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## THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

#149

### Contents

Are You Forgiven? .....	1
“Ye Must Be Born Again” .....	5
Be Sure.....	6
Almost a Christian .....	7
Practical Godliness.....	9
A Word to Parents.....	10
Television & the Christian Home .....	13
The Christian & the World .....	14
The Cross and Self .....	17
Timely Warning!.....	19
The True Church.....	21

## ARE YOU FORGIVEN?

R. F. Becker

*“Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.”—Romans 4:7*

Friend, I am writing to you today because time is short. The day of grace is fast slipping away. The great day of judgment is drawing nearer every hour. The thread of life is slowly but surely winding up. The sands of time for each of us will soon run down to rise no more. You and I are traveling far faster than we think through time towards eternity. Only a few more fleeting days and every soul of us will have gone forever to his own place of heaven or hell. Therefore I meet you in faithfulness and solemnness today and ask you only one question: Are you a forgiven soul?

The words of Scripture at the top of this page set forth the greatest blessing that can ever come to man. It is the knowledge of the forgiveness of all sin. To have the conscious occurrence of this forgiveness is the only foundation for true happiness. But to be outwardly happy without this forgiveness as many people are, is to be like the condemned man singing carelessly in his prison cell, totally unconscious that the day of his execution is now dawning.

The forgiveness spoken of in this verse of Scripture you can never buy at any price. It is something that the fondest relative can never will to you. It is a blessing which can never be earned by good works though your sins be few and your

deeds of merit be without number. No man or priest can ever bring you the forgiveness of sins. Yet in value this forgiveness is without price in earthly money. In the joy of possessing this heavenly treasure, earthly joys are altogether worthless. For this forgiveness of sins is the GIFT OF GOD. Friend, do you have this forgiveness?

Perhaps by now you are thinking: "What do I need of such a forgiveness as you speak of? Whom have I injured, or whom have I cheated and wronged or defrauded so seriously as to need to be forgiven?" Right here is where so many go wrong. So, friend, beware! It is not man's forgiveness I am writing of. But are you forgiven in the sight of God? "For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (I Sam 16:7).

I write plainly because I feel deeply. To be without forgiveness is a dreadful thing. Forgiveness will not be granted to any after we leave the land of the living. There is no change that comes over the soul after death. No conversion ever comes beyond the grave. No new heart is ever given after our last breath. As we depart in the lonely and solemn hour of death so we abide, when time for us is to be no more. As we die, so are we forever. As the tree falls so shall it lie. Each of us is either a forgiven or a lost soul now. Each one of us is either a forgiven or a lost soul forever. For Christ hath power only on earth to forgive sins (Mark 2:10).

Friend, if you are not now forgiven, you are in nature's sleep of guilt, and only Christ can awaken you (Eph 5:14). You are blinded by Satan as to your great need and hopeless condition by nature (II Cor 4:4). You are yet on that beautiful and broad, yet fatal way that leads to destruction (Matt 7:13). Perhaps your friends and companions think you are all right, but death eternal lies at the end of your road (Pro 16:25). If you have never had repentance towards God and never have had a personal faith in Jesus Christ, you are a lost and unforgiven soul (Acts 20:21).

This is the most solemn truth you will ever consider. No more important thought can ever occupy your mind. No greater issue will you ever have to decide. So let me lay before you three facts, which reveal with startling clearness why you need repentance and forgiveness above anything you can ever hope to have. May God's Spirit guide us as I seek to unfold these reasons. May He open your heart to realize the eternal worth of being a soul whom God for Christ's sake has forgiven.

## ***1. GOD IS HOLY***

We need forgiveness because God whom we must all meet, is HOLY. Isaiah heard the Seraphim around the throne of God cry, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Hosts," as though in His majestic presence they were unable to express the intensity of His holiness (Isa 6:3). Job said, "Behold He putteth no trust in His saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in His sight. How much less one that is abominable and corrupt; man that drinketh iniquity like water." "His angels He charged with folly" (Job 15:15; 4:18). God is all-wise, all-mighty. He knows no variableness, no shadow of turning (James 1:17). With Him there is no change (Heb 13:8). He alone is immortal. He dwells in dazzling light no man can even approach unto; no man hath seen Him or can see Him (I Tim 6:16). This same God with whom we all have to do has said, "I am the Lord your God...be holy; for I am holy" (Lev 11:44). The Spirit says, "He which hath called you is holy" (I Peter 1:15).

To such a holy God we shall all give an account of ourselves and our lives. It is appointed unto man once to die and after this, the judgment (Heb 9:27; Rom 14:12). He knows our every secret sin and requires that which is past (Eccl 3:15). To Him shall we answer in the last day as to how we have treated His Son, Jesus Christ, and His message of forgiveness. To Him we must confess in that awful day, the true condition of our depraved and unbelieving hearts if we reject His claims upon us all our lives. This omnipotent and Holy One will one day judge every sinner in absolute righteousness according to his earthly attitude towards His Son. Every last soul must repent towards God and exercise faith in Jesus Christ, in this land of time, or perish forever. This is the decree of the second Person of the Holy Trinity. "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish," is His solemn word in Luke 13:3. Oh, may the Lord give you wisdom, friend, to see how fearfully important it will be at that last tribunal to be a forgiven soul.

## ***2. WE ARE GUILTY***

We need forgiveness because we are GUILTY OF A LIFETIME OF SIN, in the sight of this Holy God. I do not know whether or not you are clear of guilt against your fellow man. Each soul alone knows the secret sins he has hidden from others. I do not know what your friends, neighbors and relatives think of you. But before a thrice Holy God who inhabits eternity, who sees not as man seeth, who alone is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of your heart and conscience, you are poor and wretched and naked and blind and hopeless in your guilt of unbelief, unless by grace you are a forgiven soul.

This guilt of impenitent unbelief is ours by inheritance, through our forefather, Adam, who believed the devil and disobeyed God. We were born guilty, though man's pride denies it. Our natural hearts are so completely deceived by this guilt of sin we were born in, that our minds refuse to believe the Word of God about our lost condition. Rather we believe our own deluded heart which is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jer 17:9). But the unerring Word of the Living God is very plain in His decree: "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not" (Eccl 7:20). All our vaunted self-righteousness is laid forever in the dust by that Word of the Spirit: "There is none righteous, no not one"-again: "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:10,23).

### **3. WE SHALL SOON DIE**

We need forgiveness from God because we are soon, Ah yes, so very soon, going to DIE. We are all travelers here, through a brief time of life to an endless eternity. Daily we are reminded of the brevity of our stay here by the death of those we knew so well. Every soul of us can say with David: "There is but a step between me and death." The longest earthly life is soon over and gone. The strong as well as the weak, we see buried. The young and the old, the rich and the poor, the educated and refined, the famous and mighty, as well as the ignorant and immoral, are solemnly lowered into their graves before our very eyes. The plague of sin and unbelief is in the heart of every man, and when it is finished it bringeth forth death (James 1:15). Yes, my friend, the sentence of death is now in that body of yours whether or not you like to think so (II Cor 1:9). And which of us can tell at whose door the grim destroyer of the bodies of men is now waiting?

In the light of these three facts, the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man and the certainty of death, do you see why I ask you in all sincere affection: "Are you a forgiven soul?"

Are these facts I have written hard to believe, and harder to face? Be sure, it is better to face them now than hereafter when it is too late forever. It is a most solemn thing to be unforgiven, and impenitent now. It will be terrible beyond the thoughts of men to be so in the hour when you shall stand without a Savior before the God against whom you have sinned, in the last judgment. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb 9:27).

Would you like to know you are a forgiven soul? Would you like to be at peace with God and know on the highest Authority your sins were forever removed from your wretched conscience? Would you like to know your guilty soul was safe by the assurance of God's own Word? Then let me point out to you some things about this blessing of forgiveness without which you must surely perish forever (I John 5:12).

The Scripture we have written at the head of this tract show us that there is just one way to become a forgiven soul. We can only be forgiven by Him against whom we have sinned. We can only become forgiven souls by "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). Paul said, "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sin" (Acts 13:38). "This man" is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It is against Him we have sinned. To Him alone we must go in order to ever be forgiven. We must come to Him in brokenhearted repentance, confessing our sins here in time, or be unforgiven forever. There is no one else who can save your helpless soul but Him. Peter once said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). Again he said, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Many are they who would send you to good works and deep sincerity in some belief to earn your own salvation. Others would send you to ministers, but they cannot save you either. They can only point you to Him who is the way. But alas, many of these ministers, not being forgiven themselves, are only false teachers, whose advice is a delusion. They, like the blind who lead the blind, will at last go out into a lost eternity, and their deceived church members will follow them. To trust such is to lean upon one whose remedies will utterly fail in the bitter end. Some would send you to the lodges of proud men to obtain a hope of eternal life. But these fraternities, though pretending much, can give the soul no true hope. They too are only founded upon the false imaginations and secret creeds and good works and rituals of men who love not the truth as it is in Christ, and who despise His sin atoning blood, and that one sacrifice He made which saves those who trust Him.

Some would send you to the Roman Catholic priest to be forgiven. But he, practicing his false Satanic Babylonish Pagan ritual, only loads down the poor sinner with more burdens which are grievous to be borne, and can promise him no eternal life at last. He will send you to masses, to confessions, to penance, and to worshipping Babylon's idols: the crucifix, the rosary and the queen of heaven. He will send you to worshipping saints and relics and adoring Mary and Lady Fatima. He will make you wear scapulars and charms and beads. He will send you on pilgrimages to Rome's shrines

and have you repeat numberless prayers and follow after mysterious superstitions and awe-inspiring ceremonies and ordinances. He will keep you in spiritual ignorance and bondage with his pagan mystery ritual, while he cleverly robs you of your money. And you will find in the end, all that the priest of Rome can do for you, is to bring to you an emotional form of heathen worship, which will never bring any lasting peace to your guilty and hopeless soul.

