

Free Grace Broadcaster

ISSUE 250

SELF-EXAMINATION

Examine yourselves.

2 Corinthians 13:5

Our Purpose

*“To humble the pride of man,
to exalt the grace of God in salvation,
and to promote real holiness in heart and life.”*

Free Grace Broadcaster

SELF-EXAMINATION

250

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SELF-EXAMINATION EXPLAINED

Thomas Watson (c. 1620-1686)

Self-examination is a duty of great importance. It is negotiating with one's own heart: "I commune with mine own heart" (Psa 77:6). David did put interrogatories¹ to himself. Self-examination [means] setting up a court in [your] conscience and keeping a register there that by strict scrutiny² a man may know how things stand between God and his own soul.

Self-examination is a spiritual inquisition, a bringing one's self to trial. A good Christian doth, as it were, begin the Day of Judgment here in his own soul.

Self-searching is a heart-anatomy. As a surgeon, when he makes a dissection in the body, discovers the *intestina*—the inward parts, the heart, liver, arteries—so a Christian anatomizeth himself. He searcheth what is flesh and what is spirit, what is sin and what is grace. "My spirit made diligent search" (Psa 77:6). As the woman in the Gospel [of Luke] did light a candle and search for her lost groat³ (Luk 15:8), so conscience "is the candle of the LORD" (Pro 20:27). By the light of this candle, a Christian must search his soul if he can find any grace there.

The rule by which a Christian must try himself is the Word of God. Fancy⁴ and opinion are false rules to go by. We must judge of our spiritual condition by the canon of Scripture. David calls this "a lamp unto his feet" (Psa 119:105). Let the Word be the umpire⁵ to decide the controversy whether we have grace or no. We judge colors by the sun; so, we must judge the estate of souls by the light of Scripture.

Self-examination is a great, incumbent⁶ duty. It requires self-excitation.⁷ It cannot possibly be done without offering violence⁸ to ourselves. The duty in itself is difficult because,

1. *It is a work of self-reflection.* it lies most with the heart. It is hard

¹ **interrogatories** – *Law*: questions put to a person that must be answered under oath.

² **scrutiny** – examining something closely.

³ **groat** – English silver coin issued 1351-1662, worth four pennies.

⁴ **fancy** – imagination.

⁵ **umpire** – third person called upon to decide a matter.

⁶ **incumbent** – necessary as an obligation.

⁷ **self-excitation** – motivating one's self; stirring up one's self.

⁸ **violence** – not physical injury, but intensity of emotion, strength, passion.

to look inward. External acts of religion are easy to achieve. To lift up the eye to heaven, to bow the knee, to read a prayer—this requires no more labor than for a Catholic to count his beads; but to examine a man's self, to turn in upon his own soul, to take the heart as a watch all in pieces to see what is defective is not easy. Reflective acts are hardest. The eye can see everything but itself. It is easy to spy the faults of others, but hard to find out our own.

2. *It is difficult because of self-love.* As ignorance blinds, so self-love flatters. Every man is ready to think the best of himself. What Solomon saith of love to our neighbor is most true of self-love: it “hides a multitude of evil” (Pro 10:12). A man looking upon himself in the mirror of self-love [finds that] his virtues appear greater than they are and his sins lesser. Self-love makes one excuse what is amiss⁹ rather than examine it (Exo 4:3).

As examination is in itself difficult, so it is a work that we are not easily brought to. That which causeth a backwardness¹⁰ to self-examination is,

1. *They are conscious of guilt.* Sin clamors inwardly, and men are loth¹¹ to look into their hearts, lest they should find that which should trouble them. It is little pleasure to read the *handwriting* on the wall of conscience (See Daniel 5:27). Tradesmen that are sinking in their estates are loth to look over their books or cast up their accounts, lest they should find their estates low. [Likewise, many Christians] loth to look into their guilty hearts, lest they should find something there that should affright them, as Moses was affrighted at the sight of the *rod* turned into a serpent (Exo 4:3).

2. *They have foolish, presumptuous¹² hopes.* They fancy their estate to be good; and while they weigh themselves in the balance of presumption, they pass for current.¹³ Many take their salvation on trust.¹⁴ The foolish virgins thought they had oil in their lamps, as well as the wise (Mat 25). Some are not *sure* of their salvation, but *secure*. If one were to buy a piece of land, he would not take it upon trust, but examine the title. How confident are some of salvation, yet never examine their title to heaven!

