had no holiness nor good desires, they may assuredly hope that having freely given them new hearts, and having also freely justified them—he will not abandon them to ruin, nor hand them over to condemnation. Nor is this grace in its bestowments limited to a few small items. It would have been unmerited kindness for eternal mercy to have expressed any pity for man. It would have been more than man deserved for God to have given him a respite of a thousand years from the fiery doom, which was before him. It is mere mercy that keeps a sinner out of hell even for an hour! But when God undertook to be gracious, he confined himself to no little work, but devised a plan incomprehensibly great and glorious, running through all coming time, and the eternity beyond that, and embracing in its effects in some way, myriads on myriads of happy creatures, who study it, admire it, or taste its

abundant provisions. So that on this side of heaven there is no higher exercise of virtue than simply to believe and cordially to rely upon the statements of God's word respecting this greatest of all devices.

The first result attained by the works of grace in our world, is the securing of an unparalleled revenue of renown to the divine government. Glory to God in the highest is an effect peculiar to the work of redemption. To men the results are as happy, as to God they are honorable. The fruits of God's grace are so many, and so rich, and so necessary, that we may safely say, without them existence is not desirable; but with them life is a great blessing and blessing, though it should be begun by ten thousand years of such affliction as the saints on earth are subject to. God's plan of mercy in Christ secures us against all conceivable ills, except such as shall themselves be made the means of ultimate and eternal gain to us. It also secures the possession of all conceivable good things for this world and the next, and at the best possible time. The tenor of Scripture on these points is unmistakable: "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's." 1 Cor. 3:21-23.

Even inspired men seem at a loss for words to convey an adequate conception of any of God's saving mercies. In his gospel, John says, "God **so** loved the world." And in his first epistle he says, "Behold! How **great** is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!" Paul breaks out, "Thanks be to God for His **indescribable** gift!"

With our Lord and his apostles, crowns and kingdoms are favorite emblems of the riches of our inheritance in Christ. Nor does God ever revoke any promise made to man in Christ Jesus. "The Lord is

not man that he should repent." He never begins to build and finds himself unable to finish. Nor has he affixed to the gospel offer any meritorious condition to be performed by us. Jesus Christ fulfilled the entire conditions of the covenant of grace—so far as satisfying the law and bringing in righteousness are concerned. The fourth property of this grace, then, is that it is exceedingly fruitful in the most precious and most permanent blessings!

## **Jesus Christ Fount of Every Blessing**

## **by John Hendryx**

"Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (Jas. 1:17). And again, "No one can receive anything except what is given him from heaven" (John 3:27). "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ." (Eph 1:3)

Since every good endowment and perfect gift is from above, Jesus leaves no room for nature to boast. This is no hyperbole but a plain expression of the Holy Spirit affirming that all our abilities; moral, natural and otherwise are the merciful unconditional gift of our Lord Jesus Christ. These and many other passages use universal positives (All, Every) to describe the all-encompassing nature of Christ as the source of every excellence and spiritual blessing. The word "endowment" used in Jas 1:17 means talent, ability or quality which points to the fact that the grace and illumination we are given in Christ to apprehend His word are a necessary precursor to have the internal moral/spiritual quality that enable us to generate right thoughts about Christ. An unspiritual man cannot naturally generate the affections or faith necessary to appropriate salvation. No stream can rise above its source, so likewise, no good thought can rise to heaven unless its fountain source is in heaven. Redemptive thoughts are not derived from resources found below but must issue forth from the river of life whose fountainhead springs forth from the throne of God and of the Lamb. And it is from this same fountain that we must continually drink lest we dry up in the use of our own natural resources.

We are strong because of His strength; We have good intentions only because He blesses us with a renewed heart that has His good intentions; We are wise only because of His wisdom; and we have faith because He is the author of faith (Heb 2:10, 12:2). It is when a person recognizes this Christ-centeredness, that is, when the Spirit illumines a man's mind to see this truth, it is then that we admire the Giver arightly. When we ascribe all excellencies and blessings to Him, even the very humility to believe, only then do we give all glory to Him. Consider that when the seed of the gospel is cast about by the preacher on every type of soil, we give glory to God arightly only when we acknowledge that even our good soil is only good because God first plowed up the fallow ground of our hardened heart. The soil is not good by nature (but unproductive) and it is because the farmer first plowed it up that the seed takes. Likewise, no fallen heart thinks good thoughts, or generates affection for God by nature but does so only because God has blessed Him in Christ by breaking up the natural hardness of the ground of our hearts.

If we are under the impression that the saving grace of God is conferred to us as the result of a prayer, remember that it is the grace given to us in Christ (to begin with) which stirs our souls to pray to God. Would you deny God the glory due to Him by thanking Him for all else, except your faith and thus keep this one glory for yourself? Isaiah 65:1 says, "I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, 'Here am I, here am I.' To the unspiritual man, the Scripture affirms that "THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS..." This is no hyperbole but the natural state of men without the grace of Christ.

Remember also that while God commands all men everywhere to repent and believe the gospel, that a command does not imply natural ability apart from the Holy Spirit. The commands of God are given, not to show ability but to reveal inability and sin (Rom 3:19, 20). In other words, even the very command to believe the gospel brings us to despair of all hope from ourselves, and it is there when we come to recognize our spiritual impotence, we know the Spirit is finally doing a work of grace in our lives. The very beginning and desire for faith and affection for Christ, cannot be ascribed to the unspiritual nature, but rather, comes through regeneration (1 John 5:1; John 1:13; 3:3; 6:37, 39, 63-65) but those who say that this ability belongs to us by nature and not by the effectual grace conferred by Christ, that is, by the communication of Christ by the Holy Spirit who Himself amends our affections, disarms our hostility and turns our will from unbelief to faith and turns our love for darkness to a love for light...that person is resisting the doctrine of salvation by grace alone. We secretly wish to keep part of the glory for ourself. But faith is not produced by our unregenerated human nature (1 Cor 2:12, 14; Rom 9:16).

The grace of Christ, in other words, does not depend on the humility or obedience of man for it is because of the mercy of Christ that we are obedient and humble (1 Cor. 15:10). The natural man does not form right opinions or produce any right choices with regard to redemption nor can he positively respond to the preaching of the gospel simply through his natural powers without the Holy Spirit opening his blind eyes, unplugging his deaf ears and turning his natural heart of stone to a heart of flesh. For, as the Scripture itself affirms, we are not "competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God" (2 Cor. 3:5). Apart from Jesus Christ we can do nothing. The outward revelation of God to our nature is not apprehended spiritually by the natural mind, nor



received by the fallen heart, for the revelation of God must be illumined by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 16:17; 1 Cor. 12:3; 1 Thess 4:5) who transforms our love of sin to a love of Christ. The natural mind may intellectually understand the words being said, but they do not enter his hostile and unfriendly heart. Only the love of Christ apprehended with a new heart and new eyes will, in fact receive Him. This means Christianity is not in the least about moral improvement but rather about a completely new life in Christ. The desire to improve on the old is part of the problem.

Only God can change us to believe and obey. Until we reach this kind of despair in ourselves, one has not yet fully understood the implications of the gospel. It is not about our willing, but of God's mercy that makes us willing (Rom 9:16). All redemptive blessings find their source in Christ (Eph 1:3). But Not recognizing Christ as the source of every blessing is the cause for many errors and inconsistencies among sincere Christians. For example, many dispensationalists deny that Christ died only for the elect (particular redemption) yet will acknowledge the truth of the doctrine of irresistible grace. They will reason that Christ's death does NOT in and of itself save without the instrument of faith and, furthermore, there is nothing in scripture that forces us to think that the expiation necessarily secures faith for all for whom it is intended.

In answer to this we must consider that the work of redemption is not limited to the one spiritual blessing of "reconciliation". It has manifold aspects. "Regeneration" is also a part of the saving work of Christ and to separate regeneration and effectual grace from Christ and His work is erroneous to say the least. In other words, these "four-pointers" appear to be promoting a Christ-less regeneration. All persons associated with this blog, including the author of this article, would agree that faith is necessary for justification. But considering

the fact that the redemptive blessing of regeneration (not only justification) also finds its origin in Jesus Christ should prove once for all that faith is secured for all to whom it is intended (John 6:37, 39). For this would show that Christ died in a way for the elect that He did not for the non-elect, that is, to secure the spiritual blessings of irresistible grace and regeneration which all (including four-pointers) acknowledge are blessings not granted to the non-elect. Are not these redemptive blessings also from Christ?

Christ calls all men everywhere to repent and believe the gospel but the elect alone are they whose eyes God opens. To deny this is to deny that salvation is by Christ alone. Either Christ secures all blessings for His people that they might believe, or we erroneously introduce something of nature into the work of redemption. Can we thank God even for our faith or is the one thing reserved for ourselves? Let us thank Christ for all things, even the new birth that gives rise to our hope in Christ:

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet 1:3)

-John W. Hendryx

## **Jesus Christ: The Interpretive Key to the Scripture**

## **With Five Examples of Doctrinal Errors that Arise When this Key is not Used.**

**by John Hendryx**

"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life." (John 5:39, 40)

"For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" - (1 Tim 2:5)

"The Scriptures should be read with the aim of finding Christ in them. Whoever turns aside from this object, even though he wears himself out all his life in learning, he will never reach the knowledge of the truth." - John Calvin

Almost all errors and inconsistencies in our understanding of Bible texts occur when our interpretation is less than Christ-centered. This is foundational. Unless our study, however diligent, leads us to see that all Scripture points to Jesus Christ, our study is in vain. The importance of the Bible (OT & NT) is that it testifies about Jesus Christ (John 1:43-45, Acts 3:18, Acts 17:2-3, 2 Tim 3:14-15, 1 Pet 1:10-12, Rom 1:1-3, 16:25-27, Luke 24:25-27 & 44-46).

Jesus never condemned a Pharisee for taking Moses too seriously. They take him far less seriously than they should. For Jesus says, "If you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for He wrote of Me. But if you don't believe His writings, how will you believe My words. Your accuser is Moses." (John 5:46). So to understand Moses is to come to know Christ when He is revealed. Likewise, Abraham saw Jesus' day

and was glad, the Bible testifies. And "...foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU." (Gal)

Here are some examples of specific doctrinal errors that fail to take into account the above biblical principles ... These are produced by an interpretative grid or presupposition that arises from Christless or less-than-Christocentric views of Scripture. In the following, I wish to give 5 examples of current popular, but erroneous, interpretations, that err simply because they fail to see the centrality of Jesus Christ in their understanding:

### **1) The False Unbiblical Assertion that Salvation can be Lost**

The claim by some that a Christian can actually lose his or her salvation is a prime example of reading Christ out of the text, because the focus becomes your own moral ability rather than Christ. Some erroneously believe that a Christian, after being saved by Christ, can make certain choices that will lead to the loss of their adoption and justification, and thus, their salvation in Christ. In other words, they must, by their own effort, or with the Spirit's help, maintain their just standing before God. With such a view, Christ is not sufficient to save completely. Such a doctrine should immediately make us think of Paul's warning in Galatians: "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" (Gal 3:3) But why is Paul so stern as to call them foolish? Because they have forgotten that Christ and Christ alone has saved them. To think that we can add to Christ's perfect work is to utterly misapprehend the Gospel at its core. For, we ask, is it Jesus or something else which is sufficient to carry you to the end? Any addition to Jesus Christ is to believe that justification is found in something else has forgotten about the centrality of Christ.