But dear friend, let me bring the comfort of this word to you: "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (I Tim 2:5). Though vain are your works, though vain is the help of any creed or man at this moment, there is everlasting forgiveness for you if you come to Christ by faith in contrite repentance with no plea but that His blood was shed for you.

Are you troubled and inwardly saying: "I know I need to be forgiven; I know I have sinned against God; but how can I be sure I am justified in His sight?"

In the Word of God the Spirit makes the way of salvation so plain that even a fool cannot err therein (Isa 35:8). Yet many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able, because they shall seek, alas!-too late (Luke 13:24). And many, many others who have spent their lives saying: "Lord, Lord," shall not enter heaven either (Matt 7:21). Yes, friend, there is a vast and fathomless difference between having a profession of salvation, and being a forgiven soul. Many, oh so many, have the former. They have a name to live and are dead (Rev 3:1). Few comparatively are the latter, for few ever take the place of those who need forgiveness and know and feel they must eternally perish without it. Few ever find this way of God's forgiveness. Few of these walk in it. Fewer yet abide any time in it. And fewest of all prove by obeying God and serving Him unto the end of their days, that they have found God's forgiveness in the atonement of Christ.

In the PERSON OF CHRIST alone you will find forgiveness. He has opened a fountain of living waters to cleanse sinners (John 4:14). He has provided a garment of righteousness to clothe our spiritual nakedness (Luke 15). He is the bread of life that we may eat and live forever (John 6). He is the light which guides the repentant soul to heaven (John 8:12). He is the Passover Lamb whose blood alone can stay the destroyer's hand (Exo 12:13). To Him alone I would point you as the One who made the one and only sacrifice which could take away sin forever. (Heb 9:26,28)

To trust Him completely, to cast your repentant soul unreservedly on Christ by faith in His Word is salvation. The Spirit of God said long ago, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Exo 12:13). When God, who is Holy, against whom you have sinned, whom you must soon meet, sees you trusting the Blood of Jesus alone for safety, He will pass over you. No charge will He ever bring against you, because Christ has died in your stead. Payment God will not twice demand, this at His bleeding Surety's hand and then again at yours. "Whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission [forgiveness] of sins." Reader, are you a forgiven soul?

Jesus Christ Himself has purchased forgiveness for us with His own blood. By His death on the tree He paid the debt to God we never could pay. By His resurrection He has proved that God is now satisfied once for all with the payment He once made on the tree, and every repenting soul who trusts Him is free.

To make God's forgiveness yours you must receive Christ by faith in His Word (John 1:12). You cannot see Christ now for He is in heaven. You can never go to Him as you are. But He has left His own promise in His Word: "Look unto Me, and be ye saved" (Isa 45:22). You can trust Him for having done what He says He has done: "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). You can thankfully and humbly trust God's Word that His Son Jesus was slain on Calvary's tree in your stead and that His blood has forever atoned for your sins.

To thus trust your soul unreservedly to Christ is salvation. This is being saved by grace. This is being made a new creature in Christ. This is being justified by faith. To thus trust your soul to Christ for all that is past, for all that is now, for all that is before, is to be a forgiven soul. To do this shows you have been born again.

Reader, will you not gladly now leave your case in His loving hands? Will you not just now gladly believe that He died under God's curse in your stead to set you free forever? Will you even now come by faith to Him, rest in Him, confide in Him, cling to Him, and forsake all other hopes? Then you can joyfully say with David of old: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered" (Psa 32:1), and go on your way rejoicing, singing Newton's wonderful song:

*I saw one hanging on a tree In agony and in blood  
Who fixed His languid eyes on me As near His Cross I stood.*

*Sure never till my latest breath Can I forget that look.  
It seemed to charge me with His death Though not a word He spoke.*

*My conscience felt and owned my guilt And plunged me in despair.  
I saw my sins His blood had spilt And helped to nail Him there.*

*A second look He gave which said, I freely all FORGIVE  
My blood is for thy ransom paid; I die that thou mayest live.*

## **“YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN”**

Thomas Boston

*“You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’”—(John 3:7)*

For your conviction, consider these few things:

REGENERATION IS ABSOLUTELY necessary to qualify you to do any thing really good and acceptable to God. While you are not born again, your best works are but glittering sins; for though the matter of them is good, they are quite marred in the performance.

Consider, that without regeneration there is no faith, and “without faith it is impossible to please God” (Heb 11:6). Faith is a vital act of the new-born soul. The evangelist, showing the different entertainment which our Lord Jesus had from different persons, some receiving Him, some rejecting Him, points at regenerating grace as the true cause of that difference, without which never any one would have received Him. He tells us, that “as many as received him,” were those “which were born of God” (John 1:11-13). Unregenerate men may presume, but true faith they cannot have. Faith is a flower that grows not in the field of nature. As the tree cannot grow without a root, neither can a man believe without the new nature, whereof the principle of believing is a part. Without regeneration a man’s works are dead works. As is the principle, so must the effects be: if the lungs are rotten, the breath will be unsavoury; and he who at best is dead in sin, his works at best will be but dead works. “Unto them that are defiled and unbelieving, is nothing pure being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate” (Titus 1:15,16). If we could say of a man, that he is more blameless in his life than any other in the world, that he reduces his body with fasting and has made his knees as horns with continual praying, if he is not born again, that exception would mar all. As if one should say, “There is a well-proportioned body, but the soul is gone; it is but a dead lump.” This is a melting consideration. You do many things materially good; but God says, “All these things avail not, as long as I see the old nature reigning in the man,” “For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature” (Gal 6:15).

If you are not born again:

(1) All your reformation is naught in the sight of God. You have shut the door, but the thief is still in the house. It may be you are not what once you were; yet you are not what you must be, if ever you see heaven; for “except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

(2) Your prayers are an “abomination to the Lord” (Prov 15:8). It may be, others admire your seriousness; you cry as for your life; but God accounts of the opening of your mouth as one would account of the opening of a grave full of rotteness, “Their throat is an open sepulchre” (Rom 3:13). Others are affected with your prayers, which seem to them as if they would rend the heavens; but God accounts them but as the howling of a dog: “They have not cried unto me with their hearts, when they howled upon their beds” (Hos 7:14). Why, because you are yet “in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity!” All your struggles against sin in your own heart and life, are naught. The proud Pharisee afflicted his body with fasting, and God struck his soul, in the mean time with a sentence of condemnation (Luke 18). Balaam struggled with his covetous temper, to that degree, that though he loved the wages of unrighteousness, yet he would not win them by cursing Israel: but he died the death of the wicked (Num 31:8). All you do, while in an unregenerate state, is for yourself: therefore it will fare with you as with a subject, who having reduced the rebels, puts the crown on his own head, and loses all his good service and his head too.

Be convinced, then, that you must be born again. The Scripture says that the Word is the seed, whereof the new creature is formed: therefore take heed to it, and entertain it, as it is your life. Apply yourself to the reading of the Scripture. You that cannot read, get others to read it to you. Wait diligently on the preaching of the Word, as by divine appointment the special means of conversion; for “it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe” (1 Cor 1:21).

Receive the testimony of the Word of God concerning the misery of an unregenerate state, the sinfulness thereof, and the absolute necessity of regeneration. Receive its testimony concerning God, what a holy and just One He is. Examine your ways by it; namely, the thoughts of your heart, the expressions of your lips, and the tenor of your life. Look back through the several periods of your life; see your sins from the precepts of the Word, and learn, from its threatening, what you are liable to on account of these sins.

By the help of the same Word of God, view the corruption of your nature. Were these things deeply rooted in the heart, they might be the seed of that fear and sorrow, on account of your soul’s state, which are necessary to prepare and stir you up to look after a Saviour. Fix your thoughts upon Him offered to you in the Gospel, as fully suited to your case; having, by His obedience unto death, perfectly satisfied the justice of God, and brought in everlasting righteousness. This may prove the seed of humiliation, desire, hope and faith; and move you to stretch out the withered hand unto Him, at His own command.

Let these things sink deeply into your hearts, and improve them diligently. Remember, whatever you are, you must be born again; else it had been better for you that you had never been born. Wherefore, if any of you shall live and die in an unregenerate state, you will be inexcusable, having been fairly warned of your danger.

## BE SURE

This message is written to every person young or old that thinks or believes he will be in heaven. Please consider the following carefully as it might make a difference to you for all eternity.

“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. 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.” -Matthew 7:21-23

What a terrible awakening it will be for those who are going on in this life thinking all is well with them, and then in that day as they stand before the Lord of Glory hear these words, “I never knew you.” Words cannot describe the anguish of soul as that sentence is passed upon them, and added to it will be-”Depart from Me, ye that work iniquity.” Friend, take notice that it does not say a few, but “Many will say to Me in that day.” Are you among the many? Are you one of those that sit in a church pew thinking ‘all is well,’ yet if God should say: “Cut him [or her] off,” you would drop from that pew into hell? “Many” have done this. Are you teaching a Sunday School class and not even saved yourself? Have you the responsibility for the eternal welfare of men and women who are looking to you to guide them? If so, you’re one of those that God speaks of-”the blind leading the blind.” Are you a hireling or a shepherd? Are you depending upon some religious experience to get you to heaven, or some good deed you have done or are doing? What proof have you that you are going to heaven and not to hell?

It’s time to awaken and think about these things. It’s time to do some soul searching. God says, “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?” (II Cor 13:5). God requires that we make our “calling and election sure” (II Peter 1:10).

Let us not forget many are on the broad way that leads to destruction, but only a few find the narrow way that leads to eternal life. That is the reason God says, “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it” (Heb 4:1). If your aim is heaven and you come short of it, nothing remains but a lost eternity. If you are being deceived by any of the many ways Satan has for destroying the soul, and you know it not or care not, then in that day when the righteous Judge shall appear to try the hearts of men your cry for all eternity will be too late, too late! With all urgency I say again, Be Sure. There is no sacrifice too great on your part that you might know, beyond a doubt, whether your sins are forgiven and your destiny heaven.