3. *They rest in the good opinion of others.* How vain is that! Alas, one

⁹ **amiss** – wrong; out of order.

¹⁰ **backwardness** – mental attitude of opposition or dislike.

¹¹ **loth** – unwilling.

¹² **presumptuous** – supposing something to be the case without proof.

¹³ **pass for current** – are considered truth and authentic.

¹⁴ **Many take...trust** – that is, trust in themselves, not Christ.

may be gold and pearl in the eye of others, yet God may judge him *reprobate*¹⁵ *silver*. Others may think him a saint, and God may write him down in His black-book. Judas was looked upon by the rest of the apostles as a true believer. They would have been ready to have given their hands to this certificate,¹⁶ yet he was a traitor. Standers by can but see the outward behavior; they cannot tell what evil is in the heart. Fair streams may run on the top of a river, but vermin¹⁷ may lay at the bottom.

4. *They do not believe Scripture*. The Scripture saith, “The heart is deceitful above all things” (Jer 17:9). Solomon said there were four things too wonderful for him that he could not know (Pro 30:19). He might have added a fifth: *the way of man’s heart*. The heart is the greatest impostor. It will be ready to put one off with seeming grace, instead of saving [grace]. The heart will persuade that a slight tear is repentance [and] a lazy desire is faith. Now because the generality of people does not believe that there is such fallacy in their hearts, they are slow to examine them. This natural backwardness in us to self-reflection should cause us to offer the more violence to ourselves in making a thorough disquisition¹⁸ and search of our hearts.

O that I might prevail with Christians to take pains with themselves in this great work of examination! Their salvation depends on it. It is the note of a harlot [that] she is seldom at home: “Her feet abide not in her house: Now is she without, now in the streets” (Pro 7:11-12). It is a sign of a harlot-professor to be altogether abroad, spying the faults of others, but never at home with his own heart. O let us try our hearts as we do gold by the touchstone.¹⁹ Let us examine our *sins* and, finding out this leaven, burn it. Let us examine our grace, [to see if] it be the right kind. One went into the field to gather herbs, but he gathered wild gourds, and then death was in the pot (2Ki 4:40). So many think they have grace—the right herb. But it proves a wild gourd and brings death and damnation.

That we may offer violence to ourselves in this great business of examination, let these few things be seriously weighed:

1. *Without self-examination, we can never know how it is with us*. If we should die presently, we cannot tell what coast we should sail to,

¹⁵ **reprobate** – weighed and found lacking; rejected.

¹⁶ **given...certificate** – act of responsible persons providing evidence for something.

¹⁷ **vermin** – animals of a loathsome appearance or character, originally applied to reptiles and slinking animal.

¹⁸ **disquisition** – investigation; examination.

¹⁹ **touchstone** – mineral used for testing the quality of gold.

whether to hell or heaven. It is reported [that] Socrates²⁰ [made] this speech when he was going out of the world: “I am now to die, and the gods know whether I shall be happy or miserable.” That man who is ignorant of the state of his soul must needs have the trembling at the heart, as Cain had a shaking in his flesh. By a serious scrutiny of our hearts, we come to know to which prince we belong—the prince of peace or the prince of the air.

2. *If we will not try ourselves, God will try us* He will examine us as the chief captain did Paul—*by scourging* (Act 22:24). He will ask that question as Christ [did]: “Whose image and superscription is this?” And if we cannot show Him His own image, He will reject us.

3. *There is secret corruption within, which will never be found out but by searching* There is in the heart (as Augustine saith) *hidden pollution*. When Pharaoh’s steward accused Joseph’s brethren of having the cup, they dared to have sworn they had not the cup in their sacks. Little doth a man know what atheism, pride, uncleanness is in his heart until he searcheth.

4. *The great advantage that will accumulate to us* The benefit is great whichsoever way things turn. If upon examination we find that we have not grace in truth, then the mistake is discovered, and the danger prevented. If we find that we have grace, we may take the comfort of it. How glad was he that had “found the pearl of great price”? He that upon search finds that he hath but the least degree of grace is like one that hath found his box of evidences: he is heir to all the promises and in a state of salvation!

And that we may go on the more successfully in this work, let us desire God to help us find out our hearts: “That which I see not teach thou me” (Job 34:32). Lord, take off the veil; show me my heart; let me not perish through mistake or go to hell with hope of heaven.

From *The Christian Soldier, or Heaven Taken by Storm*, ed. Armstrong,
Second American Edition (New York: Robert Moore, 1816),
55-56; in the public domain.