So we ask in relation to this doctrine, is it Christ who saves us, or does He merely assist us so we may save ourselves? The warning passages in Hebrews actually warn against this very error. They start by pointing out that Jesus is superior to the angels, to Moses and to the Sacrificial System. The warnings of falling away are actually warnings about going back to something inferior to Christ, like the sacrificial system which only pointed to Christ. To read that a particular sin can make us lose our salvation, is thus, to utterly forget what the context of the Text in Hebrews itself is. So the assertion that a Christian can lose salvation is the first error that we have spotted that arises because Christ was not seen as the ultimate interpretive presupposition. Some other ultimate presupposition guided our exposition.

## **2) Synergism**

Synergism is the error that affirms that the natural man can cooperate with God in the regeneration process (the new birth) ...that an unregenerate person has the moral capacity to embrace the Gospel apart from the work of the Spirit changing the heart. Again, remember what our interpretive Key to the Bible is? Jesus Christ. So, in relation to regeneration and conversion, when the gospel is preached, what makes people to differ in their response to it? Does Jesus Christ make us differ or does something else? This "something else" may take various forms; it may be something native to the human constitution (i.e. Pelagianism) or something alien yet universal (i.e. Arminianism)? In either case, the point is that it is not Christ that makes the difference. Anyone who claims that the difference arises from one of these something-else's has failed to see first our hopelessness as fallen creatures apart from Christ and second the exclusive sufficiency of Christ's saving work. If I am different than my neighbor because of something other than Jesus Christ, then Christ, whatever role he may play, cannot be central to

my understanding of salvation. He is only partly responsible for it. It is the grace we have in Christ that saves, and nothing in addition to it.

### **3) Four-Point Calvinism**

Four-point Calvinism fails the test of Christ-centered interpretation because this view tends to see the TULIP as an abstraction. But the TULIP only works when we see Christ at its center. Consider the TULIP as a chiasm with the "L" at the top of the pyramid. It is Jesus Christ which makes sense of all the doctrines of grace. Four-point Calvinists who reject Limited Atonement but embrace irresistible grace must consider this: Irresistible grace is not some abstract doctrine but must be seen in relation to Jesus Christ, specially in relation to the grace purchased by Christ upon the cross. The Spirit of Christ illuminates, regenerates and effectually brings to faith his elect. And this enabling, effectual grace is, from first to last, Christ-centered. It does not come out of a void, nor from some hidden source of grace in God the Father. Therefore Christ must have died for the elect so as to purchase that grace in a way – a redemptive way – that he did not die for the non-elect. That is why we often call it particular redemption. Irresistible grace is one of the redemptive benefits purchased by Jesus Christ ... and it was never granted to the non-elect nor intended for them. Four point Calvinism not only fails the test of Christocentricity but fails to acknowledge that the Trinity always works in harmony. The Father elects a particular people for himself, Christ dies to secure their redemption and the Holy Spirit unites the same to Christ applying the benefits of Christ's redemption to them. I believe that until Jesus Christ is seen as central to the TULIP then four-pointers will continue to reject the christocentric nature of the Scripture and the gospel is partly distorted as a result.

#### **4) Purgatory**

Roman Catholics believe in Purgatory, which again accents their belief that Christ is not sufficient to save completely. Rather than, we must work off our sins after death for 1000's of years until it is paid. Where is Christ in all this? Was His work insufficient to cover their sins completely and once for all?

#### **5) Emerging Church (Jesus as Example but not Savior)**

The emerging church is another belief system which fails the test of Christocentricity. Although they often pride themselves on being "red-letter" Christians who only want to follow Jesus, most of the time they fail to emphasize any accompanying need for Christ as Savior. The result is that they are preaching only half a Christ with such an overemphasis on the teaching of the kingdom, that they have forgotten to teach people how to get into the kingdom to begin with. In other words, there is great effort to teach Christ as a moral example for us while there is little or no vital teaching that he is Savior. The result of refusing Christ as savior has created a church movement that is highly moralistic and graceless. In the 1980s I remember the Lordship controversy where some were teaching that we could receive Christ as savior but not Lord. Now in the emerging church we have the opposite error: those who want to yield to Christ's kingdom Lordship but the refusal to yield to him as Savior. Of course if one truly yielded to Christ's Lordship they would believe in him as Savior as well. But Few things could be more arrogant than to read the Sermon on the Mount and fail to see our moral inability to live up to it and the consequent necessity of a bloody atonement to bear the punishment for our rebellion.

We cannot bifurcate Jesus into two halves. The gospel is not an either/or supposition where we can see Jesus as a moral example but not see our spiritual bankruptcy and desperate need of His saving

grace. This is a failure to confess that Christ lived the life we should have lived and died the death we deserve. The gospel is **first** declarative - that is, it is news about something God has already done for us. It is not, "preach the gospel, use words if necessary." The declaration of God's accomplishment for us will indeed make us want to live for him due to joy, but we cannot make an idol out of our self-salvation project or simply become "Jesus followers" without seeing we can do nothing, including believe the gospel and be subjects of his kingdom, apart from his saving work. As a recent example of this problem: A friend of mine attends an emerging church in our area was telling me about a baptism where two girls confessed their newly found faith. They spoke glowingly about how the life of Jesus as a model way to live but spoke nothing of the fact that they were broken sinners justly deserving the wrath of God save for Christ's mercy alone. My friend went to ask the elders about this after the baptism, and in following up with these girls, they discovered that they had not understood this aspect at all. Listen, if any person does not understand this basic, foundational truth of our sin and Jesus Christ as Savior from God's wrath then they have not understood the gospel, period. I am afraid most emerging churches commit this grievous error, and while there may be true Christians in them, the teaching is largely unChristian. Unless we renounce all self-sufficiency and recognize that we deserve God's just wrath save for Christ's mercy, arrogance in our own ability and merit can only result. But God's wrath for man's sin is denied by false teachers like Rob Bell with teachings like his popular "the god's are not angry tour". **The error of the emerging church is that it emphasizes what we can do for God, not what He has already done for us in Christ.** But the gospel is not advice about how to live but it is news of One who did for us what we could not do for ourselves.



Each of these above five errors (and many others like them) occurs when the our hermeneutic - our ultimate presupposition - is not Jesus Christ.

Fact is, it is the doctrine of 'grace alone' in Jesus which enables us to see that we are no better than our unbelieving skeptical neighbor - because we are just like them. Salvation by grace alone because of what Jesus has done for us has set us apart (with nothing to boast of in ourselves) and it enables us to minister to others because we have just about everything in common with other sinners like ourselves. We are beggars leading other beggars to bread, that is, the bread called Jesus. Speaking about Christocentric ministry Tim Keller says: "The gospel of grace leads us to be: humble, without moral superiority knowing we were saved by grace [alone], gracious, remembering our former deserved spiritual poverty, and respectful of believing poor Christians as brothers and sisters from whom to learn. The gospel alone can bring "knowledge workers" into a sense of humble respect for and solidarity with the poor ... All problems, personal or social come from a failure to use the gospel [Jesus as central] in a radical way. All pathologies in the church and all its ineffectiveness comes from a failure to use the gospel in a radical way. Avoiding the excesses of the dispensationalist, charismatic, or mainline liberal churches (who all lose the balance of the gospel truth in different ways), a gospel-centered church will break stereotypes and shine brightly in the city."

**To Cut off the Sinner from All Hope in Himself**

## **by John Hendryx**

One of the most prevalent motifs that runs through the whole Bible is its constant reminder of the insufficiency of man. While this may seem all too obvious, we need constant reminding of this critical truth in our everyday lives. This goes for the non-Christian, because he has no hope apart from Christ's mercy, and for the Christian who has no hope, save in Christ and Christ alone. This is not only clear in those parts of the Scripture which are propositional but also are quite pervasive in the gospel narratives. If you look closely at many of the stories associated with Christ's earthly ministry, it becomes clear that deliverance occurred in individuals only when they were so desperate that they came to an end of themselves and were reduced to begging, if you will. Grace works salvation in us, not as we are, but first humbles our pride revealing our natural brokenness, spiritual bankruptcy and impotence, which none of us naturally appear ready to admit. For our true condition before God is that we cannot even lift a finger toward our salvation and can bring nothing to God except that which He first gives us.

In the gospels, the first reaction to an encounter with Jesus was often a holy fear or dread when confronted with His capacity to provide that which they were insufficient to provide for themselves. When Peter was fishing all night and then in the morning commanded by our Lord to cast the net to the other side of the boat to catch fish, Peter immediately took in such a load of fish that the boat began to sink. Peter's reaction was holy fear and a desire to get away for the Lord for in it He saw his own sinfulness.

In each of the stories on Mark 4:35-5:43 we see similar happenings:

In desperation, after the disciples woke Jesus from sleep on the turbulent sea, Jesus calmed the waves, "And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey him?" (Mark 4:41) Their fear of Jesus was now greater than had been their fear of the storm.

After Jesus cast the demons into the herd of swine, those who saw it ran off to report it and when others...."came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid.(Mark 5:15)

There was also a woman who was bleeding for 12 years that touched Jesus garment. After being healed "...the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth." (Mark 5:33)

Then lastly the crowd was astounded after Jesus raised the twelve year old dead girl to life. (Mark 5:42)

Take note, in each story, as in many more stories in the gospel narratives, people have come to Jesus to help solve some problem after all possible human means have been exhausted, many times after years of trying. The result was often people falling at Jesus' feet. But the proud who failed to see their own desperate condition, had no such reaction. Jesus said, "If you were blind you would not be guilty of sin, but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains." We are not quick to learn this lesson, i.e. that we are a dependent people and have nothing in ourselves and can do nothing apart from Jesus. That which we can do, we can only thank Him for. God reaches us when we find ourselves in desperation because we so often wrongly trust in our own boasted self-sufficiency. But Jesus calls us to pray always .. because prayer is a posture of looking away from ourselves for help to the only One who can provide it. The Bible

uses these stories, most importantly, to exhibit our own helplessness, a situation which we human beings cannot resolve.

It seems that Jesus brings about events in our lives that will reveal our insufficiency so that we might find Him. For as long as we pridefully think all we can help ourselves (even a little), He remains hidden. But take note, it is by the grace of God we are what we are, which means that even the very humility needed to recognize the truth and excellency of Jesus does not come naturally. It is a gift of grace. When Peter acknowledged Jesus was the Son of the living God, Jesus quickly quenched any pride that might rise up in Peter by reminding him that even his very understanding of this was not revealed by flesh and blood but by His Father in heaven. This strips man of all possible hope in himself, even to understand or lift a finger toward God. Christ is awakened, as it were, when he hears us pray, for then we no longer are looking to our own resources nor think we have the ability in ourselves.

The common thread through these stories, and many like them in Scripture, is a revelation of man's utter insufficiency. This is really the last thing the natural man wishes to hear so he suppresses this truth, but Jesus keeps reminding us that true faith can only be a humble faith. That is, a disposition of a beggar reduced to desperation which abases oneself and exalts God alone. No one can be a true believer unless they truly believe they justly deserve the wrath of God save in Christ's mercy alone, having no confidence in the flesh. The will of the true Christian is bowed and despairs of all hope in himself – they can only find solace, peace and hope in Christ. We see the effects of grace working in a person when they come to the end of themselves and their own resources. Only as we become sensible of our own inadequacy and helplessness and our pride is mortified does it become apparent that Christ has done a work of

grace us. For even the very humility to believe does not come by nature, but by grace. There is nothing more essential to true religion. The only door we can enter heaven is extremely low, such that we must crawl on our hands and knees to enter. True faith trusts God's righteousness and excellence, not our own.

This is most clearly revealed in Jesus parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, where the Pharisee boasts of his obedience and the tax collector simply looks to the ground, beats his chest and asks for mercy on the sinner. This is our true position before God.

Psalm 34:18

The LORD is near to the brokenhearted  
and saves the crushed in spirit.