What are some of the marks of eternal life? God says we must be born again. What does this new birth mean? We read, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Cor 5:17). Do you know what this means in your life? "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (I John 2:4). Are not these words to think upon? "But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes" (I John 2:11). Are you walking in darkness or light? God is light. If we are doing the will of God, we will be walking in the light as He is in the light and not as one blind walking in darkness. "He that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (I John 2:17). Is not this worth striving for? Do we not read-"He that committeth sin is of the devil" (I John 3:8). "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love" (I John 4:8). "Ye shall know them by their fruits." What are your fruits? "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit" (Matt 7:16-20). What do you know about "the fruit of the Spirit...love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal 5:22,23)?

It is necessary that we prove ourselves in the light of God's Word. May I urge again no matter who you are, where you are, what church you belong to, what so-called Christian work you are doing, whether white or black, young or old, whether Protestant, Catholic, Jewish or any other faith, Be Sure. Remember, there is only one God, one Christ, and one way of salvation. "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (I Peter 4:18). "This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth and honoreth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me" (Matt 15:8). "Every plant, which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matt 15:13).

Time is but a short space, eternity is immeasurable. Heaven will never cease to exist, neither will hell. If you are one of His, prove it. God hates lukewarmness. His desire is determined men and women grounded in the truth, standing firm upon the living Word, not carried about by every wind of doctrine, but established upon the rock Christ Jesus. What a sad condition exists today when one sees little difference between those who profess Christ and those of the world. The world, the flesh, and the devil are enemies of the child of God. We read that even Satan is changed into an angel of light. Is it any wonder we need to continually examine ourselves, that we might Be Sure of our salvation?

## ALMOST A CHRISTIAN

From a treatise by M. Meade, 1661

THERE ARE TWO QUESTIONS of very great importance which we should every one of us put to ourselves: "What am I?" and "Where am I?" Am I a child of God or not? Am I sincere in religion, or am I only a hypocrite under a profession? Am I yet in a natural state, or in a state of grace? Am I yet in the old root, in old Adam, or am I in the Root, Christ Jesus? Am I in the covenant of works that ministers only wrath and death, or am I in the covenant of grace that ministers life and peace? I press this upon you that are professors, because many rest in a notion of godliness and an outward show of religion, and yet remain in their natural condition. Many are hearers of the Word and not doers of it, and so deceive their own souls (James 1:22). He that slightes the ordinances cannot be a true Christian, but yet it is possible a man may own them and yet be no true Christian.

Errors in the first foundation are very dangerous. If we be not right in the main, the fundamental work, if the foundation be not laid in grace in the heart, all our following profession comes to nothing. The house built upon a sandy foundation, though it may stand for a while, yet when the floods come and the winds blow and beat upon it, great will be the fall of it. There are many things like grace that are not grace. Now it is the likeness of things that deceives. Many take gifts for grace; common knowledge for saving knowledge; whereas a man may have great gifts and no grace, great knowledge and yet not know Jesus Christ. Some take common faith for saving; whereas a man may believe all the truths of the gospel, all the promises, all the threatenings, all the articles of the creed to be true, and yet perish for want of saving faith. Some take morality and restraining grace for renewing grace; whereas it is common to have sin much restrained where the heart is not at all renewed. Some are deceived with a half-work, making many mermaid Christians, or like Nebuchadnezzar's image, head of gold and feet of clay. Endless are the delusions that Satan fastens upon souls for want of this self-search. Satan will try us at one time or other. He will winnow us and sift us to the bottom, and if we now rest in a groundless

confidence, it will then end in a comfortless despair. Nay, God Himself will search and try us, at the day of judgment especially, and who can abide that trial, that never tries his own heart?

Whatsoever a man's state be, whether he be altogether a Christian or not, yet it is good to examine his own heart. If he finds his heart good, his principles right and sound, this will be a matter of rejoicing. If he finds his heart rotten, his principles false and unsound, the discovery may be in order to a renewing. If a man have a disease upon him and know it, he may send to the physician in time, but what a sad vexation it will be not to see the disease till it be past cure! So for a man to be graceless and not see till it be too late, to think himself a Christian when he is not; that he is in the right way to heaven when he is in the ready way to hell, and yet not know it till a death bed or a judgment day confute his confidence, this is the most irrecoverable misery. These are the grounds upon which I press this duty of examining our state. Oh, that God would help us in doing this necessary duty!

You will say: But how shall I come to know whether I am almost or altogether a Christian? If a man may go so far and yet miscarry, how shall I know when my foundation is right, when I am a Christian indeed?

Christ is a King, Priest, Prophet, and all as Mediator. Without any one of those offices, the work of salvation could not have been completed. As Priest He redeems us, as Prophet He instructs us, as King He sanctifies and saves us. Therefore the apostle says He is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Righteousness and redemption flow from Him as Priest, wisdom as a Prophet, sanctification as a King. Now many embrace Christ as a Priest, but yet they own Him not as a King and Prophet. They like to share in His righteousness, but not to partake of His holiness. They would be redeemed by Him, but they would not submit to Him. They would be saved by His blood, but not submit to His power. Many love the privileges of the gospel, but not the duties of the gospel. Now these are but almost Christians, notwithstanding their close with Christ; for it is upon their own terms, but not upon God's. The offices of Christ may be distinguished, but they can never be divided.

But the true Christian owns Christ in all His offices. He does not only close with Him as Jesus, but as Lord Jesus. He says with Thomas: "My Lord, and my God." He does not only believe in the merit of His death, but also conforms to the manner of His life. As he believes in Him, so he lives in Him.

The altogether Christian has a thorough work of grace and sanctification wrought in the heart, as a spring of obedience. Regeneration is a whole change. All old things are done away, all things become new. It is a perfect work as to parts, though not as to degrees. Carnal men do duties but from an unsanctified heart, and that spoils all. A new piece of cloth never does well in an old garment, for the rent is made worse (Matt. 9:16). When a man's heart is thoroughly renewed by grace, the mind savingly enlightened, the conscience thoroughly convinced, the will truly humbled and subdued, the affections spiritually raised and sanctified, and when the mind and will and conscience and affections all join issue to help on and with the performance of the duties commanded, then is a man altogether a Christian. Here the almost Christian fails. He does the same duties, but he does them not in the same manner. If he pray, he regards not faith and fervency in prayer; if he hears, he does not mind Christ's rule: "Take heed how ye hear." If he obey, he looks not to the frame of his heart in obedience; therefore miscarries in all he does. These defects spoil all.

The altogether Christian is much in duty and yet much above duty in regard of dependence. He lives in his obedience, but not upon his obedience. He lives upon Christ and His righteousness. The almost Christian fails in this: He is much in duty, but not above it, but rests in it. He works for rest, and he rests in his works. He cannot come to believe and obey too. If he believes, then he thinks there is no need of obedience, and so casts off that; if he be much in obedience, then he casts off believing, and thinks there is no need of that. He cannot say with David: "I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments" (Psa 119:166). The altogether Christian is universal in his obedience. He does not obey one command and neglect another, do one duty and cast off another; but he has respect to all the commandments. He endeavours to leave every sin, and love every duty. The almost Christian fails in this. His obedience is partial and piece-meal. If he obeys one command, he breaks another. The duties that least cross his lust, he is much in; but those that do, he lays aside. The pharisees fasted, paid tithes etc., but they did not lay aside their covetousness, their oppression; they "devoured widows' houses;" they were unnatural to parents.

The altogether Christian makes God the chief end of all his performances. Now the almost Christian fails in this. For he that was never truly cast out of himself, can have no higher end than himself. It is dangerous to be almost a Christian, in that it stills and serves to quiet conscience. Now it is very dangerous to quiet conscience with anything but the blood of Christ. It is bad being at peace till Christ speaks peace. Nothing can truly pacify conscience less than that which pacifies God, and that is the blood of Christ (Heb 9:14). Now the almost Christian quiets conscience but not with the blood of Christ; it is not a peace flowing from Christ's propitiation, but a peace rising from a formal profession; not a peace of Christ's giving, but a peace of his own making. He silences and bridles conscience with a form of godliness and so makes



it give way to an undoing soul-destroying peace. He rocks it asleep in the cradle of duties, and probably never wakes more till death or judgment. Ah, my brethren, it is better to have a conscience never quiet than quieted any way but by the blood of sprinkling. A good conscience is the greatest affliction to the saints, and an evil conscience, quiet, is the greatest judgment to sinners.

## PRACTICAL GODLINESS

Arthur W. Pink

*“BE YE DOERS of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” (James 1:22)*

It is much, very much to be thankful for when the Holy Spirit has illumined a man’s understanding, dispersed the mists of error, and established him in the Truth. Yet that is only the beginning. The Holy Scriptures are “profitable” not only for “doctrine” but also for “reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16). Observe well the order there: before we are ready to be instructed “in righteousness” (right doing), there is much in our lives that God “reproves” and which we must “correct.” Necessarily so, for before conversion everything in our lives was wrong! For all we did was for the gratifying of self, with no thought or concern for God’s honour and glory. Therefore, the first great need, and the primary duty of every young convert is not to study the Old Testament types, or puzzle his brains over prophecy, but to diligently search the Scriptures in order to find out what is pleasing and displeasing to God, what He forbids and what He commands.

If you have been genuinely converted, then your first concern must be to form all the details of your life-in the home, in the church, in the world-so as to please God. And in the actual bringing of this to pass, the order will be “cease to do evil; learn to do well” (Isaiah 1:16-17); “Depart from evil, and do good” (Psalm 34:14 and cf. 37:27). There has to be a breaking down before there can be a building up (Eccl 3:3). There has to be an emptying of self before there is the filling of the Spirit. There has to be an unlearning before there is a true learning. And there has to be a hating of “evil” before there is a loving of the “good” (Amos 5:15 and cf. Rom. 12:9).