Thomas Watson (c. 1620-1686): English Nonconformist Puritan preacher and author; possibly born in Yorkshire, England, UK.



Self-examination is a necessary duty, belonging to everyone in the church,
and requires much diligence in the performing of it.—*Stephen Charnock*

²⁰ **Socrates** (469-399 B.C.) – Greek philosopher.

EXAMINE YOURSELVES

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.
Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you,
except ye be reprobates?—2 Corinthians 13:5*

THE Corinthians were the critics of the apostles' age. They took to themselves great credit for skill in learning and in language, and as most men do who are wise in their own esteem, they made a wrong use of their wisdom and learning: they began to criticize the apostle Paul. They criticized his style. "His letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible" (2Co 10:10). Nay, not content with that, they went so far as to deny his apostleship. For once in his life, the apostle Paul found himself compelled to "become a fool in glorying"; for, says he, "ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing" (2Co 12:11). The apostle wrote two letters to them. In both, he is compelled to upbraid¹ them while he defends himself, and when he had fully disarmed his opponents and wrested the sword of their criticism out of their hands, he pointed it at their own breasts, saying, "'Examine yourselves.' You have disputed my doctrine: examine 'whether ye be in the faith.' You have made me prove my apostleship: 'prove your own selves' (2Co 13:5). Use the powers that you have been so wrongfully exercising upon me for a little season upon your own characters!"

And now, my dear friends, the fault of the Corinthians is the fault of the present age. Let not any one of you, as he goeth out of the house of God, say unto his neighbor, "How did you like the preacher? What did you think of the sermon this morning?" Is that the question you should ask as you retire from God's house? Do you come here to judge God's servants? I know it is but a small thing unto us to be judged of man's judgment, for our judgment is of the Lord our God. To our own Master we shall stand or fall. But, O men, ye should ask a question more profitable unto yourselves than this. Ye should say, "Did not such-and-such a speech strike me? Did not that exactly con-

¹ **upbraid** – criticize.

sort with my condition? Was that not a rebuke that I deserve, a word of reproof or of exhortation? Let me take unto myself that which I have heard, and let me not judge the preacher, for he is God's messenger to my soul. I came up here to be judged of God's Word and not to judge God's Word myself." But since there is in all our hearts a great backwardness to self-examination, I shall lay out myself for a few minutes this morning, earnestly to exhort myself and all of you to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith...

First, I shall expound my text, though in truth it needs no exposition. It is very simple. Yet by studying and pondering it, our hearts may become more deeply affected with its touching appeal. "*Examine yourselves.*" Who does not understand that word? And yet, by a few suggestions you may know its meaning more perfectly.

"Examine" is a *scholastic* idea. A boy has been to school a certain time, and his master puts him through his paces. [He] questions him to see whether he has made any progress, whether he knows anything. Christian, catechize your heart! Question it to see whether it has been growing in grace. Question it to see if it knows anything of vital godliness or not. Examine it: pass your heart through a stern examination as to what it does know and what it does not know by the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

Again, it is a *military* idea. "Examine yourselves," or renew yourselves. Go through the rank and file of your actions and examine all your motives. Just as the captain on review day is not content with merely surveying the men from a distance, but must look at all their accoutrements,² so do you look well to yourselves. Examine yourselves with the most scrupulous³ care.

And once again, it is a *legal* idea. "Examine yourselves." You have seen the witness in the box, when the lawyer has been examining him or, as we have it, cross-examining him. Now, mark: never was there a rogue⁴ less trustworthy or more deceitful than your own heart. And in the way you cross-examine a dishonest person—one that hath by-ends to serve⁵—you set traps for him to try and find him out in a lie. So do with your own heart. Question it backward and forward, this way and that way; for if there be a loophole for escape, if there be any pretense for self-deception, rest assured your treacherous heart will

² **accoutrements** – military dress and arms; equipment for military service.

³ **scrupulous** – careful in obedience to one's conscience.

⁴ **rogue** – dishonest person.

⁵ **by-ends** – secret purposes for personal gain.

be ready enough to avail itself of it.