Psalm 138:6

For though the LORD is high, he regards the lowly,  
but the haughty he knows from afar.

Isaiah 57:15

For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.

Isaiah 66:2

But this is the one to whom I will look:  
he who is humble and contrite in spirit  
and trembles at my word.

Matt 5:3

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of

heaven.

This humility is the first essential thing pertaining to the true faith – to renounce all natural self-exaltation, and glory only in Christ.

How does this affect our preaching to unbelievers. In every way. Ichabod S. Spencer once said, "To cut off the sinner from all reliance upon himself, his merits and his powers; and throw him, naked and helpless, into the hands of the Holy Spirit to lead him to Christ in faith; should be the one great aim of the ministry."

If a preacher (or a doctrine) nourishes a good opinion of man, he is spawning a dangerous error, for all men naturally are a god to themselves. They need little further encouragement to think even more highly of themselves. Consider this: if the carpenter working on your house tells you that your entire house is rotten and eaten through with termites, and thus must be torn down and a entirely new house built in its place, but a second carpenter tells you that's its OK, you don't need to worry, that the house will probably stand and only needs a little reinforcement at minimal cost ... most people would be naturally willing to listen to the later. The first carpenter's advice is too drastic, you think, but you know the first one is right. Likewise, Christ comes to us and, in love, informs us that our natural state is rotten and and the old frame of the house must come down so that a new one can be built in its place. its devastating news. But the synergist comes in with his corrupt doctrine which inflames the pride of man by telling him that he is not as far gone as the other asserts. God merely need superadd grace to what you already have. (Gurnall) No, says Christ, "unless a seed falls to the ground and die, it remains a single seed" ... and "he that would save his life must lose it."

Yes we must pay our debts in full, but thanks be to God, Christ is our paymaster. Send your conscience and Satan to Christ and let them make a charge against Him, who is now sitting at God's right hand interceding for you, to clear all your accounts.

## **Repenting of our Good Works and Bad Works**

**by John Hendryx**

Is Jesus really the only way? In an environment of such plurality and diversity this really seems an implausible or even arrogant claim of Christians. When confronted with the exclusive claims of Christianity, the question on many people's minds is how can Christians be so narrow as to believe that all non-Christians will be excluded from heaven? There are plenty of good people who are not Christians. Do Christians think they are better than others? So the question often put to Christians is what about a person, a good person who has been good all their life ... will they go to heaven?

Actually, Jesus himself answered this question. When asked by a rich young ruler what must he do to gain eternal life, Jesus answered: "If you want to enter life, obey the commandments" (Matt 19:17). So Jesus himself makes it clear that a good person who obeys all of God's commands would merit or qualify for eternal life. This includes all good people of all time from all nations, peoples, races and languages. The point is that if anyone could obey all God's commandments, they will live (also see Rom 2:6-8). So in answer to the question, yes a good person who has done good all their life would merit eternal life. The Scripture declares, however, that there is no one on earth who fits that description (Rom 3:9-18). There is no

one who does not sin when measured against the holiness and majesty of God. That means you ... and that means me ... yes, all of us have utterly failed to follow the law God has given us. Only Jesus Christ alone has obeyed all of God's commands and earned a place at the right hand of God (Hebrews 4:15). You see, it is always important to look at context, for after Jesus tells the rich young ruler, "If you want to enter life, obey the commandments", He then goes on to explain but "With man this is impossible..." (Matt 19:26) So it is very important to note that Jesus teaches that the first prerequisite of eternal life in God, is when by God's grace, we recognize our utter impotence to save ourselves by human effort due to our moral corruption. This slavery we have to our rebellion renders it impossible to obey God's commands. In fact Jesus saved his greatest criticism of people on earth for the Pharisees because they believed and trusted in their own righteousness and moral ability to please God.

So what is Jesus saying here because this is really important? He is saying that in God's economy both moral and immoral people are equally alienated from God. God is equally offended by both. This may be counter-intuitive but moral people are lost because of their "goodness". Why? It is often the case that goodness keeps people from God. In fact many people avoid Jesus by avoiding sin because they are trying to become their own saviors ... attempting to justify themselves. But the gospel is neither moralism nor relativism and so it is equally offensive to the moral and the irreligious. So Christ calls us to repent of both our good and bad works, for we have no righteousness of our own.

If you look to your moral performance as the basis of your relationship with God, then you commit idolatry because inwardly you are setting up self as a false savior which could never be good



enough to please God. If we are trusting in being politically active, generous, compassionate, a good parent, a good spouse, or trusting in our moral uprightness or our service to others then we trust in these as our "Saviors". Human beings look everywhere for significance and worth and if we do not trust God provides this in Christ we will fill that void by our own futile attempts. Dr. Tim Keller once wisely said, "Every sin is rooted in the inordinate lust for something which comes because we are trusting in that thing rather than in Christ for our righteousness or salvation. At the moment we sin it is because we are looking to something to give us what only Jesus can give us. Beneath any particular sin is the general sin of rejecting Christ-salvation and indulging in self-salvation."

Christianity differs from all other religions because the gospel is news we declare about what God has done for us. It is not advice on how to live for him. Jesus came to inform us that every human idea about how to reach God is wrong and He shattered every human category. In the gospel "I am accepted through Christ, therefore I obey" while every other religion operates on the principle of "I obey, therefore I am accepted." The principle of 'religion' is the deep default mode of the human heart. Our hearts are never empty because we are always trying to fill it with something that comforts or justifies us.

As an example of Jesus dislike of people who trusted in their own morality, Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains." (John 9:41) Those who think God will accept us based on goodness actually understand only part of the truth. Yes, God loves what is good. But since He also loves the truth, we must confess that, in light of God's holy law, we are not good and have woefully failed to do what is pleasing to God, replacing God with worthless self-pleasing idol substitutes, and so we

justly deserve to be punished for it. Those who think they have done enough to please God have not understood or considered the seriousness of their condition. John Calvin once said, "Man is never sufficiently touched and affected by the awareness of his lowly state until he has compared himself with God's majesty." In light of the holiness of God all persons, even the best of us, would become undone. This was the case even with the holiest of the saints of the Bible. When it pleased God to reveal himself to them, they fell at his feet as though dead. God created us to enjoy and glorify Him, but humans voluntarily rebelled against God falling into the bondage of the self-centeredness of sin and cannot help themselves out of it.

So the point of the exclusiveness of Christianity is not to show the rest of the unbelieving world that Christians are better or more moral than others. Christians are not better. Rather, the purpose is to communicate that we all share the same alienated condition as human beings and so we bring the gospel as beggars pointing other beggars to the only bread. Jesus does not point to some innate goodness in yourself. You have none. I have none. He is a Savior who comes from the outside to save those who acknowledge themselves sinners in need of a Savior.

To understand this more clearly we must not rely on our opinions. Rather we should simply listen as we let God speak. Let us look and see what Jesus states is the means for obtaining eternal life. First, Jesus makes clear that all the law and the prophets are summarized in just two commandments.

"And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the

great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the prophets." (Matthew 22:35-40)

Next, God makes it clear that in order to gain entrance into His favor one must not fail to obey and keep all of God's law. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." (James 2:10).

"And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live." (Luke 10:25-28)

But how often have you done this? As I read this and answer honestly, I can only confess that not for a moment do I love God with all my heart nor do I love my neighbor as myself. Each day along with the "good" there is the constant reality of pride, self-righteousness, hypocrisy, lust, hatred, covetousness, jealousy, envy and more. The Scripture says, "For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience."

(Ephesians 5:5-6 ESV) "For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them."" (Galatians 3:10 ESV) And the curse described here for violating

God's law is eternal. See Matthew 25:41-46. I must admit, that in light of this, in light of God's perfect standard I am undone.

Why? Because God's holy standard is not graded on a curve but calls us to perfectly obey his law in word and deed. So if you look at God's law, and you are honest, you will become increasingly aware that you fall woefully short of having kept any of it. For the purpose of God's law to us is not so that we would see our ability, but that it would reveal our inability, "for through the law comes knowledge of sin." (Rom 3:20).

"But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury." (Romans 2:5-8)

"...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed." (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9)

Thankfully God has provided a means apart from his law, lest none of us would have hope. But before you see your need for that you need to recognize your hopeless condition in light of God's standard which is moral perfection for you in light of his holy law. So we implore you on behalf of Christ, take the time to examine yourself;

have you ever honored yourself above others, been proud, selfish, put yourself before God, coveted, lusted, lied, envied, stolen, worshipped false gods, hated others, fornicated? If you have committed any of these sins, even in your heart, then, according to the true testimony of Scripture, then judge yourself truly: the just punishment for your sins is to be cast into the lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

"Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.(1 Corinthians 6:9-10)

"...for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death." (Revelation 21:7-8)

Again, the purpose of showing these passages to you is not for me to look down on you from some higher moral ground ... no, I am right there with you. For all persons who call themselves Christians have been guilty of of the same. So if you have committed any of the above sins, you are not alone. But it is necessary that your true condition before God is revealed and acknowledged, that no one (not you, not me) is capable of keeping God's law through their own effort. There is not a just man on earth who has never sinned for none is righteous, not even one. If by reading God's law you see that you see you are guilty of breaking it, then this is very good. God is working in you.

But now we have a very serious dilemma. If all who do not keep the law of God are to receive just punishment, then the entire human race has no hope of doing anything to please God and we are all without hope of helping ourselves. We are morally unfit for the task. There is no way to free ourselves from this cursed bondage so that we might live. Who will help us?

God resolved the dilemma by coming to earth Himself in the person of Jesus Christ who lived the life we should have lived and died the death we deserve. "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Cor 5:21) Jesus humbled himself to become a human being, suffered for sinners the stripes we deserve. He endured on behalf of all his people who would call on his name.

If you are a sinner who acknowledges that you justly deserve the wrath of God save for Christ's mercy ... if you place your trust in Jesus alone who died for sinners and whom God rose from the dead, then God counts His perfectly righteous life as your own. Having no righteousness of your own by sheer grace, he grants to you the perfectly righteous life of Jesus, who justly bore the full wrath of God for your sin. So if you have renounced all self-sufficiency and flee to Him knowing you need mercy, then He not only forgives your sins but adopts you as his very own child. To those who believe, Jesus has redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.

"But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a

propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith."

What we learn from all this is that, apart from Him, we can do nothing. If the Spirit of Christ has opened your heart to place faith in Jesus Christ we must acknowledge that salvation is all of the Lord, not of yourselves. "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God." (Galatians 4:3-7)

What about faith? Where does one get it? Are some more wise? Do some persons choose Christ because they are more sensitive to spiritual things than others? no. Jesus taught that no one can believe in Him unless it is granted through the gracious work of the Holy Spirit (John 6:63-54) and all persons so granted will believe (John 6:37). therefore the Bible plainly teaches that faith is the gift of God. God requires all persons to believe the gospel. It is his command, but since no one by nature is inclined to do so, God has mercy on those He came to save.

# **What God Requires of You**

**by John Hendryx**

"John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he permitted Him." Matt 3:14-15

Have you ever wanted to know God, the creator of all that is seen and unseen? ... or to know how you can approach this holy God so that He will accept you with open arms into His glorious presence? But if He is holy how can a person make himself righteous to stand in the presence of a righteous God? Well, there is only one way to do this... there is only one requirement placed upon you ... only one thing you need to bring to Him, without which you would be lost forever ... This one thing that God requires of you is a life of perfect righteousness. If, at the time of the final judgment, you cannot produce a perfect record of holiness and a righteous life, an unblemished résumé, which has never once broken any Law of God and have deeds that deserve merit, then, you will not be received into God's kingdom, ever (Matt 5-7). Plain and simple. Is this good news? If you are honest with your self it is the worst news imaginable ... so if your initial reaction to this message is to flee from God's presence then you have well understood the impossibility of fulfilling the least trifle of God's covenant from our end. But read on, there is good news.