Now to the extent the young Christian does use the Holy Scriptures in a practical way, regulating his thoughts, desires and actions by their warnings and encouragements, their prohibitions and precepts, will very largely determine the measure in which he will enjoy God’s blessing on his life. As the moral Governor of the world God takes note of our conduct, and sooner or later manifests His displeasure against our sins, and His approval of a righteous walk, by granting that measure of prosperity which is most for our good and His glory. In the keeping of His commandments “there is great reward” (Psalm 19:11) in this life (1 Tim. 4:8). O how much temporal and spiritual blessing most Christians miss through careless and disobedient conduct: see Isaiah 48:18!

The tragic thing is that instead of the average young Christian studying diligently God’s Word so as to discover all the details of the divine will for him, he does almost anything and everything else. Many a one engages in “personal work” or some form of Christian “service” while his own life remains full of things displeasing to God! The presence of those displeasing things in his life hinders God’s blessings upon his soul, body, and temporal affairs; and to him it has to be said: “Your sins have withholden good things from you” (Jer 5:25). God’s Word to His people is: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:12). But O how little of this “fear and trembling” is to be found anywhere today! Instead, there is self-esteem, self-confidence, boasting and carnal security.

There are others who give themselves unto the diligent study of doctrine, but, generally, they fail to realize that the doctrine of Scripture is not a series of intellectual propositions, but is the “doctrine which is according to godliness” (1 Tim. 6:3). The “doctrine” or “teaching” of God’s Holy Word is given not for the instruction of our brains, but for the regulation of all the details of our daily lives; and this in order that we may “adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things” (Titus 2:10). But that can only be realized by a constant reading of the Word with one dominant purpose-to discover what God forbids and what he commands; by our meditating frequently on what we have read, and by fervent prayer for supernatural grace to enable us to obey. If the young convert does not early form the habit of treading the path of practical obedience to God, then he will not have His ear when he prays! John states plainly one of the main conditions which we must constantly seek grace to heed, if our petitions are to meet with acceptance: “and whatsoever we ask we

receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight" (1 John 3:22). But if instead of submitting unto God's holy requirements, we follow our own inclinations, then it will be said, "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear" (Isaiah 59:2). This is unspeakably solemn. O what a difference it makes whether or not we have experimental access to God!

Not only does the young Christian, by following a course of self-pleasing, reduce his prayers to empty words, but he brings down upon himself the rod of God, and everything goes wrong in his life. That is one reason why many Christians are suffering just as sorely as the poor worldlings are: God is displeased with their ways, and does not show Himself strong on their behalf (2 Chron 16:9). In this connection we have sought to point out in the past the remedy, which calls for real heart-humbling before the Lord, godly sorrow, true repentance, unsparing confession, the firm determination to reform our ways; and then (and not before) faith's counting on God's mercy and a patient expectation that He will work wonders for us if we now tread the path of full submission to Him.

## A WORD TO PARENTS

by A. W. Pink

One of the saddest and most tragic features of our twentieth-century "Civilization" is the awful prevalence of disobedience on the part of children to their parents during the days of childhood, and their lack of reverence and respect when they grow up. This is evidenced in many ways, alas, even in the families of professing Christians. In his extensive travels during the past thirty years the writer has sojourned in a great many homes. The piety and beauty of some of them remain as scared and fragrant memories: but others of them have left the most painful impressions. Children who are self-willed or spoiled, not only bring themselves into perpetual unhappiness, but inflict discomfort upon all who come into contact with them, and foreshadow evil things for the days to come.

In the vast majority of cases the children are not to be blamed nearly so much as the parents. Failure to honor father and mother, wherever it is found, is in large measure due to parental departure from the Scriptural pattern. Nowadays the father considers that he has fulfilled his obligations by providing food and raiment for his children, and by acting occasionally as a species of moral policeman. Too often the mother is content to be a domestic drudge, making herself the slave of her children instead of training them to be useful, performing many a task which her daughters should do, in order to allow them freedom for the frivolous. The consequence has been that the home, which ought to be-for its orderliness, its sanctity, and its reigns of love-a miniature heaven and earth, has degenerated into "a filling station for the day and a parking place for the night" as someone has tersely expressed it.

Before outlining the duties of parents toward their children, let it be pointed out that they cannot properly discipline their children unless they have first learned to govern themselves. How can they expect to subdue self-will in their little ones and check the rise of an angry temper if their own passions are allowed free reign? The character of parents is to be a very large degree reproduced in their offspring: "And Adam lived a hundred and thirty years and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image" (Gen 5:3). The parent must himself or herself be in subjection to God if they may lawfully expect obedience from their little ones. This principle is enforced in Scriptures again and again: "Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" (Rom 2:21). Of the bishop or pastor it is written that he must be, "One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity. For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" (I Tim 3:4,5). And if a man or woman know not how to rule their own spirit (Pro 25:28), how shall they care for their offspring.

God has intrusted to parents a most solemn and yet a most precious privilege. It is not too much to say that in their hands are deposited the hope and blessing, or else the curse and plague of the next generation. Their families are the nurseries of both Church and State, and according to the cultivating of them now, such will be their fruitfulness hereafter. How prayerfully and carefully should they discharge their trust. Most assuredly God will require an account of the children from the parents' hands, for they are His, and only lent to their care and keeping. The task assigned you is no easy one, especially in these superlatively evil days. Nevertheless, if trustfully and earnestly sought, the grace of God will

be found sufficient here as elsewhere. The Scriptures supply us with rules to go by, with promises to lay hold of and, we may add, with fearful warnings lest we treat the matter lightly.

### ***Instruct Your Children***

We have space to mention but four of the principal duties delegated to parents. First, to instruct their children. “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up” (Deut 6:6,7). This work is far too important to allocate unto others: parents, and not Sunday School teachers, are divinely required to educate their little ones. Nor is this to be an occasional or sporadic thing, but one that is to have constant attention. The glorious character of God, the requirements of His holy law, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the wondrous gift of His Son, and the fearful doom which is the certain portion of all who despise and reject Him, are to be brought repeatedly before the minds of the little ones. “They are too young to understand such things” is the devil’s argument to deter you from discharging your duty.

“And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph 6:4). It is to be noted that the “fathers” are here specifically addressed, and this for two reasons: because they are the head of the family and its government is especially committed to them, and because they are prone to transfer this duty unto their wives. This instruction is to be given by reading to them the Holy Scriptures and expounding upon those things suitable for their age. This should be followed by catechising them. A continued discourse to the young is not nearly so effective as when it is diversified by questions and answers. If they know they will be questioned on what you read, they will listen more closely: the formulating of answers teaches them to think for themselves. Such a method is also found to make the memory more retentive, for answering definite questions fixes more specific ideas in the mind. Observe how often Christ asked His disciples questions.

### ***Be a Good Example***

Second, good instructions are to be accompanied by good example. That teaching which issues only from the lips is not at all likely to sink any deeper than the ears. Children are particularly quick to detect inconsistencies, and despise hypocrisy. It is at this point parents need to be most on their faces before God, daily seeking from Him that grace which they so sorely need and which He alone can supply. What care they need to take lest they say or do anything before their children which would tend to corrupt their minds or be of evil consequence for them to follow! How they need to be constantly on their guard against anything which might render them contemptible in the eyes of those who should respect and revere them! The parent is not only to instruct his children in the ways of holiness, but is himself to walk before them in those ways, and show by his practice and demeanor what a pleasant and profitable thing it is to be regulated by the divine law.

In a Christian home the supreme aim should be household piety-the honoring of God at all times-everything else being subordinated thereto. In the matter of family life, neither husband nor wife can throw on the other all the responsibility for the religious character of the home. The mother is most certainly required to supplement the efforts of the father, for the children enjoy far more of her company than they do of his. If there is a tendency in fathers to be too strict and severe, mothers are prone to be too lax and lenient, and they need to be much on their guard against anything which would weaken her husband’s authority: when he has forbidden a thing, she must not give her consent to it. It is striking to note that the exhortation of Ephesians 6:4 is preceded by “be filled with the Spirit” (5:18), while the parallel exhortation in Colossians 3:21 is preceded by “let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly” (v. 16), showing that parents cannot possibly discharge their duties unless they are filled with the Spirit and the Word.

### ***Discipline Your Children***

Third, instruction and example is to be enforced by correction and discipline. This means, first of all, the exercise of authority-the proper reign of law. Of the father of the faithful, God said, “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgement; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him” (Gen 18:19). Ponder this carefully, Christian fathers. Abraham did more than offer good advice: he enforced law and order in his household. The rules he administered had for their design the keeping of the “way of the Lord”-that which was right in His sight. And this duty was performed by the patriarch in order that the blessing of God might rest on his family. No family can be properly brought up without

household laws, which include reward and punishment, and these are especially important in early childhood, when as yet moral character is unformed and moral motives are not understood or appreciated.

Rules should be simple, clear, reasonable and flexible like the Ten Commandments - a few great moral rules, instead of a multitude of petty restrictions. One way of needlessly provoking children to wrath is to hamper them with a thousand trifling restrictions and minute regulations that are arbitrary, due to a parent who is a perfectionist. It is of vital importance for the child's future good that he or she should be brought into subjection at an early age: an untrained child means a lawless adult-our prisons are crowded with those who were allowed to have their own way during their youth. The least offense of a child against the rulers of the home ought not to pass without due correction, for if it find leniency in one direction toward one offense, it will expect the same towards others, and then disobedience will become more frequent till the parent has no control except that of brute force.

The teaching of Scripture is crystal clear on this point. "Foolishness is bound in the heart of the child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him" (Prov 22:15; and cf. 23:13,14). Therefore God has said, "He that spareth the rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes" (Prov 13:24). And again, "Chasten thy son while there is yet hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying" (Prov 19:18). Let not a foolish fondness stop you: certainly God loves His children with a deeper parental affection than you can love yours, yet He tells us "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten" (Rev 3:19 and cf. Heb 12:6). "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame" (Prov 29:15). Such severity must be used in their early years, before age and obstinacy have hardened the child against the fear and sting of correction. Spare the rod, and you spoil the child: use it not on him, and you lay up one for your own back.