What is Righteousness, Who Produces it and Why Do We Need it?



The one thing required, righteousness, very simply means perfect conformity to the Law of God; or sinless perfection. Do you have this? We must note that God has such righteousness. When referring to God, Psalm 119:142 declares, "Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness." This means that God perfectly conforms to the demands of His own character and to break any Law would go against His very nature. All His ways are just and perfect so He requires and rightly expects all creation to be the same: He demands of us "Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy"(Lev. 19:2). God originally created man with an inclination toward righteousness so that he could obey God's commands, but Adam, the federal head and root of mankind rebelled against God, forsaking the gift of life and his original righteous standing before God. This one act of unrighteousness resulted in the condemnation of all Adam's seed (Rom 5:12, 18) of whom we are a part. An insurmountable barrier also accompanied our new state of lost righteousness so that we could no longer reach out freely and take of the tree of life (Gen 3:24). Our new condition, the current lost condition of the human race, is one of estrangement from God, slavery, blindness and hatred of the light. Apart from producing a life of sinless perfection; we are under His holy and righteous condemnation. God's verdict upon us now is, "There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins" (Ecclesiastes 7:20), "...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). And to top it all off, you are now impotent to recover yourself from your ruined estate (John 6:44, 65, 1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 4:4-6; Eph 2:1, 2:5; Rom 3:11) since all your natural inclinations are to rebel against God by attempting to establish your own righteousness. This state of an autonomous declaration of independence is one of hostility toward God and a fixed desire bent on going one's own way.

We need righteousness because it is the holy standard God will use to judge us on the day in which He has appointed. Each of us will be judged on the basis of how perfectly we kept God's holy Law. If we broke it at one point, if we did not exhibit or produce sinless perfection in this lifetime then all we can expect is the righteous fury of a holy and just God. The Scripture emphatically states, "...Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?" (1 Cor. 6:9). God is infinitely just and does not grade us on a curve. He is not going to look at your motives and consider that you were righteous 51% of the time sweeping the rest of your sins under the carpet. Such a God would not be just. God would have to lower His standard for us if this was the case. But as you well know, He will always remain holy and cannot change His standard, even though righteousness is the only means by which He will accept us. It would render Him less than just if He could overlook even the least transgression. We chronically and woefully fall short of what we "ought" to do. But according to the clear and explicit testimony of Scripture, if you have broken God's Law, any time in your life, and you cannot produce perfect righteousness at the time of your death, then God's holiness and Law makes you a debtor and you would be required to be cast into the lake of fire where you will spend eternity as a payment for your unrighteousness. Does this sound harsh? Then you should recognize how seriously God takes your sin and unrighteousness. This is not my idea, but God's, so any idea of God that falls short of requiring that we produce perfection is idolatry and a dishonoring, unscriptural caricature of the true God. God is a God of love but He is also a God of justice and any understanding that leaves one or the other out is a failure to proclaim the whole counsel of Scripture.

How Can I be Righteous and Meet God's Holy Demands?

If you don't think you have the ability or wherewithal to come up with the righteousness that God demands of you ... if you don't think you can live a life of holy perfection as the Scripture has declared to you, then congratulations, because that means you have understood what I have written up to this point. According to the Scriptures, the intent of divine legislation is to first drive you to despair of any hope from yourself that you can fulfill God's requirement to keep the law perfectly (Rom 3:19, 20). Despair should be your first response if you have carefully understood God's requirements.

On the other hand, if you think you have kept God's law in perfect righteousness, then you don't need to read on for you already have all that you need and will not require a means to escape the coming wrath. Jesus Himself said, "...I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (Matt 9:13) ... But also, if you honestly feel you have kept God's Law this means that you have not understood what God's demands are for you and you are deceiving yourself. Take the most important command: "...to Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength." Has this been your deepest animating motive and principle of all you say and do? I didn't think so. Even if you have spent your whole life promoting virtue, civil righteousness, and have given yourself for charity, goodness and selflessness, your many good works, even though in accord with God's commands, are not well pleasing to God when weighed against His ultimate criteria and standard of perfection. The love of God and His law has not been the deepest animating motive and principle of your life, so it does not earn you the right to redemptive blessings from a holy God.

After reading this, if you still think you are holy and have kept God's entire law then you don't need, or at least are not ready for, the message that follows. But to those who recognize their need and

desperate sinfulness before a holy and just God, you ask, is there something that can be done so we can have this righteousness? Fortunately by God's mercy, yes there is!!! The good news is that God has provided a means to attain this righteousness for all who would desire to know it. If this describes you, read on.

The message that follows is the sum and substance of Christianity. That is, as long as you look to yourself for the righteousness that God requires, you will indeed fail and must face the grim consequences of your worthless choice. But the good news is that this demand on you for holy perfection can be found in Another: "This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe" (Romans 3:22). Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes" (Romans 10:1-4).

The good news is that Jesus Christ has fulfilled the covenant from our side by obeying God's Law perfectly. He alone lived the life of perfect righteousness that we should have lived and died the death on the cross that we should have died (the penalty of sin being death), so the sins of those who believe are charged to His account. And further, for all those who would trust in Him, His righteousness is freely accredited to their account. Although we justly deserve God's wrath, Jesus suffered it in our place. "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21). So God calls you to repent of trusting in your good works and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for your righteousness. There is no other name under heaven by which one can meet God's requirements for no one else has ever lived a sinless life as Jesus has.

How Did Jesus Attain Righteousness For His People?

Where Adam failed, Jesus succeeded. Where Adam disobeyed, Jesus obeyed (Rom 5). God required of us a perfect obedience to His law and we all failed. But God looked upon us in mercy and great love, becoming flesh (John 1:14) in order to fulfill the covenant from our side (Matt 5:17). Jesus attained righteousness for His people by being the only human being in history to fulfill all the requirements of God's holy Law. He voluntarily placed Himself under the law and became willing subject to it in all things as a man. Again, God's strict requirement means He cannot overlook sin without punishing it. To maintain His perfect character God must carry out justice but He is also merciful and delights in His people and is unwilling that any should perish. How did Jesus do this? Because "in the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons' (Galatians 4:4-5). He made an end of all our sin by bearing the law's heavy yoke for us as our willing Substitute. Our Lord Jesus Christ fully submitted to all the ordinances of the law as a man, that he might fulfill the law for us bringing it's condemnation of us to an honorable end. Being made free from the condemnation of sin in Christ, all believers are now free to delight in God's law for it fully reflects His holy character. Our new disposition given us in our new birth transformed our heart of stone into a heart of flesh that now desires to keep God's law knowing that it can no longer condemn us. We are now ruled, motivated, and governed by the grace of God in Christ, which makes us take delight in obeying God's law. God's justice is, thus, fully satisfied in Christ so that when His people fail God no longer condemns them but lovingly disciplines them so they might grow in grace in the holiness of God. There is no better news than this in the whole world.

Again, God's holy law requires from all people a perfect righteousness. It will not bend for it is absolute. It will not accept self-made humility, a sincere heart, self-generated faith, repentance, or the most costly sacrifices one can make. If this be the case, how can a fallen, guilty, depraved sinner meet the law's just demands? How can we escape the coming wrath of God? We can escape because God gives to us freely, what he demands from us. In the gospel God reveals the same righteousness and faith for us that God demands from us. What we had to have, but could not create or achieve or fulfill, God grants us freely, namely, the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21) and the faith of Christ. He reveals, as a gift in Christ Jesus, the faith and righteousness that was once only a demand. There is only one way to be righteous and acceptable before God - Recognize that you do not qualify, falling woefully short of God's holy standards then 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' Faith is not something that the sinner contributes towards the price of His salvation. Our faith in Christ itself does not satisfy the law's demands; but Christ, the Object of our faith, does. And to believe in Christ does not depend on man's desires of effort but on God's mercy (Rom 9:16). It is the gracious gift of God to sinners. Thus, when sinners, who can never meet the law's demands, believe on Christ, the laws requirements are met on our behalf and Christ's righteousness is imputed to us. We are, thus made, fully acceptable in God's sight and adopted into His family as one greatly loved.

## **Are Our Churches Preaching the Gospel?**

## **by John Hendryx**

This year my wife and I traveled to Denver, Colorado to attend the world's largest Christian publisher's conference and retail show. It was quite an experience and probably the most massive coming together of any industry people I have ever seen. Buyers came in the conference with carry on luggage so they could take away the truckloads of free materials given away. Everyone loaded up on single copies of new books given out (some good, some not so good) many of which the authors were signing on the spot. And since we got to meet and connect with many persons in the industry face to face our trip was a great success. Below are some thoughts that I had about our time in Denver.

### **Are Our Churches Preaching the Gospel?**

The next morning after we arrived in Denver it was a Sunday so we went to a local conservative/evangelical Presbyterian church. I was impressed by the facility and doubly impressed that they had a massive book library available to members so they might check books out for free. It seemed like a very literate church and one which we could be confident understood the gospel. That day there was an important guest missionary preacher and so I was most interested in what he had to say given that missions was our personal vocation overseas for over ten years. I want to share a little about what he preached on that morning because it is important to see an obvious trend in both our churches and in the Christian publishing industry.

The Text he chose was the encounter Jesus had with the Rich Young Ruler. He read the story ... but only the first part of it:

"And behold, a man came up to him, saying, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments." He said to him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The young man said to him, "All these I have kept. What do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions."

"Excellent", I thought.. This happens to be one of the most interesting events that took place in Jesus' life. If we obey the commandments, Jesus asserts, then we will have eternal life. The man then claimed that he already did so. I noticed immediately, however, that our guest speaker did not finish the story as it was written in the text but I was still eager to hear what he had to say about the portion he did read. But instead of preaching from the word, he began speaking of another "ruler" who the preacher claimed actually did obey our Lord's voice in this way; a man who really gave all his possessions toward the advancement of the kingdom. He said this person was the head of a missionary movement in the 18th century and I immediately knew he meant the Moravians, and more specifically, Count Zinzendorf. He then went on to tell a very inspiring story from history about Zinzendorf's obedience to God and thus doing what the Rich Young Ruler did not do. I even learned some very encouraging new things like a painting entitled "First Fruits" which showed people's from every culture that had come to know Christ through the missionary efforts of the Moravians. Those who were surrounding Christ's throne in the painting were the actual



paintings of the first convert from each specific nation or people group after they had gone to be with the Lord, so they were actually, at that moment, in Christ's presence as the first fruit of a particular people group (as the painting depicted). Now I must admit that I got a lot out of this as a history lesson even though I had read much about this before. And even though it was a positive story which I would recommend anyone read about, something still bothered me about the preaching. It bothered me in the same way many of the sermons in contemporary evangelical churches bother me. What was it you ask? It was the fact that the text of Scripture preached upon really had little or nothing to do with the sermon at hand, and also, that the Text was actually saying the very opposite of what the preacher was trying to make it say. While the Moravian missionaries are to be commended for their spending their lives, and in many cases deaths, for the work of the Kingdom, that is not what the story of the rich young ruler is about AT ALL. It is my conviction, from many years of careful study, that the Scripture, in its whole counsel, contains either law or gospel wherever you look. When we preach from any Text of Scripture we can always find law, which condemns us, and the gospel of Christ which redeems us. This is true for both Old and New Testaments. Luther once said, "The law is for the proud but the gospel is for the brokenhearted."

Well, what was preached to us that Sunday I unfortunately concluded, was really just a spiritual pep-talk. While there may have been very encouraging content, but was it the gospel? Is the pulpit meant to rally the troops with inspiring half-time talks, or be a place to preach Christ crucified? The message to us in the church that morning, if you think about it, really was, "We all just need to be more like Zonzendorf and then Christians would have a greater impact on society." But if you consider this even more closely, when we just give examples in our sermons or witness about how to live,

we are setting people up for a fall because it is the preaching of the law without gospel. There was no redemptive element whatsoever to the sermon. It was just a message about how we should behave. While I admit that it was of great interest, the fact is that many who heard the inspirational story will simply go out of church and on Monday be deflated. Unfortunately this is what the vast majority of modern evangelical preachers are teaching from their pulpits. A high percentage of the books available at the convention likewise are merely filled with inspirational pep-talks about how to be a good Christian with Jesus help, of course. It is so close to truth that it is easy to understand how we have slipped into this. But it is, in my opinion, the very cause for the weakness and lack of impact we have on those around us. You see, if we go back to look at the end of the story of the Rich Young Ruler, this is not even remotely the message Jesus was communicating. And the fact that the end of the story was forgotten or overlooked by the preacher that day was VERY telling. What does the text say after the place in the text where the preacher left off when the young man went away sad?

And Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God ." When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" But Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

You see the whole point of the story is not that we just need to see the Rich Young Ruler as an antetype and go do the opposite or find someone who did obey Jesus and follow their example. No. Jesus chose the man's covetousness because he knew this is where this man stumbled the most. In the beginning of the passage the man

boasted that he had already obeyed God's commandments, but Jesus preached the law to Him and pressed where it hurt most. It was a death blow. Jesus wanted to expose, not only his, but all of our tendencies to trust in something we did. Instead of being happy and boasting that we have obeyed God's commandments (or that we should be more like Zinzendorf) the disciples understood the radical degree of perfection for everyone that such a perfect holy law would require. They commented that if this were the case for the young man then there is no hope for anyone, including themselves. EXACTLY! This is what Jesus was saying. And He finishes by revealing that obedience to God's law, in this case the forsaking of covetousness, is impossible with man, but with God "all things are possible." In other words, the story shows that we are all poor, blind and naked, pitiful and are in desperate need of mercy ... a mercy only God can give through Christ. When this is understood the story is not just a spiritual pep-talk but a major blow to the pride of man while simultaneously a testimony of God's infinite mercy. As long as the message we hear from the pulpit is that the rich young ruler did not obey but Zinzendorf did, then we are missing the gospel entirely and preaching only law. As great a work that God did through the Moravians, it is God who gets the glory. Any obedience, repentance or faith in God was because of the grace of God bringing him to an end of himself, not because he just hunkered down and gave it all he had by learning from examples. That great energy of the Moravians sprang forth from the gospel. Again, what makes this or any sermon distinctively Christian? Christ is what makes it Christian. A truly Christian sermon from anywhere in the Bible must take into account the full unfolding drama of redemption and its fulfillment in Christ.

Are Publishers Promoting the Gospel in their Books? The Good and the Bad

Not only did we meet publishers face to face at this conference but met a large number of authors who were signing their new books. Among those we met were C.J. Mahaney, R.C. Sproul and Ray Comfort. It was an honor and a privilege to spend some time chatting with all of them. Dr. Sproul was there promoting his new Reformation Study Bible and I had the opportunity to explain how great an influence his book *Willing to Believe* had on launching Monergism.com more than four years ago. He has left a great legacy, one for which I am thankful to God. I explained that his ministry had especially been used by God to open my eyes to the importance of the work of the Holy Spirit in our salvation. He said, "You know, John Calvin was actually known as the theologian of the Holy Spirit." Yes we delight in emphasizing the Holy Spirit, who brings glory to Christ, but has been left out of so many modern evangelical sermons in any meaningful way. I left him with some of my bookmarks and I could see his eyes light up when he saw that it was called "Monergism" since he himself has worked tirelessly to promote the Augustinian view of God's work of grace changing men's hostile disposition that, in His great mercy, we may believe.

While there were some encouraging trends, other trends in the industry were somewhat disturbing.

Being at the conference I saw with my own eyes that in our era we have most all the Christian texts through history available at our fingertips but it is tragic that we really do not take better advantage of these resources. One of the reasons we fail to do this, I believe, is that there is too much to choose from. The sheer amount of material out there makes it daunting to the individual Christian, especially since about 80% of it probably would have been better had it never been written. That is why Monergism.com and Monergismbooks.com tries to narrow our selection to what is

excellent and yet even at our websites there is more than anyone would ever need to read. We only pray that as we increase the selection that we continue to be faithful to provide only that which is worthy of your time. Life is too short to spend of reading worthless nonsense. Since we are doing this ministry full time now, we really need your support so please consider purchasing books through us. We are VERY thankful for the generosity of many of those who frequent the site.

### Some Negative Trends in the Industry

The show was excellent and while I was encouraged by some things I saw, yet there were some very negative things that I took away from the conference as well which I would hope you would all pray about. The publishing industry seems to becoming more and more a consumer-driven industry. Speaking with some of the publishers, much of what is good and classic is or will be going out of print to make way for the books people really want, many times meaning a shallow or hallow legalism or example-driven (not gospel driven) content. This is quite the frightening trend since the Scripture should obviously be the driving factor of the content of the books we read. One of the larger publishers even told me that if we wanted any real discount on their books I would have to buy all of their new books each quarter, whether I wanted them or not. This particular publisher, in my opinion, has only 5-6 really good books I know of that are worthy of carrying and would buy in bulk. The rest were titles that have little lasting value. But their policy was to force the customer to buy what they determined you should have in your store (all the new publications) AND THEN you could get better rates on other books. Most publishers are not this way, thankfully, but the persons representing this publisher did not understand why I would not carry a book if it was a good seller. The possibility that some

books just had bad theology and that we would not want to subject our readers to them did not occur to them for a moment.

I share this story with you because it impacts all of us. What seems to matter to many publishers these days is the new and the best-sellers, whether or not they are Christ-centered or truly edifying. You can see this when you walk into most of the bookstores that look like Christian boutiques half filled with junk. Many of our churches are trending in the same direction. The pastor wants to find out what the congregation wants and then preach on so takes a poll rather than be Christ-driven from a sound exegesis of the word. When our ears are tickled the numbers may grow, but how meaningful is that? But a recent Business Week magazine article on the church growth movement and how evangelicalism had become a business had a revealing comment. It said that overall the church in the United States is not growing at all. It is flat. But, we ask, what of all the mega-churches that appear to be growing like gang busters? The reality is that the mega-churches are not unlike when Walmart or Home Depot moves into a small town. The mom and pop shops close down to make room for the big boys. The so-called success of the church growth movement in evangelicalism is due to factors such as these, not because real growth in converts and discipleship is taking place at any sustained level. Just ask yourself, how can the church really grow in truth unless there is a preacher who proclaims Christ and Him crucified?: A preacher who proclaims the gospel, not just half-time pep-talks is the only means God has promised to bless.

Pray

Both our pulpits and the publishing industry are trending in a similar direction: to give the people what they want, rather than give us the law, which breaks us, and the gospel which redeems us. Pray

that the Lord grant his people the ability to destroy all speculations that set themselves up against the knowledge of God and take every thought captive and make them obedient to Christ. We are thankful for those who are praying for this ministry. Wicked men and demons are particularly interested in attacking those who study, teach and apply God's Word. In addition to our current financial difficulties, juggling responsibilities of family, seminary, church and ministry, there is always the problem with the sin within our own hearts. Pray for us as we contend for the truth and that God would use these weak vessels to bring His name glory.

## **Growing in Grace & Conscious of Sin**

**by John Hendryx**

Due to a rising sense of sin, many genuine Christians, as they grow in grace, may occasionally have doubts arise as to the assurance of their conversion. We can feel that grace is declining when our awareness of inner corruption is growing. Our pride, our lusts and other corruptions swell up in our breasts and so we wonder if our conversion is real, or at least wonder where God is in all of this. Rather than being comforted, we feel extraordinary discomfort. We become worried and irritated and wonder how it is that we feel guiltier than ever.

If you are complaining to yourself in this way, let me ask you this: Were these corruptions in you before you began to sense their reality? If you are human you answered in the affirmative. You may

have noticed them before but not been humbled by them, but now your soul is vexed and brought low by them. This might seem strange but actually you are finally judging yourself aright. This is not a sign of grace decay and decline but, on the contrary, a sign that you are growing in grace. If you notice your sin more, it is because you have more light, because the Lord has made you more sensitive to it. This is actually a sign that God united you to Himself in Christ, and a sign of a thriving Christian. For if God is with you, you will be more discomforted than ever in the presence of your own sin. This means the Spirit is doing His work. The result is that we may think ourselves even more vile sinners than we previously thought. Christian, take note, if this is the case, this is not the love of sin growing in your heart but the love of the Savior. You only make this judgment against yourself because God has made you His and jealously desires your entire heart. That you now finally take notice of these things means that the gospel is at work in you, and additionally, that sin will no longer keep you in bondage but that the Lord is now both freeing you and purging sin from you. The sense of it and the growing distaste for it is the evidence that He is saving you from both the guilt and power of sin. The Son of God has arisen in your bosom and thus the cold glacier has begun to melt as His warmth and love fills you. So if you feel the pangs of more sin in your heart as a Christian see it as a sign that the Lord is moving you on to greater maturity, not less. It seems most dark before sunrise. So if you are irritated rather than comforted, it is not a sign that grace is declining ... more likely it is a sign that it is increasing. Humility is better developed in harsh conditions than under the mild comfort of a San Diego day.

-J.W. Hendryx



# **Paul's Definition of a Christian**

## **"No Confidence in the Flesh" a Biblical Reflection**

**by John Hendryx**

In chapter 3 of The Epistle to the Philippians Paul gives us one of the best definitions of a Christian available in the Bible. He also contrasts this with the marks of false teachers.

Paul begins the chapter by contrasting the wondrous gift of grace against the hopeless pit of sin. He warns the Philippians against false teachers; those, he says, who have confidence in themselves. That is, anyone who adds conditions for salvation, in addition to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul likens to Gentile dogs, those who fail to recognize that salvation is wholly of Jesus.

But then in stark contrast to false teaching, Paul defines what a Christian looks like:

"For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh"

He calls true Christians "the real circumcision", i.e. the true covenant people of God. Then he gives three characteristics of Christians in verse 3. He says true Christians are those who:

- 1) Worship in the Spirit of God
- 2) Glory in Christ
- 3) And put no confidence in the flesh

(1) The first mark of a Christian is that they are those who worship in the Spirit. They are the true circumcision, Paul says. They do not worship in the flesh. The "flesh" here is not referring to our physical bodies, for there is nothing inherently wrong with physicality. God created all matter and our bodies and declared them "good". What Paul is contrasting is human effort or trust in ancestry, that is, trusting in it for our redemption. In Scripture, "In the flesh" is always set in contrast to "in the Spirit". They define two states of being or nature - those with the Spirit (regenerate) and those without the Spirit (unregenerate). "Those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom 8:8) and "... the flesh counts for nothing."... But "the Spirit gives life." (John 6:63). And "no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of ... the Spirit (John 3:6; Ezek 36:25-27). Worship in the Spirit of God also means that the source of our daily spiritual life and walk in Christ is the Holy Spirit who unites us to Jesus Christ. Gal 5:25 likewise says, "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit." Thus both our conversion and our sanctification can be attributed to the work of Christ, applied by the Spirit.