It should hardly need pointing out that the above Scriptures are far from inculcating that a reign of terror is to mark the home life. Children can be governed and punished in such a way so that they do not lose their respect and affections toward their parents. Beware of souring their temper by unreasonable demands, or provoking their wrath by smiting them to vent your own rage. The parent is to punish a disobedient child not because he is angry, but because he is right- because God requires it, and the welfare of the child demands it. Never make a threat which you have no intention of executing, nor a promise you do not mean to perform. Remember that for your children to be well informed is good, but for them to be well controlled is better.

Pay close attention to the unconscious influences of a child's surroundings. Study to make the home attractive: not by producing carnal and worldly things but by noble ideals, by inculcating a spirit of unselfishness, by genial and happy fellowship. Separate the little ones from evil associates. Watch carefully the periodicals and books which come into the home, the occasional guest which sits at the table, and the companionships your children form. Parents carelessly let people have free access to their children who undermine their authority, overturn their ideals, and sow seeds of frivolity and iniquity before they are aware. Never let your child spend a night among strangers. So train your girls that they will be useful and helpful members of their generation, and your boys that they will be industrious and self-supporting.

### ***Pray For Your Children***

Fourthly, the last and most important duty, respecting both the temporal and spiritual good of your children, is fervent supplication to God for them. Without this all the rest will be ineffectual. Means are unavailing unless the Lord blesses them. The Throne of Grace is to be earnestly implored that your efforts to bring up your children for God may be crowned with success. True, there must be a humble submission to His sovereign will, a bowing before the truth of Election. On the other hand, it is the privilege of faith to lay hold of the divine promises and to remember that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Of holy Job it is recorded concerning his sons and daughters that he "rose up early in the morning and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all." (1:5) A prayerful atmosphere should pervade the home and be breathed by all who share it.

# TELEVISION & THE CHRISTIAN HOME

By J. K. Duff

There are many perils which threaten the spiritual well-being of the believer in these last closing days. Some of these dangers are apparent and can be easily discerned, while others are like sunken rocks which cannot be readily seen, but are, for that very cause all the more dangerous.

Such a menace to the Christian is to be found in Television which Satan exploits for the accomplishment of his own sinister ends. No one will deny that it is a most wonderful invention and some items in the programs are educational and instructive; but for the child of God the baneful effects on the soul, will far outweigh the seeming advantages.

There is no desire to encroach upon the personal liberty of any brother or sister, but rather to lovingly warn any who may be tempted to follow the trend of the world, and be caught in the snare. The writer believes that viewing TV programs is inimical to spiritual prosperity, and that Television will prove a curse if brought into the home. The Lord said unto Ezekiel—"I have set thee as a watchman...therefore thou shalt hear the word at My mouth and warn them from Me" (Eze 33:7).

There are five simple yet cogent reasons why we who are believers in Christ should avoid acquiring a TV set.

## ***For Our Own Sakes***

Beloved brethren and sisters, we have been born again by the word of God that liveth and abideth for ever (1 Peter 1:23). It is God's desire that we should grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. This spiritual growth results from feeding on God's word (1 Peter 2:2), and communing with the Lord in prayer. Now, if we fritter away our time in watching TV, there is nothing more certain than that we shall lose our appetite for the Scriptures and our desire to pray. Then we will imperceptibly become weak and impoverished in soul, moreover, the conscience will become defiled and we shall lose the joy of God's salvation.

Remember one has said: "Mine eye affecteth my heart," therefore let us be very careful what we see as well as what we hear. Much better to go in for the blessed experience of 2 Corinthians 3:18—"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."

## ***For Our Children's Sake***

God is very solicitous for the welfare of His people's children as can be seen in both Old and New Testaments (see Exo 10:9, Deut 6:7, Eph 6:4, Col 3:21).

If God has blessed us with a family, He commands us to bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. He would have us to put their salvation before education, recreation, or worldly advancement. Christian parents who live with eternity's value in view will seek to do this by living Christ before them, by reading God's word with them, by praying continuously for them, also, by bringing them under the sound of the Gospel as frequently as possible, since it has pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe (1 Cor 1:21). The influence of loving parents, who honour God, is powerful and cannot be overestimated.

Some may say: 'But I would not allow my child to see everything that appears on TV.' That may be true, you may be selective and switch off when undesirable items are coming over. But will your family be so discriminating? Will they not rather be curious to see everything that is to be seen when you are not there, or when they feel old enough to assert their own wills in the house. Surely all parents who realize the dreadful possibility of rearing children who may lose their souls, will agree that we should refrain from bringing into our homes anything that may cause them to miss salvation.

## ***For Our Brethren's Sake***

"Am I my brother's keeper?" were the words of Cain after he had slain his brother Abel. God's question infers that it was His intention that he should have been. In 1 Corinthians 12 the local assembly is viewed as a body with the several members all functioning for the good of the whole. God would teach us that we are all closely linked together, each necessary to the other and each affected by the other, for if "one member suffer all the members suffer with it." If this

aspect of truth is appreciated, it will be readily seen that TV installed in the home of the believer may have serious repercussions in the assembly. Some perhaps, will not care, but many beloved brethren and sisters who have a conscience about this thing, will be sorely grieved while other weak Christians may be emboldened by the example and stumble. Furthermore, if an elder in the assembly has TV in the home, will the saints not regard him as a worldly Christian, and lose confidence in his leadership? Certainly, if he is one who is “apt to teach,” his ministry will have less weight in the meeting.

### ***For Our Neighbor’s Sake***

One of the greatest arguments in favor of the Gospel is the fact that the believer has a peace and a joy independent of circumstances. He derives his joy not from the world’s cisterns but from the wells of salvation. The Lord Jesus said to the woman of Samaria-”Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” We can sing:

*Now none but Christ can satisfy, None other name for me,  
There’s love and life, and lasting joy, Lord Jesus found in Thee.*

The impact of Christians who are full of this joy of the Lord upon the unsaved is tremendous. They see that we have happiness and peace without going in for the pleasures and sports of the world. But will our testimony in this respect not be altogether nullified if our unsaved neighbors observe that we have to resort to the ways and means through which they derive their enjoyment? If we fail to keep our souls in spiritual health through fellowship with God, we shall become backsliders in heart, if not in life, and like Lot, we shall seem as one that mocked, unto those whom we would warn and seek to win for Christ.

### ***For the Lord’s Sake***

The Lord has redeemed us with His precious blood, therefore we are not our own, we have been bought with a price. We have been redeemed to be His own peculiar possession. He will have us in glory with Him by and by, but He desires to have fellowship with us now. He is jealous of our affections and cannot bear the world to steal away our hearts.

When we consider the case of the cleansed leper in Leviticus 14, we observe that the blood of the sacrifice was put on the tip of the right ear, the thumb of the right hand, and the great toe of the right foot. Then upon the blood marked ear, thumb and toe was put the oil. This finds its antitype in the blood of Christ by which we have been cleansed from sin, and the Holy Spirit by whom we have been sealed. It teaches us that God claims all our faculties, our actions and our will. What we think, say, hear and see, what we do, and where we go, should manifest our subjection to the Lordship of Christ.

Brethren, the coming of our Lord draweth nigh, now is our salvation nearer than when we believed, let us keep our hearts true to Christ, and our homes free from the world. Then we shall be able to sing truthfully to the glory of God-

*I have seen the Cross of Jesus, Gazed upon the Crucified,  
And my heart is won forever, I am saved and satisfied.*

*Earth’s joys no longer charm me, And the world has lost its hold,  
But my heart will sing with gladness, When the pearly gates unfold.*

## **THE CHRISTIAN & THE WORLD**

I. C. Herendeen

*“Love not the world...The world passeth away, and the lust thereof”(I John 2:15,17).*

*“Be not conformed to this world” (Rom. 12:2).*

*“Come out from among them, and be ye separate” (2 Cor. 6:17).*

The Christian is plagued by three great, powerful and subtle enemies—“the world, the flesh and the devil.” They are terrible foes which must be overcome if we are to be saved. However, at this time we will consider but one of these enemies which Scripture warns us not to be “conformed” unto, namely “the world.” It is not easy to give a clear definition, but we would, with another, describe it as both “a society and a system.” “As a society, it is composed of ‘the world of the ungodly’ (2 Pet. 2:5), of ‘men of the world which have their portion in this life’ (Psa. 17:14). It is composed only of unregenerate humanity, the Lord having delivered all His people from ‘this present evil world’ (Gal. 1:4). Though still in it, the Christian is no longer of it. As a system, it is under the dominion of Satan who is its ‘prince’ (John 12:31) who regulates its policies and its politics.” He is its “god” (2 Cor. 4:4) directing its religions. Eph. 2:2 tells us the unregenerate “walk 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.”

Considered morally, the world is synonymous with the kingdom of Satan (Matt. 12:26), or the unregenerate part of humanity. It is fallen human nature acting under the influence of the devil. “The spirit of the world is hostile to godliness, dominated by carnal ambition, pride, avarice, self-pleasing and sensuous desires and interests. Its opinions are false, its aims selfish, its pleasures sinful, its influence thoroughly corrupt, its honors an empty bauble” (something showy but worthless). The world is the sphere of rebellion against God; it is away from God and in opposition to Him. Unregenerate persons think only of this world’s ways and things to the neglect of “the world to come.” They are always thinking more of earth than of heaven, more of time than eternity, more of the body than of pleasing God. Both the religious and profane world are under the control of Satan in their ways, habits, customs, tastes, practices and aims, and in these things are a great and subtle enemy of our souls. Every one who is a true Christian and determined to please the Lord will be in earnest in renouncing these things, and will earnestly seek to order his life by God’s standard, the Holy Scriptures.