(2) Christians are also defined as those who "glory in Christ" --- those who have no hope save in Christ Jesus alone. The mark of a Christian here, Paul says, is that they glory in Christ. Our full weight rests on Him and not anything else. To glory in someone means one will have affection and desires which are driven by that someone. Christ is the one the Christian will cherish above all. No doubt, with all of the distractions around us, this is a constant struggle, even for a regenerate Christian. In fact the more mature we become the more we recognize the darkness of our own hearts. There is a constant

heavy pull in the world and our flesh to glory in ourselves or in something else, but the Spirit who lives in us preserves by working in us to will according to His good purpose. This constant tug by the flesh to return to the covenant of works (relying on self-effort to justify ourselves) is something we constantly struggle against. We think we can find or justify ourselves in something that is less worthy than the real thing, and so we disbelieve God's promises. But the Holy Spirit uses such instances to discipline us as children to draw us nearer to Himself. In Romans, Paul describes some of his old unbelieving Jewish friends in this way:

"I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."

This passage is really a warning against thinking that all is well as long as we have good motives. As the Lord tells us so plainly, "I desire obedience, not sacrifice." So what was their disobedience? These Jews are being rebuked for trusting in something else in the place of Christ alone. Lest we think we Christians are beyond the possibility of falling into this false gospel of self-effort, take heed lest you forget that it was the gospel that saved you and even now preserves you. I believe this is actually one of the greatest dangers of modern evangelicalism. The gospel easily gets lost and tends to become good advice rather than good news. Often more about what we do for Christ than grounding all of our doings in what He has done for us. Christ alone is our Savior, not someone who helps us save ourselves. Don't make a savior out of your duties.

(3) Lastly a true Christian is one who has “no confidence in the flesh”. This means they have utterly despaired of themselves ... are spiritual bankrupt. When the Holy Spirit does a work of grace in someone, He convicts them of their sin. Not just sins, but convicts of the fact that they are sinners by nature and can do nothing to save themselves. There is no pride in physical decent or in natural abilities. This means one who is brought to faith, repents of both their good works and their evil works. Both are equally worthless to God. False teaching glories in something other than in Christ alone, always pointing to something that we can do; a resumé we can bring before God to curry His favor, not realizing that He has already adopted us as sons. Not unlike the older brother in the Prodigal son who glories that he has worked for his father all his life, not realizing that God does not first ask us to meet conditions to obtain his love. Those who have confidence in the flesh also tend to believe in Christ PLUS this or that. That Christ saved them, but they must maintain their own justification before God. Glorifying in Christ is the antithesis of glorying in the flesh. Pharisees boast before God of what they have done for him. The Christian is one who has empty hands every day and can only thank God for His mercy. He thus relies solely on the righteousness of Christ.

It is the new Covenant in Christ’s blood which “reminds God” not to treat us as our sins justly deserve. True Christians flee to Christ as their only hope. A mark of maturity is that we no longer are constantly worrying about our own spirituality but rather our focus is on Christ and His accomplishments. Those who are glorying the flesh will exhaust themselves because they are constantly looking to their own resources. The cross alone is where we find sanctification. Christians flee to Christ as their only hope casting aside all self-confidence and autonomy. Remember, Paul calls everything other

than Christ “rubbish”. Are we trusting in rubbish or in Christ? A.W. Pink, I believe captures the point in a sentence:

“Just as the sinner's despair of any hope from himself is the first prerequisite of a sound conversion, so the loss of all confidence in himself is the first essential in the believer's growth in grace.”

## **Is There More Than One Way to God?**

**by John Hendryx**

Is Jesus the only way to God? Does Jesus himself speak of another way?

I would like for us to take a look at a recent debate that took place on the Donahue show between Phil Donahue and Albert Mohler, President of the Southern Baptist Seminary. The context of the debate is the recent move by the Catholic church to no longer evangelize the Jews since they have stated that God has given them some kind of special plan or dispensation. This debate also typifies many of the debates that occur between Christians and non-Christians these days with regard to our exclusive claim that Christ is the only way to be saved for both Jew and Gentile. In America's current climate of postmodern, multicultural, political correctness, the claim by Christians that Christ is the only gives rise to accusations of hate and intolerance as we shall see in the following

excerpts of this interesting dialogue between Donahue, Albert Mohler & Rabbi Shmuley Boteach:

DONAHUE: Well, Dr. Mohler, sir, nice to see you again. You're how many strong these days, the southern Baptists?

REV. ALBERT MOHLER, SOUTHERN BAPTIST MINISTER: About 16 million members, Phil, and about 40,000 churches. It's good to be with you tonight.

DONAHUE: Thank you. Do these 16 million people believe Jews can go to heaven?

MOHLER: Southern Baptists, with other Christians, believe that all persons can go to heaven who come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And there is no discrimination on the basis of ethnic or racial or national issues, related to who will go to the Scriptures. It's those who are in Christ. The defining issue is faith in Christ.

DONAHUE: So a good Jew is not going to heaven.

MOHLER: Well, all persons are sinners in need of a savior. Jesus Christ is the sole mediator. And the gospel, we are told by the Apostle Paul, comes first to the Jews and then to the gentiles. And salvation is found in his name, and in his name alone, through faith in Christ.

DONAHUE: So if a Nazi killed a Jew, a good Jew, practicing Jew, the Jew goes to hell, but the Nazi still has a chance to get to heaven. That would be the consequence of your position.

MOHLER: Well, the gospel is not just for the worst of us. The gospel is for all of us. And the scripture tells us the hard truth, that all have sinned. And that Nazi guard is going to be punished for his sin, and it will be judged as sin. His only hope would be the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. And the profound truth of the gospel is that the salvation that can come to any person who comes to faith in Christ-can come to that Jew who was killed and to that guard who does the killing. That's the radical nature of the gospel.

DONAHUE: Well, Rabbi Shmuley Boteach is with us. You're author of "Judaism For Everyone." You know, Reverend Mohler, this is such a vast organization. You have so many wonderful members. This just breeds anti-Semitism. I am sorry. You cannot possibly look a person in the eye and say, if you don't come to Jesus, if you don't change your faith, you're not going to heaven. Reeks of prejudice, and also stirs the soul to evil behavior, in my opinion.

MOHLER: Well, if the church had just come up with this in the 20th century as a novel idea, perhaps it should be subjected to such a critique. But this is the gospel that has been received from the Lord Jesus Christ himself, who said he came, first of all, for the people and children of Israel, and then also for the gentiles. And he himself declared that he is the way, the truth and the light, and no man comes to the Father but through him. He spoke as a man born of the Jewish race, but who was also the son of God.

DONAHUE: Well, three cheers for the Catholic bishops. And it's been a while since anybody has given them cheers. Well, Rabbi, it took us long enough, but we are no longer calling upon our faithful, Catholic faithful, to evangelize and convert the Jews. Praise the lord for that, whichever lord may be your favorite.

RABBI SHMULEY BOTEACH, AUTHOR, "JUDAISM FOR EVERYONE": Amen. John Paul II is one of the great friends of the Jewish people. Christians are our brothers and sisters, but they have to finally acknowledge that there is a 2,000-year repulsive, malignant history of the church, of trying to spiritually annihilate Jews by removing every last Jew on the face of the earth and converting them to Christianity and Jesus. And Reverend Mohler, however intelligent of a scholar he may be, he is a spiritual Neanderthal with repulsive, revolting views. Because we know in history that Christian, anti-Judaism has always led to racial anti-Semitism. This is the modern equivalent, Phil, of spiritual terrorism. ....

OK I think you get the idea...

Today let's consider the Biblical, Theological and Philosophical consequences of Donahue and the Rabbi's position. My first thought after hearing Donahue and the Rabbi was that it was ironic that they were excluding Mohler for being exclusive. They were calling him evil for not seeing it their way. Are they not doing the very thing that they accuse him of? This, at the very least, is hypocritical.



But let's revisit my first question as to whether or not belief in Jesus Christ is only way to God. In fact let's have a look at the Scriptures where Jesus Himself spoke of a different way. Al Mohler is one of the great reformers of our time and I think he is courageous to go on the Donahue show where he knew the audience would be taking swings at him. I liked his answers but hope we can, if possible, even improve upon what he said so that we can preach as clearly as we can to those who do not yet know Christ.. It is our duty to take the time to explain exactly what we believe more clearly. Christian jargon and terminology often clouds the issue rather than clarifies it.

When Donahue said, "So a good Jew is not going to heaven." Instead of answering, "we are all sinners in need of a savior," as Mohler did, perhaps an even more memorable answer may have been "Yes, all good Jews will go to heaven, and not only Jews but all good people of all races will go to heaven. If they can live a good life, obey all the commandments, they will live (see Rom 2:6-8). When asked what must he do to gain eternal life by the Rich Young Ruler, Jesus said the same thing: "If you want to enter life, obey the commandments." Matt 19:17

Let's take a closer look at that passage -- an exposé.

### ***Matt 19:16-26 The Rich Young Man***

16Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?"

17"Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments."

18"Which ones?" the man inquired.

19Jesus replied, " 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father

and mother,' and 'love your neighbor as yourself.' "

20 "All these I have kept," the young man said. "What do I still lack?"

21 Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow Me."

22 When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

23 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

24 Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

25 When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, "Who then can be saved?"

26 Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

When Jesus says, "why do you ask me about what is good? There is only One who is good," He is driving the point home right away that no one even approaches God's holy standards. Someone might think he means by this verse that He Himself is not good but when weighed against other scripture (He who was without sin, became sin for us...He was tempted in every way as we were yet without sin and He says to the Pharisees Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?") it is obvious He had specific intentions in mind. His point here was to get the Rich man to see his own failure. Then He tells him "If you want to enter life, keep the commandments." Jesus is serious here I believe. He does not merely say believe in me and you will live since He knows his hearts' disposition and tailors the message specifically for him. He is saying if you can keep the commandments perfectly then you will live. But His point in doing so was to use the law to

reveal his shortcomings. The object of these words is to expose the pride of his heart, and to reveal his absolute need of a Savior from sin due to the impossibility of keeping the law. The Rich man obviously didn't get it for he answered? Which ones? Jesus is showing unregenerate man that if he is to recover himself in this way he must perfectly keep the commandments without stumbling.

Next the rich man asked him which commandments to keep --- Jesus replied, " 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother,' and 'love your neighbor as yourself.' " ---- Notice that Jesus mentions all the commandments in the second table of the law except for the last one (though shall not covet) since Jesus has in mind to expose his failure at this point. The man replies that he has keep all these commands since youth, which means that he still doesn't get it. But he feels there must be something more (which is right) so he asks what he still lacks. Jesus here finally pierces his dark soul where it hurt the most by telling him to sell everything and follow him. Jesus knew the man loved money and would be unwilling to let it go. His sin was exposed and he went away sad.

When Jesus says: "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. 24Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." He is merely exposing this one man's vice. His disciples understood the ramifications of His statement that none can be saved when they asked, "Who then can be saved?"

In other words the way to heaven is blocked for all men. The angel with the flaming sword has barred the way to the tree of life. Our spiritual condition before God is utterly bankrupt. There is no hope for a man to do anything that will win him acceptance with God. We

are in God's debt; He is not in ours. But that which is impossible with man - salvation, is possible with God. We can contribute nothing and deserve God's wrath just like the next guy.

So now lets review my original statement once again that belief in Jesus is not the only way to God. We have discovered that there is indeed another way: Obey the commandments and you will live. The difficulty arises however, in that there is no one who fits that description. This little passage demonstrates the folly of any person who thinks they can reach God through obedience to His commandments, since our fallen condition leaves us spiritually impotent. To tell our fellow human beings that it is folly to trust in their own efforts to attain heaven, is not only the opposite of intolerance but is the most considerate thing we can do for them. We often fail to communicate that we also are sinners saved by grace and are not morally any better than they are.