The world surrounds us. We have it exhibited on every hand day in and day out. For example, the very immodest and lustful way in which women dress; wearing that which Holy Writ strictly forbids (see Deut. 22:5; 1 Tim 2:9) to their shame. Dear friend, if you really love the Lord, see to it that you are not guilty of such forbidden practices. Remember, God’s stern command is “Be not conformed to this world” (Rom. 12:2), to its wicked ways, customs or fashions. Believers ought to live in marked contrast from it; we ought rather to be “conformable unto His [Christ’s] death” (Phil. 3:10). Instead of being conformed unto this world we ought to be more and more separated from the world (2 Cor. 6:16-18). Its ungodly ways ought to be abhorrent to us, and especially those of the unregenerate professing religious world which “hates” our blessed Saviour (John 15:25), and which “put Him to an open shame” (Heb. 6:6).

The world seeks to gratify its lusts with no thought of nor concern for God’s will or glory; hence, we must tread the path of separation from it in obedience to Him. It is God’s purpose that His people, all His people, should detach their affections and interests completely from the things of this visible and corruptible and perishing order, and “set them upon things above” (Col 3:2). But as things are now it is hard to detect any line of demarcation between the Christian and the world. As so many deport themselves, it is most difficult if not impossible to distinguish “him that believeth” from him that “believeth not.” It was never contemplated that the Lord’s people should make themselves at home here, for their “citizenship is in heaven” (Phil. 3:20). God separated Abraham from his people, and ‘righteous Lot’ and his household from the inhabitants of the plain. He carefully separated Israel from the nations, setting them apart by peculiar laws and customs. And in this age He commands His Church to ‘have no fellowship’ with unbelievers, or be ‘unequally yoked’ with them

In the light of this, what about us? Are we taking a definite stand in this matter? If we are not, why not? Will the Lord accept any of our excuses? He has given us our marching orders when He said we are to “go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing [not seeking to avoid] His reproach” (Heb. 13:13). Do we think we can mix in our lives the things of this wicked world, and not sin? Impossible! Sin is a serious matter. The very Son of God suffered and died to put it away, yet great numbers posing as Christians are taking an active and prominent part in the world’s merry-making and mad scramble after its pleasures, wealth and temporal benefits! In a matter so solemn can we, dare we, afford pretense and trifling! If we really believe these things then let us live and act as though we believe them, and really be what we profess to be. If we do not believe them, then let us quit the miserable pretense of being followers of the meek and lowly Jesus, members of His body. In other words, let us quit being hypocrites and take our Christian profession seriously. He who seeks God must be prepared to make a full surrender of all worldly prospects, pleasures and benefits, and give himself wholly to God. We must be willing to give Him all the affections of our hearts, for His command is: “Thou shalt love the

Lord thy God with all thy heart” (Matt. 22:37). The world from which the Christian is to detach himself “lieth in the evil one” (I John 5:19).

It is a sad fact but there are two kinds of “Christians”-the converted and the unconverted, “possessors and professors.” The professors are overcome by the love of the world, the cares of the world, the business of the world, the money of the world, the pleasures of the world, the desire to go along with the world, and, alas, the desire to be like the world.

Of course, with all their worldliness, they must be religious and pretend to piety. “They make no objection to any article of belief of the Christian faith, nor do they deliberately choose evil and openly rebel against God. No, for with all their worldliness they hope to get to heaven at last. They think it only proper that they should have a religion of some sort, though they are not too particular what it is just so long as they are religious. But they cannot and do not intend to give up their idols. Religion is very popular with them just so long as it does not interfere with their worldly desires and ambitions...Just so long as they can have their religion and world, too.”

When our Lord commanded through Paul to “Come out from among them,” He did not mean that the Christian must give up all his worldly callings, his trade, his profession, his business if lawful and according to the Word of God, for then he “must needs go out of the world” (I Cor. 5:10). He did not forbid any should be bankers, farmers, or lawyers, for example. God expects His people not to be idle, but busy “working with his hands the thing that is good” (Eph. 4:28). “If any man will not work neither shall he eat” (II Thess. 3:10). We are not to give up any lawful work, but “do with our might whatsoever our hands find to do” (Eccl. 9:10), being careful to carry our testimony with us into our business, conducting it in “the fear of the Lord” and to “the glory of God.” Neither are we to stand aloof from all intercourse with unconverted people, and refuse their society entirely. Our Lord and His disciples did not; they went to the marriage feast and sat at the Pharisee’s table.

Christians are not to be odd, eccentric and strange in their dress, ways of behaviour, conduct or voice. Such things attract notice but are most objectionable, unnatural, and ought to be carefully avoided. To wear clothes of such a color, for instance, or made in such a fashion as that you will be a public spectacle and the object of comment is wrong and dishonoring to the Lord. You may be sure that our Lord and His apostles and their companions dressed and acted as befitted their place and rank in life. It was the Pharisees who “made broad their phylacteries, and enlarged the borders of their garments.” Why?—“To be seen of men” (Matt. 23:5). True sanctity (saintliness, holiness, purity) is one thing, and sanctimoniousness (pretended piety, religious hypocrisy) is another.

As Christians we must beware of being swallowed up and absorbed in the affairs of this world. Whatever we be, banker, farmer or lawyer, we will, of course, strive to do our duty and to do it well. “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as unto the Lord, and not unto men” (Col. 3:23). But we must take care that we do not permit our work to come between us and Christ. If we find that our temporal affairs are interfering with our Bible reading, prayer and meditation, and encroaching on our Sundays so that we do not have time for the Lord as we ought; we will choose being less rich and prosperous in this world rather than that our souls should not prosper. This may require real self-denial, but it is the way of true separation from the world. We are to be “temperate in all things” (I Cor. 9:25), even in things lawful. Anything that takes up too much of our time and attention so that we do not have sufficient time for the things of the Lord is to be eschewed. We are to “seek first the kingdom of God” (Matt. 6:33).

We are also commanded to “redeem the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:16). This means that we are to buy up our opportunities and invest them for eternity. Every moment of free time is to be used to the best advantage and not in idleness or other ways to no profit for the time to come. The divine fiat is, “Give attendance to reading” (I Tim. 4:13). This commandment is to be obeyed, not ignored. We should make ourselves very familiar with the Word, and also “hide” it in our hearts (Psa. 119:11). For this we should set apart a portion of each day for reading and meditating on the Holy Scriptures. In addition, we should read with diligence and care good books on the Bible written by accredited authors whom God has gifted to be teachers of His flock. If we plead lack of time then let us see that we make time, for we always have time for what we really want to do. Paul wrote Timothy requesting him: “...when thou comest, bring...the books, and especially the parchments” (II Tim. 4:13).

Of course it is no easy thing to “come out from” the world. It requires a constant struggle and exertion, incessant conflict and self-denial. To come decidedly out from the ways of the world and be unmistakably separate requires a real determination. But if our heart is right everything else will be right in time. We should set before our minds every day as grand realities, which they are, the matter of our soul’s eternal welfare: God, Christ, heaven, hell, death, judgment to come and eternity. Let us remind ourselves that what we do not see is just as real as what we do see, and ten thousand times more important. Armed with this faith we will regard this world as a mere shadow compared with the reality of “the world to come.” We will disdain its praise or blame, its enmity or rewards. Moses “esteemed the reproach of Christ greater



riches than the treasure of Egypt” and so “he forsook Egypt;” for “he endured as seeing him who is invisible” (Heb. 11:26). Dear friends, “the time is short;” “the end of all things is at hand,” the shadows are lengthening, the sun has nearly gone down. “The night cometh when no man can work” (John 9:4). The judgment will soon be set and “the books opened.” Are you ready for the great Judgment Day? Let us awake and “come out from the world” while “it is called today.” In a little while the things as we now see them will have passed away-no more “eating and drinking, feasting and frolicking, making and getting gain” (James 4:13). If these are the things our hearts have been set upon and we have pursued so ardently, what will we do when all have passed away forever? How could we ever think of being happy in heaven, a place of holiness and where worldliness has no place whatever!

O friends, consider these things more seriously than you have ever done before. Awake while there is yet time and “set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:2). Persevere in your separation from the world and be a most decided Christian. You will never regret having lived too holy and too separated a life.

## THE CROSS AND SELF

by Arthur W. Pink

*“Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any will come after Me let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.” -Matthew 16:24*

Before developing the theme of this verse let us comment on its terms. “If any”: the duty enjoined is for all who would join Christ’s followers and enlist under His banner. “If any will”: the Greek is very emphatic, signifying not only the consent of the will, but full purpose of heart, a determined resolution. “Come after Me”: as a servant subject to his Master, a scholar his Teacher, a soldier his Captain. “Deny”: the Greek means “deny utterly.” Deny himself: his sinful and corrupt nature. “And take up”: not passively bear or endure, but voluntarily assume, actively adopt. “His cross”: which is scorned by the world, hated by the flesh, but is the distinguishing mark of a real Christian. “And follow Me”: live as Christ lived-to the glory of God.

The immediate context is most solemn and striking. The Lord Jesus has just announced to His apostles, for the first time, His approaching death of humiliation (v 21). Peter was staggered, and said, “Pity Thyself, Lord” (v 22 mar.). That expressed the policy of the carnal mind. The way of the world is self-seeking and self-shielding. “Spare thyself” is the sum of its philosophy. But the doctrine of Christ is not “save thyself” but sacrifice thyself. Christ discerned in Peter’s counsel a temptation from Satan (v 23), and at once flung it from Him. Then turning to Peter, He said: Not only “must” Jesus go up to Jerusalem and die, but everyone who would be a follower of His must take up his cross (v 24). The “must” is as imperative in the one case as in the other. Mediatorially the cross of Christ stands alone, but experimentally it is shared by all who enter into life.

What is a “Christian”? One who holds membership in some earthly church? No. One who believes an orthodox creed? No. One who adopts a certain mode of conduct? No. What, then, is a Christian? He is one who has renounced self and received Christ Jesus as Lord (Col 2:6). He is one who takes Christ’s yoke upon him and learns of Him who is “meek and lowly in heart” (Matt 11:29). He is one who has been “called unto the fellowship of God’s Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor 1:9): fellowship in His obedience and suffering now, in His reward and glory in the endless future. There is no such thing as belonging to Christ and living to please self. Make no mistake on that point. “Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple,” (Luke 14:27) said Christ. And again He declared, “But whosoever shall [instead of denying himself] deny Me before men [not “unto” men: it is conduct, the walk which is here in view], him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven” (Matt 10:33).

The Christian life begins with an act of self-renunciation, and is continued by self-mortification (Rom 8:13). The first question of Saul of Tarsus, when Christ apprehended him, was, “Lord, what wouldst Thou have me to do?” The Christian life is likened unto a “race,” and the racer is called upon to “lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset” (Heb 12:2), which “sin” is in the love of self, the desire and determination to have our “own way” (Isa 53:6). The one great aim, end, task, set before the Christian is to follow Christ: to follow the example He has left us (1 Pet 2:21), and

He “pleased not Himself” (Rom 15:3). And there are difficulties in the way, obstacles in the path, the chief of which is SELF. Therefore this must be “denied.” This is the first step toward “following” Christ.

What does it mean for a man to utterly “deny himself”? First, it signifies the complete repudiation of his own goodness. It means ceasing to rest upon any works of our own to commend us to God. It means an unreserved acceptance of God’s verdict that “all our righteousnesses [our best performances] are as filthy rags” (Isa 64:6). It was at this point that Israel failed: “For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God” (Rom 10:3). But contrast the declaration of Paul: “And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness” (Phil 3:9).

For a man to utterly “deny himself” is to completely renounce his own wisdom. None can enter the kingdom of heaven except they become “as little children” (Matt 18:3). “Woe unto them that are wiser in their own eyes and prudent in their own sight” (Isa 5:21). “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” (Rom 1:21). When the Holy Spirit applies the Gospel in power to a soul, it is to the “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” (2 Cor 10:5). A wise motto for each Christian to adopt is “Lean not unto thine own understanding” (Pro 3:5).

For a man to utterly “deny himself” is to completely renounce his own strength. It is to have “no confidence in the flesh” (Phil 3:3). It is the heart bowing to Christ’s positive declaration “Without Me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5). It was at this point Peter failed: (Matt 26:33). “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Pro 16:18). How necessary it is, then, that we heed 1 Cor 10:12: “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall”! The secret of spiritual strength lies in realizing our personal weakness: (see Isa 40:29; 2 Cor 12:9). Then let us “be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 2:1).

For a man to utterly “deny himself” is to completely renounce his own will. The language of the unsaved is, “We will not have this Man to reign over us” (Luke 19:14). The attitude of the Christian is, “For to me to live is Christ” (Phil 1:21)- to honour, please, serve Him. To renounce our own wills means heeding the exhortation of Phil. 2:5, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus,” which is defined in the verses that immediately follow as that of self-abnegation. It is the practical recognition that “ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price” (1 Cor 6:19,20). It is saying with Christ, “Nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt” (Mark 14:36).

For a man to utterly “deny himself” is to completely renounce his own lusts or fleshly desires. “A man’s self is a bundle of idols” (Thomas Manton, Puritan), and those idols must be repudiated. Non-Christians are “lovers of their own selves” (2 Tim 3:1); but the one who has been regenerated by the Spirit says with Job, “I am vile” (40:4), “I abhor myself” (42:6). Of non-Christians it is written, “all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s” (Phil 2:21); but of God’s saints it is recorded, “they loved not their own lives unto the death” (Rev 12:11). The grace of God is “Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world” (Titus 2:12).

This denial of self which Christ requires from all His followers is to be universal. There is to be no reserve, no exceptions made: “Make not provision for the flesh, to the lusts” (Rom 13:14). It is to be constant, not occasional: “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me” (Luke 9:23). It is to be spontaneous, not forced, performed gladly, not reluctantly: “And whatsoever ye do, do heartily, as to the Lord” (Col 3:23). O how wickedly has the standard which God sets before us been lowered! How it condemns the easy-going, flesh-pleasing, worldly lives of so many who profess (but vainly), that they are “Christians”!

“And take up his cross.” This refers to the cross not as an object of faith, but as an experience in the soul. The legal benefits of Calvary are received through believing, when the guilt of sin is cancelled, but the experimental virtues of Christ’s Cross are only enjoyed as we are, in a practical way, “made conformable unto his death” (Phil 3:10). It is only as we really apply the cross to our daily lives, regulate our conduct by its principles, that it becomes efficacious over the power of indwelling sin. There can be no resurrection where there is no death, and there can be no practical walking “in newness of life” until we “bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus” (2 Cor 4:10). The “cross” is the badge, the evidence, of Christian discipleship. It is his “cross” and not his creed, which distinguishes a true follower of Christ from religious worldlings.

Now in the New Testament the “cross” stands for definite realities. First, it expresses the world’s hatred. The Son of God came here not to judge, but to save; not to punish but to redeem. He came here “full of grace and truth.” He was ever at the disposal of others: ministering to the needy, feeding the hungry, healing the sick, delivering the demon-possessed, raising the dead. He was full of compassion: gentle as a lamb; entirely sinless. He brought with Him glad tidings of great joy. He sought the outcast, preached to the poor, yet scorned not the rich; He pardoned sinners. And how was He

received? What welcome did men accord Him? They “despised and rejected” Him (Isa 53:3). He declared, “They hated Me without a cause” (John 15:25). They thirsted for His blood. No ordinary death would appease them. They demanded that He should be crucified. The Cross, then, was the manifestation of the world’s inveterate hatred of the Christ of God.

The world has not altered, any more than the Ethiopian has changed his skin or the leopard his spots. The world and Christ are still in open antagonism. Hence it is written, “Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4). It is impossible to walk with Christ and commune with Him until we have separated from the world. To walk with Christ necessarily involves sharing his humiliation: “Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach” (Heb 13:13). This is what Moses did: (see Heb 11:24-26). The closer I am walking with Christ, the more shall I be misunderstood (1 John 3:2), ridiculed (Job 12:4) and detested by the world (John 15:19). Make no mistake here it is utterly impossible to keep in with the world and have fellowship with the Holy Christ. Thus, to “take up” my “cross” means, that I deliberately court the enmity of the world through my refusing to be “conformed” to it (Rom 12:2). But what matters the world’s frowns if I am enjoying the Saviour’s smiles!

Taking up my “cross” means a life voluntarily surrendered to God. As the act of wicked men, the death of Christ was a murder; but as the act of Christ Himself, it was a voluntary sacrifice, offering Himself to God. It was also an act of obedience to God. In John 10:18 He said, “No man taketh it [His life] from Me, but I lay it down of Myself.” And why did He? His very next words tell us: “This commandment have I received of My Father.” The cross was the supreme demonstration of Christ’s obedience. Herein He was our Exemplar. Once again we quote Philippians 2:5, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” In what follows we see the Beloved of the Father taking upon Him the form of a Servant, and becoming “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Now the obedience of Christ must be the obedience of the Christian—voluntary, glad, unreserved, continuous. If that obedience involves shame and suffering, reproach and loss, we must not flinch, but set our face “like a flint” (Isa 50:7). The cross is more than the object of the Christian’s faith, it is the badge of discipleship, the principle by which his life is to be regulated. The “cross” stands for surrender and dedication to God: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, your reasonable service” (Rom 12:1).

The “cross” stands for vicarious service and suffering. Christ laid down His life for others, and His followers are called on to be willing to do the same: “We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 John 3:16); that is the inevitable logic of Calvary. We are called to follow Christ’s example, to the fellowship of His sufferings, to be partners in His service. As Christ made himself “of no reputation” (Phil 2:7) we must not. As He “came not to be ministered unto, but to minister” (Matt 20:28), so must we. As He “pleased not Himself” (Rom 15:3), no more must we. As He ever thought of others, so must we: “Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves in the body” (Heb 13:3).

“For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for My sake, shall find it” (Matt 16:25). Words almost identical with these are found again in Matthew 10:39, Mark 8:35, Luke 9:24; 17:33, John 12:25. Surely, such repetition argues the deep importance of our noting and heeding this saying of Christ’s. He died that we might live (John 12:24), so must we (John 12:25). Like Paul we must be able to say, “Neither count I my life dear unto myself” (Acts 20:24). The “life” that is lived for the gratification of self in this world, is “lost” for eternity; the life that is sacrificed to self-interests and yielded to Christ, will be “found” again, and preserved through eternity.

A young university graduate, with brilliant prospects, responded to the call of Christ to a life of service for Him in India among the lowest caste of the natives. His friends exclaimed, What a tragedy! A life thrown away! Yes, “lost” so far as this world is concerned, but “found” again in the world to come!

## **TIMELY WARNING!**

Charles H. Spurgeon

*“Cursed be the man before the Lord, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho”—Joshua 6:26*

Since he was cursed who rebuilt Jericho, much more the man who labours to restore Popery among us. In our father's days the gigantic walls of Popery fell by the power of their faith, the perseverance of their efforts, and the blast of their gospel trumpets: and now there are some who would rebuild that accursed system upon its old foundations. O Lord, be pleased to thwart their unrighteous endeavours, and pull down every stone which they build. It should be a serious business with us to be thoroughly purged of every error which may have a tendency to foster the spirit of Popery, and when we have made a clean sweep at home we should seek in every way to oppose its all too rapid spread abroad in the church and in the world. This last can be done in secret by fervent prayer, and in public by decided testimony. We must warn with judicious boldness those who are inclined towards the errors of Rome; we must instruct the young in Gospel truth, and tell them of the black doings of Popery in the olden times. We must aid in spreading the light more thoroughly through the land, for priests, like owls, hate the daylight. Are we doing all we can for Jesus and the Gospel? If not, our negligence plays into the hands of priestcraft. What are we doing to spread the Bible, which is the Pope's bane and poison? Are we casting abroad good, sound Gospel writings? Luther once said, "The devil hates goose quills," and doubtless, he has good reason; for ready writers, by the Holy Spirit's blessing, have done his kingdom much damage. If the thousands who will read this short word will do all they can to hinder the rebuilding of this accursed Jericho, the Lord's glory shall speed among the sons of men. Reader, what can you do? What will you do?