Those who believe they are good enough to be pleasing to God have a low view of God's holiness. If God can forgive sin and injustice without payment then He would have to commit an unjust act. One sin against an infinitely holy God is such an offense against His Person that it must be met with the outpouring of His fierce wrath if justice is to be satisfied. He is pure justice and for Him to accept anything less than sinless perfection from us would render Him less than God. Therefore, the question from the world should not be how could a just God send anyone to hell; it should be how can a just God send anyone to heaven and remain just? Those who believe that if we live a relatively good life can win God's acceptance/approval have a god that is too small; a god that is not perfectly just and a god that is not holy. In other words, it is a sad excuse for a god: A man-made god. But God owes no man anything. He is no man's debtor. Anyone who says that God should reward those who are good are

actually saying that God owes them. Their decent, moral life has placed God in their debt. Furthermore, those who believe that God won't judge sin are pinning their hopes on an unjust god. Donahue's only real hope is that God will overlook all injustices. This god is neither holy nor just, therefore it is a corrupt god. If God is not perfectly holy and just then He is not God and has horrible imperfections.

### **So then why is Jesus the only way?**

Where Adam failed Jesus succeeded. Where Adam disobeyed, Jesus obeyed. God required of us a perfect obedience to His law and we all failed. But God looked upon us in mercy, became flesh in order to fulfill the covenant from our side.

As a human being Jesus was the second Adam. While we justly deserve God's wrath for breaking the law of a holy God, Jesus obeyed God's commands perfectly, the only human being ever to do so. At every moment of his life he fully obeyed the ten commandments and the highest ideal to love God with all His heart, mind, soul and strength and love His neighbor as Himself. He was tempted in every way as we were yet without sin. Temptation is a neutral term meaning to test. He never internalized nor desired sin ever in His life, thus God was fully pleased with Him. He took every thought captive and made it obedient to God. He did all this for us so that He might bear the wrath of God on our behalf. God's wrath is now turned aside from us.

John MacArthur once said that there are two religions in the world: human attainment and divine accomplishment. All other religions in the world trust in some degree in human merit for salvation. Christianity alone understands we have fallen short of God's

demands and can find life only by trusting in the only one is history to have obeyed the covenant.

There is an element of human pride in all other attempts. The Donahue's of the world who think good intentions will get us to heaven are like the Pharisee who prays in the temple, "thank you God that I am not like other men; adulterers, thieves and like this tax collector over here. I obey and give a tenth of all I have. In Donahue's case, "thank you God that I am not like this Nazi." Do you see the connection/ He is boasting in his relatively decent life and thinks that now God somehow owes Him heaven. He is trusting in his own merit but forgetting that he falls woefully short of God's demands on his life. The tax collector understands his own spiritual bankruptcy however. He looks down and beats his chest saying, "forgive me Lord, the sinner. Jesus said it was he that went home justified.

As Christians this should be our character. We should always keep in mind in every situation that but for the grace of God we would be lost. There is nothing to boast of in ourselves or our good works. We are not in God's favor because we are any better than the pagans and may I suggest that, in many instances, pagans may have lived a more moral life than you or I.

Brokenness before God is his requirement for us and it is only by grace that we even have this realization. All trust in our merit, flesh or abilities will fail. So when Donahue asks if a good person will go to heaven, the answer is the same one Jesus gave. Yes he would - obey the commandments and you will live, but there is no one who is good but God alone. This devastates any hope of heaven through self effort. The Law drives us to God's mercy and it is found in Jesus alone.

We must first be totally convinced of our woeful condition and God's holy perfection. If people better understood the inconsistent position they have in believing in a less than holy God and that the true God is holy and just then our position before Him becomes more clear. We also need to do a better job explaining what fallen or natural man's condition is. Christian jargon that we are all familiar with needs to be defined, explained to an unbeliever. "Pretend" they have no knowledge at all of Christianity and start from the beginning rather than first saying that that God loves them but they are sinners and need Jesus. Such a statement would be meaningless, or worse to someone who has never been to church. I believe it is important that we go into detail about man's spiritually bankrupt state and our present condition before God. Explain it.

But we can tell people that if you are confident that they have never sinned against God's revealed law, then of course they don't need Jesus. Jesus is for sinners not for people who are good enough to please God on their own.

“Natural religion in all its forms presupposes holy character and conduct as the essential antecedent condition of God's favor. Christianity in all its genuine forms presupposes the favor of God as the essential antecedent condition of holy character and conduct.” -

A.A. Hodge

"The idea that there are really no substantive differences between religions needs to be held up to careful scrutiny and declared fraudulent. For example, Islam says that Jesus was not crucified. Christianity says He was. Only one of us can be right. Judaism says

Jesus was not the Messiah. Christianity says He was.  
Only one of us can be right. Hinduism says God has  
often been incarnate. Christianity says God was  
incarnate only in Jesus. We cannot both be right.  
Buddhism says that the world's miseries will end when  
we do what is right. Christianity says we cannot do  
what is right. The world's miseries will end when we  
believe what is right" - Alistar Begg, Made For His  
Pleasure , 126

**There are other problems of a philosophical nature to  
consider with Donahue's position...**

The position is basically that Christianity is not true because it is intolerant and judgmental. The problem with the position is that even those who deny truth's exclusivity, in effect, exclude those who do not deny it. They are themselves taking a position of truth ... a belief that all ways are true as long as they do not claim exclusivity, but in doing so it establishes its own truth claim which **excludes** others who do not believe all ways are true, thereby canceling itself out. They say "stop being intolerant by claiming Christ is the only way" while their very statement has intolerantly imposing its own values on Christians with the intent that they will conform to their political correctness. They have become their own worst enemy, in other words...self-contradictory. Christians know they are claiming Jesus to be exclusive and must always bring truth and love together. Historically we have certainly been guilty of losing balance to one side or the other and we must always remain vigilant to never lose sight of both. But post-moderns often fail to see their own hypocrisy since their tolerance; their highest virtue is often used as a weapon of intolerance.



*Lets look closer at the well-known parable of the elephant as described by John Bowen:* “Blind men are trying to discover the nature of an elephant. Yet each offers a different description, according to the part of the elephant he touches. The one who feels the head concludes that an elephant is like a pot; the one with the ear says, ‘An elephant is like a winnowing basket;’ the one feeling the tusk argues that an elephant is like a plough share; and so on. The conclusion is obvious: religious views are different because each grasps only a portion of the truth. The differences are more apparent than real. The truth is only to be found in taking all the parts together...[but] how do the observers come to be in a position of omniscience, able to survey the whole scene, superior to everyone else, sighted while others are blind? By what right do they say, ‘This is how things really are’? The parable claims to show that nobody has ‘objective truth’. Unfortunately, the story itself claims to be the objective truth about world religions and Ultimate Reality! “

“What initially appears to be a benign and liberal analogy proves in fact to be just as intolerant of diversity as the views it seeks to relativize maybe more so because it appears at first sight to be so broad minded.”

To conclude, let's have a closer look at a part of the Westminster Confession. It shines a light and clarifies what we just considered.

Note: The Westminster Confession Chapter 7 Of God's Covenant with Man. States:

II. The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam; and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.

III. Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace; wherein He freely offers unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ; requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life His Holy Spirit, to make them willing, and able to believe.

## **The Emergent Church and the Gospel**

**by John Hendryx**

A simple reading of the Bible will reveal that the gospel is not about what we have done for Jesus, but what Jesus has done for us (Rom 5:19, 2 Cor 5:21, Phil 2:8). The mystery of God has been made manifest in the Person and work of the Son, who frees prisoners, gives sight to the blind, breaks loose our chains and changes hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. At one time we were taken captive to do Satan's will and could not escape until Christ set us free. In other words, Christ did for us what we could not do for ourselves. He lived the perfect life that we should have lived and died the death we should have died, in order to free us so that we might then proclaim His excellencies, make known his gospel and spread justice and mercy to the poor.

But this is not what many of the the most notable characters in the Emerging church (e.g. McClaren, McManus, Bell) mean when they use the term "gospel"; for Christ, in their view, did not primarily

come to us as a Savior, who delivers us from His just wrath, but rather, He came to make us "Christ followers". In other words, Jesus came as a moral example of how we might live, treat one another, and form communities. But as has been repeatedly shown throughout the testaments, this is a recipe for failure. In Romans 3:20 the Apostle teaches that the purpose of the law was not so much to show us how to live (although it was that too), but more importantly, to reveal our moral inability and hopeless bondage to sin in the face of God's holy majesty apart from the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Some major voices in the emergent church are saying they want a relationship with Jesus and not doctrines, but we must ask which Jesus do they want to have a relationship with? If words mean anything it appears they want a relationship with a moralistic Jesus of their own imagination. They want to believe that God is pleased with us because of what we do ... that He is pleased with us if we join Him in being active in crusades against social ills such as corporate greed, global warming, racism and poverty. That doing this is what the Gospel is all about. But as good as some of these things might be, God is not pleased with them if they do not come from faith in Jesus Christ as a Savior first, not as a mere example for us to follow. The background of the true gospel is that Jesus revealed His sinlessness and our moral impotence and bankruptcy in the face of His holiness. Thus our need for His mercy. But McLaren and many of the other emergent church leaders trumpet their belief that the gospel is more about ethics than the work of Christ on our behalf. They appeal to bettering the world around us as a task that is opposed to and more pressing than seeing our own rebellion and poverty, which prove our need for reconciliation to God through the life, death and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. This unbiblical bifurcation of orthopraxy and orthodoxy, and foundational preference for the former, is just plain contrary to the Christian gospel.

Ultimately, the emergent "gospel" is not about the grace of Jesus Christ who delivers people from the wrath of God and puts them into the kingdom of light, but rather about becoming a 'Jesus follower', about walking as Jesus walked and trying to live the life he exemplified. Apart from the fact that, according to Scripture, this is an impossible goal when drawing from our native resources, but it misses the whole point for which Jesus came. The gospels showed Jesus setting his face like flint toward Jerusalem for a reason. He did not come primarily to be a moral example for us, but to become a Savior who does for us what we cannot do for ourselves. The emergent ideology, in other words, is appealing to the fallen will without the merciful act that God has done for us in Jesus. Since we woefully fall short of God's call to us to live this way, it offers no hope.

In his book, *Why We're Not Emergent*, Kevin DeYoung says, "I am convinced that a major problem with the emerging church is that they refuse to have their cake and eat it too. The whole movement seems to be built on reductionistic, even modernistic, either-or categories. They pit information versus transformation, believing versus belonging, and propositions about Christ versus the person of Christ. The emerging church will be a helpful corrective against real, and sometimes perceived, abuses in evangelicalism when they discover the genius of the "and," and stop forcing us to accept half-truths."

My fear, and I believe it is well founded, is that Emergent (and emerging) is just a newly cast form of the old Semi-Pelagian heresy of behavior modification, or to put it bluntly, moralism. The most tragic "either-or" category they have set up for themselves is this: faith in Christ as a Savior versus following Christ as an example. Many of its leading proponents assert that right living leads to right

doctrine, thus reversing the Biblical priority of grace. But ethics are not what make Christianity to differ from other world religions. All world religions offer ethical programs that are remarkably similar to ours. But ethics/morals don't bring us into relationship with God unless you can perfectly keep them (James 2:10, Gal 3:10-12). In that case, you might need a helper, but you certainly don't need a Savior. What makes Christianity to differ is that it is the only way which acknowledges that its own adherents are rebels and without hope in themselves, that is, apart from the sovereign mercy of their Head, who procured salvation for them. All other religions rely on moral improvement and good works, but Christ has shown us that "there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins." (Ecc 7:20) Trusting in Jesus as a moral example alone, trusting in our good works and the social justice we do, simply makes Jesus' Person and work of no effect, for we are ascribing the power to do those things to ourselves apart from His redeeming us. Thus it would appear that both the emergent and seeker sensitive churches are cut from the same moralistic cloth. If you are a young person considering either of these, remember that seeing Christ as merely an example and seeing church as a place to hear stories about how we are to live, apart from the new birth, is a man-centered and not a Christ-centered message and should be steered clear of as you would a poisonous viper.