### ***Other Great Minds on Roman Catholicism***

ADAM SMITH: "The most formidable combination that was ever formed against the reason, liberty and happiness of mankind."

CHARLES DICKENS: "The most horrible means of political and social degradation left in the world."

CANON MELVILLE: "Make peace if you will with Popery; receive it in your hearts. But be certain, as certain as there is a heaven above you and a God over you, that the Popery thus honoured and embraced is the very Popery that was loathed and degraded by the holiest of your fathers; the same in haughtiness, the same in intolerance, which lorded it over kings, assumed the prerogative of Deity, crushed human liberty and slew the saints of God."

### The British Isles in the Nineties: A Mighty Famine in the Land

We praise and thank God for men such as C. H. Spurgeon who stood "in the gap" for the faith. Today our need is at the house of God (see 1 Peter 4:17), where there must be a recovery in the worship of God as ordered by the Creator. The Lord Jesus said of the prodigal in a famine-stricken land 'and he began to be in want.' The Shorter Catechism teaches us wisely 'Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.'

Our sovereign Lord and Creator demands our obedience. In Ulster we remember with joy the breaking of the boom in Londonderry. Today there is a boom across the minds of men. It consists of atheistic education, anti-Christian media propaganda, Papal tradition, 'evangelical' confusion and Pelagian teaching. Let us remember that our unchanging God is able to break the boom again. May our nation know the salt and light of God's Word providentially directing its paths.

*"Indifference in religion, is the first step to apostasy from religion."*—William Secker

*"The humble Christian is the wary Christian."*—William Gurnall

# THE TRUE CHURCH

J. C. Ryle, Bishop of Liverpool

I want you to belong to the one true Church: to the Church outside of which there is no salvation. I do not ask where you go on a Sunday; I only ask, "Do you belong to the one true Church?"

Where is this one true Church? What is this one true Church like? What are the marks by which this one true Church may be known? You may well ask such questions. Give me your attention, and I will provide you with some answers.

The one true Church is composed of all believers in the Lord Jesus. It is made up of all God's elect-of all converted men and women-of all true Christians. In whomsoever we can discern the election of God the Father, the sprinkling of the blood of God the Son, the sanctifying work of God the Spirit, in that person we see a member of Christ's true Church.

It is a Church of which all the members have the same marks. They are all born again of the Spirit; they all possess "repentance towards God, faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ," and holiness of life and conversation. They all hate sin, and they all love Christ. They worship differently, and after various fashions; some worship with a form of prayer, and some with none; some worship kneeling, and some standing; but they all worship with one heart. They are all led by one Spirit; they all build upon one foundation; they all draw their religion from one single book-that is the Bible. They are all joined to one great center-that is Jesus Christ. They all even now can say with one heart, "Hallelujah"; and they can all respond with one heart and voice, "Amen and Amen."

It is a Church which is dependent upon no ministers upon earth, however much it values those who preach the gospel to its members. The life of its members does not hang upon church membership or baptism or the Lord's Supper-although they highly value these things, when they are to be had. But it has only one Great Head, one Shepherd, one chief Bishop-and that is Jesus Christ. He alone, by His Spirit, admits the members of this Church, though ministers may show the door. Till He opens the door no man on earth can open it-neither bishops, nor presbyters, nor convocations, nor synods. Once let a man repent and believe the gospel, and that moment he becomes a member of this Church. Like the penitent thief, he may have no opportunity of being baptized; but he has that which is far better than any water-baptism-the baptism of the Spirit. He may not be able to receive the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper; but he eats Christ's body and drinks Christ's blood by faith every day he lives, and no minister on earth can prevent him. He may be excommunicated by ordained men, and cut off from the outward ordinances of the professing Church; but all the ordained men in the world cannot shut him out of the true Church.

It is a Church whose existence does not depend on forms, ceremonies, cathedrals, churches, chapels, pulpits, fonts, vestments, organs, endowments, money, kings, governments, magistrates or any act of favor whatsoever from the hand of man. It has often lived on and continued when all these things have been taken from it. It has often been driven into the wilderness, or into dens and caves of the earth, by those who ought to have been its friends. Its existence depends on nothing but the presence of Christ and His Spirit; and they being ever with it, the Church cannot die.

This is the Church to which the scriptural titles of present honor and privilege, and the promises of future glory especially belong; this is the Body of Christ; this is the flock of Christ; this is the household of faith and the family of God; this is God's building, God's foundation and the temple of the Holy Ghost. This is the Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven; this is the royal priesthood, the chosen generation, the peculiar people, the purchased possession, the habitation of God, the light of the world, the salt and the wheat of the earth; this is the "holy catholic Church" of the Apostles' Creed; this is the "One catholic and apostolic Church" of Nicene Creed; this is that Church to which the Lord Jesus promises "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," and to which He says, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 16:18; 28:20).

This is the only Church which possesses true unity. Its members are entirely agreed on all the weightier matters of religion, for they are all taught by one Spirit. About God and Christ and the Spirit and sin and their own hearts and faith and repentance and necessity of holiness and the value of the Bible and the importance of prayer and the resurrection and judgment to come-about all these points they are of one mind. Take three or four of them, strangers to one another, from the remotest corners of the earth; examine them separately on these points: you will find them all of one judgment.

This is the only Church which possesses true sanctity. Its members are all holy. They are not merely holy by profession, holy in name and holy in the judgment of charity; they are all holy in act and deed and reality and life and truth. They are all more or less conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. No unholy man belongs to this Church.

This is the only Church which is truly catholic. It is not the Church of any one nation or people: its members are to be found in every part of the world where the gospel is received and believed. It is not confined within the limits of any one country, or pent up within the pale of any particular form or outward government. In it there is no difference between Jew and Greek, black man and white, Episcopalian and Presbyterian-but faith in Christ is all. Its members will be gathered from north and south and east and west and will be of every name and tongue-but all one in Jesus Christ.

This is the only Church which is truly apostolic. It is built on the foundation laid by the Apostles, and holds the doctrines which they preached. The two grand objects at which its members aim, are apostolic faith and apostolic practice; and they consider the man who talks of following the Apostles without possessing these two things to be no better than sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

This is the only Church which is certain to endure unto the end. Nothing can altogether overthrow and destroy it. Its members may be persecuted, oppressed, imprisoned, beaten, beheaded, burned; but the true Church is never altogether extinguished; it rises again from its afflictions; it lives on through fire and water. When crushed in one land it springs up in another. The Pharaohs, the Herods, the Neros, the Bloody Marys, have labored in vain to put down this Church; they slay their thousands, and then pass away and go to their own place. The true Church outlives them all, and sees them buried each in his turn. It is an anvil that has broken many a hammer in this world, and will break many a hammer still; it is a bush which is often burning, and yet is not consumed.

This is the only Church of which no one member can perish. Once enrolled in the lists of this Church, sinners are safe for eternity; they are never cast away. The election of God the Father, the continual intercession of God the Son, the daily renewing and sanctifying power of God the Holy Ghost, surround and fence them in like a garden enclosed. Not one born of Christ's mystical Body shall ever be broken; not one lamb of Christ's flock shall ever be plucked out of His hand.

This is the Church which does the work of Christ upon earth. Its members are a little flock, and few in number compared with the children of the world: one or two here, and two or three there-a few in this parish and a few in that. But these are they who shake the universe; these are they who change the fortunes of kingdoms by their prayers; these are they who are the active workers for spreading knowledge of pure religion and undefiled; these are the life-blood of a country, the shield, the defense, the stay, and the support of any nation to which they belong.

This is the Church which shall be truly glorious at the end. When all earthly glory is passed away then shall this Church be presented without spot before God the Father's throne. Thrones, principalities, and powers upon earth shall come to nothing-dignities and offices and endowments shall all pass away; but the Church of the first-born shall shine as the stars at the last, and be presented with joy before the Father's throne, in the day of Christ's appearing. When the Lord's jewels are made up, and the manifestation of the sons of God takes place, Episcopacy, and Presbyterianism, and Congregationalism will not be mentioned; one Church only will be named, and that is the Church of the elect.

Reader, this is the true Church to which a man must belong, if he would be saved. Till you belong to this, you are nothing better than a lost soul. You may have the form, the husk, the skin and the shell of religion, but you have not got the substance and the life. Yes, you may have countless outward privileges: you may enjoy great light and knowledge-but if you do not belong to the Body of Christ, your light and knowledge and privileges will not save your soul. Alas, for the ignorance that prevails on this point! Men fancy if they join this church or that church, and become communicants, and go through certain forms, that all must be right with their souls. It is an utter delusion; it is a gross mistake. All were not Israel who were called Israel, and all are not members of Christ's Body who profess themselves Christian. Take notice; you may be a staunch Episcopalian or Presbyterian or Independent or Baptist or Wesleyan or Plymouth Brother-and yet not belong to the true Church. And if you do not, it will be better at last if you had never been born.

### ***Christ the Foundation of His Church – Isaac Watts***

*Behold the sure foundation stone, Which God in Zion lays,  
To build our heavenly hopes upon, And His eternal praise.*

*Chosen of God, to sinners dear, Let saints adore the name;  
They trust their whole salvation here, Nor shall they suffer shame.*

*The foolish builders, scribe and priest, Reject it with disdain;  
Yet on this rock the church shall rest, And envy rage in vain.*

*What though the gates of hell withstood; Yet must this building rise:  
'Tis thine own work, almighty God, And wondrous in our eyes.*