J.W. Hendryx

## **Christ vs. Moralism**

**by John W. Hendryx**

Death is the wages of sin (Rom 6:23) and Jesus Christ had none (Heb 4:15; 1 Pet 2:22; 1 John 3:5; 2 Cor 5:21). Death, therefore, had no rightful claim on Him thus Jesus died an unnatural death. This means that Jesus, the true remnant of Israel, alone fulfilled the covenant from our side, pleasing God. And all who are united to Him share in His distinction that death has no rightful claim on them (6:23b). So Jesus alone is our focus, our religion, our righteousness. Yet we still, as Christians often get caught up in our own spirituality. That is, we focus incessantly on how we are doing, whether reading the Word, praying, involving myself in a body of like-minded believers, being a witness,. etc. We often do this in a way where we expect to win God's approval and somehow become more spiritual. While all these things are all good and helpful when done in the right spirit, it is not exactly what is meant by giving oneself fully to the Lord, or being spiritual.

To give oneself to the Lord means that you begin align yourself with God and his redemptive plan for the world. It means to lose all confidence in oneself and recognize Jesus as the all in all. The gospel remains our only hope as a Christian. All of these other activities don't make you in any way more pleasing to God. He is already pleased with you in Christ and the covenant he has made with you in Him. When we realize this, these other activities are overflow, not duty driven acts to put on our spiritual resumé. Our delight is in the Lord and the story of His redemptive activity through history culminating in his finished work in Christ on the cross. It is not about our piety ... instead we work out of salvation in fear and trembling before the Lord. The more we look at Him the more we are transformed into His likeness (2 Cor 2:18). As long as we view the core of spirituality as some morbid self-introspection and practice of disciplines then we fall into the danger of taking our eyes off of Jesus.

Sinclair Ferguson aptly said, "from the New Testament's point of view, those who have almost forgotten about their own spirituality because their focus is so exclusively on their union with Jesus Christ and what He has accomplished are those who are growing and exhibiting fruitfulness. Historically speaking, whenever the piety of a particular group is focused on OUR spirituality that piety will eventually exhaust itself on its own resources. Only where our piety forgets about itself and focuses on Jesus Christ will our piety be nourished by the ongoing resources the Spirit brings to us from the source of all true piety, our Lord Jesus Christ."

So the question often arises to me about how much spiritual activity is enough? The answer is the same every time: what Jesus has accomplished for you is already sufficient. God is as pleased as He can be with you and could not be more pleased with you because of Jesus. Preach this gospel to yourself every day and you will begin to see a new world open before you. You will rest in Christ's completed work and out of the overflow of the new life you have in Him, you will do all things filled with the Holy Spirit. He becomes greater while you become less. The most mundane, banal activity then becomes spiritual ... not simply when you are reading your Bible. You don't curry God's favor or earn more points in heaven by your activities. God has set his affection on you. You are his son - this is a reality to those who are in Christ. Recall in the parable of the prodigal son where the older brother is angry with God because he said, "I have worked all my life for you and never given me a slaughtered calf." He saw his relationship with his father as a servant rather than a son. First, you must know that you are worse than could ever be imagined and are impotent to do anything on your own. Such despairing in oneself is necessary to true spirituality. Yet God is more gracious than you imagined and adopts you as his very own son. When you know you are thus loved then all of what you do

will reflect that. You will forgive others, and delight in good works not because God needs to be appeased, but because you are loved by him and that overflows in your life to others. Oh, but how easy it is to forget this and slip back into perfectionism. The Apostle Paul waned against this tendency in Galatians 3:3 when he said, "having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" Here we clearly see Paul's frustration in persons who think that we start with grace in the gospel but then move on to perfection through other means.

A common religion of our time is one of moralism, and many evangelicals tend to moralism without even realizing they are. Moralism seeks to achieve perfection through behavior modification. It often accompanies the religion of "family values" that we hear about each day on the radio. This kind of religion risks self-righteously looking down on unbelievers by putting our supposed morality in a comparison with theirs. It is as if we believe our entrance into Christianity is by grace but that our lives in Christ are due to our maintained by some kind of moralism. Those who believe this fall into the trap of (at least subconsciously) believing that is not grace alone that make us to differ with others. But we must always remember that God's commands to us to be holy and love our neighbor etc. are not there to show our ability, but to reveal our inability (Rom 3:19, 20). So instead of spending our time gazing at our navels in the hope that we become more spiritual and can attain some kind of perfection, true Christianity recognizes and faces up to our sinful imperfection. We can never obey God's commands no matter how hard we try. Anyone who thinks that they could possibly live sinlessly for an hour or a day has not yet come face to face with God and his utter holiness. We flatter ourselves to think this way but the apostolic assertion is that if a man shall keep the whole law and yet offend at one point he is guilty of all.



The good news is that we do not need to ascend to God via human effort (an impossible supposition) because He has descended to us. The philosophy of the age, even among Christians who should know better, is to focus on what we human beings can do to be saved. True Christianity, I believe, teaches that there is nothing we can do... we must despair of ourselves, because what we could not do for ourselves, Christ has done for us. Unfortunately a large percentage of Christians think moralism, avoiding wrongdoing of every kind, is what Christianity is all about, (otherwise why so much effort to get our morals put into law) not realizing that we need to repent of trusting in our good deeds and bad ones. Paul, says to the Philippians that all his good works are but rubbish compared to Christ. But even though we know this, our remaining corruption still deceives us sometimes into thinking that God wants something from us other than Christ. It is easy to see that much of Christianity has slipped into this error because the barriers and differences with Roman Catholicism seem to be coming down everywhere I look. Even in Peter Jennings interview with member's of Ted Haggard's church people were saying that they don't see that much difference anymore. I am not saying that unity would not be a good thing, but this unity is not based on truth but on family values, political alliances and morality, all of which are not the gospel.

But none of us can live up to the high standards we impose upon ourselves and often hide it when we fail, thinking that we must put on a good face to other Christians. That is called hypocrisy. Our many attempts at perfection often lead to immoral behavior, especially when it makes us feel superior to others. Rather, we should lead with our weaknesses and admit our sinfulness which points each other and the world to Christ. The world would believe us much more if we simply stopped pretending and boasting about being so much more moral than we really are. Real humility would

go a long way in opening eyes for the problem with humanity is not simply our committing various sins, but with our very natures which we desperately need to be delivered from, something only Christ can do, not only at the beginning of our salvation, but each day. There is nothing wrong with wanting to be good, it is God's command, but when we are honest, not one is able to even come close to achieving this goal.

All ways which consist of human effort to reach God, whether it be through the will, intellect or emotions, are futile. We have no hope to reach God this way, for not only do we utterly fail to live up to God's holy law, but we have no desire to do so, except by God's grace. True Christian piety begins with God's descent to us in Christ and our ascent to Him through Christ. This leaves zero room for human pride. It is all about what God does for us. Only Christ fulfilled the covenant and achieved the moral perfection that a holy God justly requires. And his death bore the punishment for our willful rebellion and sinful passions. The Scripture requires perfection of you, but you don't have the moral ability to do it. God commands us to be righteousness then turns around and says that we have none (Isaiah 64:6). All self-righteousness is, therefore, out the door. We are guilty of sin against a holy God and therefore, justly deserve God's wrath. Agreeing with this reveals that the Holy Spirit has begun doing a work of grace in you and is the first step in conversion. God law, therefore, must be preached to the proud but the gospel to the broken-hearted, as Martin Luther says. When the Law breaks our pride, autonomy, self-sufficiency and the belief in the utter impotence to save ourselves, then and only then does the gospel become good news (and understandable). Any pulpit or gospel presentation that leaves out God's wrath presents an incomplete and incomprehensible "gospel", but many are doing it. Only in Christ are God's holy demands toward us fully satisfied. The Scripture testifies

that believing that this is accomplished, not by our will, but by the grace of God (Rom 9:16; John 6:65). The preachers job, therefore, is to continually place the law and the gospel before Christians.

Although I know very little about the rest of Bono's theology, I found the following conversation he had with Michka Assayas to be helpful in understanding the gospel of grace:

**Bono:** ... the thing that keeps me on my knees is the difference between Grace and Karma.

**Assayas:** I haven't heard you talk about that.

**Bono:** I really believe we've moved out of the realm of Karma into one of Grace.

**Assayas:** Well, that doesn't make it clearer for me.

**Bono:** You see, at the center of all religions is the idea of Karma. You know, what you put out comes back to you: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, or in physics; in physical laws every action is met by an equal or an opposite one. It's clear to me that Karma is at the very heart of the universe. I'm absolutely sure of it. And yet, along comes this idea called Grace to upend all that "as you reap, so you will sow" stuff. Grace defies reason and logic. Love interrupts, if you like, the consequences of your actions, which in my case is very good news indeed, because I've done a lot of stupid stuff.

**Assayas:** I'd be interested to hear that.

**Bono:** That's between me and God. But I'd be in big trouble if Karma was going to finally be my judge. I'd be in deep s---. It doesn't excuse my mistakes, but I'm holding out for Grace. I'm

holding out that Jesus took my sins onto the Cross, because I know who I am, and I hope I don't have to depend on my own religiosity.

**Assayas:** The Son of God who takes away the sins of the world. I wish I could believe in that.

**Bono:** But I love the idea of the Sacrificial Lamb. I love the idea that God says: *Look, you cretins, there are certain results to the way we are, to selfishness, and there's a mortality as part of your very sinful nature, and, let's face it, you're not living a very good life, are you? There are consequences to actions.* The point of the death of Christ is that Christ took on the sins of the world, so that what we put out did not come back to us, and that our sinful nature does not reap the obvious death. That's the point. It should keep us humbled . It's not our own good works that get us through the gates of heaven.

**Assayas:** That's a great idea, no denying it. Such great hope is wonderful, even though it's close to lunacy, in my view. Christ has his rank among the world's great thinkers. But Son of God, isn't that farfetched?

**Bono:** No, it's not farfetched to me. Look, the secular response to the Christ story always goes like this: he was a great prophet, obviously a very interesting guy, had a lot to say along the lines of other great prophets, be they Elijah, Muhammad, Buddha, or Confucius. But actually Christ doesn't allow you that. He doesn't let you off that hook. Christ says: *No. I'm not saying I'm a teacher, don't call me teacher. I'm not saying I'm a prophet. I'm saying: "I'm the Messiah." I'm saying: "I am God incarnate."* And people say: *No, no, please, just be a prophet. A prophet, we can take. You're a bit eccentric. We've had John the Baptist*

*eating locusts and wild honey, we can handle that. But don't mention the "M" word! Because, you know, we're gonna have to crucify you. And he goes: No, no. I know you're expecting me to come back with an army, and set you free from these creeps, but actually I am the Messiah. At this point, everyone starts staring at their shoes, and says: Oh, my God, he's gonna keep saying this. So what you're left with is: either Christ was who He said He was the Messiah or a complete nutcase. I mean, we're talking nutcase on the level of Charles Manson. This man was like some of the people we've been talking about earlier. This man was strapping himself to a bomb, and had "King of the Jews" on his head, and, as they were putting him up on the Cross, was going: OK, martyrdom, here we go. Bring on the pain! I can take it. I'm not joking here. The idea that the entire course of civilization for over half of the globe could have its fate changed and turned upside-down by a nutcase, for me, that's farfetched*

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