And yet once more: it is a *traveler's* idea. I find in the original [that] it has this meaning: "Go right through yourselves." As a traveler, if he has to write a book about a country, is not content to go around its borders merely but goes, as it were, from Dan to Beersheba, right through the country. He climbs the hilltop, where he bathes his forehead in the sunshine. He goes down into the deep valleys, where he can only see the blue sky like a strip between the lofty summits of the mountains. He is not content to gaze upon the broad river unless he traces it to the spring whence it rises. He will not be satisfied with viewing the products of the surface of the earth, but he must discover the minerals that lie within its bowels. Now, do the same with your heart. "Examine yourselves." Go right through yourselves from the beginning to the end. Stand not only on the mountains of your public character but go into the deep valleys of your private life. Be not content to sail on the broad river of your outward actions but go follow back the narrow rill⁶ until you discover your secret motive. Look not only at your performance, which is but the product of the soil, but dig into your heart and examine the vital principle. "Examine yourselves." This is a very big word: a word that needs thinking over. And I am afraid there be very few, if any of us, who ever come up to the full weight of this solemn exhortation: "Examine yourselves."

There is another word you will see a little further on, if you will kindly look at the text. "*Prove* your own selves." That means more than self-examination; let me try to show the difference between the two. A man is about to buy a horse. He examines it. He looks at it. He thinks that possibly he may find some flaw, and therefore he carefully examines it. But after he has examined it, if he be a prudent man, he says to the person of whom he is about to buy, "I must prove this horse. Will you let me have it for a week, for a month, or for some given time, that I may prove the animal before I actually invest in him?"

You see, there is more in proof than in examination. It is a deeper word and goes to the very root and quick⁷ of the matter. I saw but yesterday an illustration of this. A ship, before she is launched, is examined. When launched, she is carefully looked at; yet before she is allowed to go far out to sea, she takes a trial trip. She is proved and tried; and when she has roughed it a little, and it has been discovered

⁶ **rill** – small brook; streamlet.

⁷ **root and quick** – source and vital part.

that she will obey the helm,⁸ that the engines will work correctly, and that all is in right order, she goes out on her long voyages. Now, “*prove yourselves.*” Do not merely sit in your closet and look at yourselves alone but go out into this busy world and see what kind of piety⁹ you have. Remember, many a man’s religion will stand examination that will not stand proof. We may sit at home and look at our religion and say, “Well, I think this will do!” It is like cotton prints that you can buy in sundry shops.¹⁰ they are warranted fast colors,¹¹ and so they seem when you look at them; but they are not washable when you get them home. There is many a man’s religion like that. It is good enough to look at, and it has got the “warranted” stamped upon it; but when it comes out into actual daily life, the colors soon begin to run, and the man discovers that the thing was not what he took it to be. You know, in Scripture, we have an account of certain very foolish men that would not go to a great supper; but, foolish as they were, there was one of them who said, “I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them” (Luk 14:19). Thus, he had at least worldly wisdom, enough to prove his oxen. [In the same way,] prove yourselves. Try to plough in the furrows of duty: see whether you can be accustomed to the yoke of gospel servitude. Be not ashamed to put yourselves through your paces. Try yourself in the furnace of daily life, lest haply¹² the mere examination of the chamber should detect you to be a cheat, and you should prove to be a castaway after all. “Examine yourselves...prove your own selves.”

There is a sentence that I omitted, namely, this one: “Examine yourselves, *whether ye be in the faith.*” “Oh,” says one, “you may examine me whether I am in the faith. I am an orthodox Christian, fully up to the standard, good genuine weight; there is no fear whatever of my coming up to the mark and going a little beyond it too.” Ah, but, my friend...he that lives by faith; he who feels that faith operates upon him and is to him a living principle; he who realizes that faith is his dwelling place, that there he can abide, that it is the very atmosphere he breathes and the very girdle of his loins to strengthen him—such a man is *in* the faith. But, we repeat again, all the orthodoxy in the world, apart from its effect upon the heart as a vital principle, *will not save a man.* “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith.”

⁸ **obeys the helm** – responds properly to the rudder, by which a ship is steered.

⁹ **piety** – respect and love for God manifested in obedience and devotion.

¹⁰ **sundry shops** – shops that sell different kinds of goods; general stores.

¹¹ **warranted fast colors** – colors guaranteed to keep their original hue without fading.

¹² **haply** – perhaps; it may be.

“Know ye not your own selves?” If you do not, you have neglected your proper study! What avails all else that you do know, if you know not yourself? You have been roaming abroad, while the richest treasure was lying at home! You have been busying yourself with irrelevant affairs, while the main business has been neglected and ruined. “Know ye not your own selves?” And especially know ye not this fact, that Jesus Christ must be in your heart, formed and living there, or else ye are reprobates?¹³ That is, ye are worthless persons, vain pretenders, spurious¹⁴ professors! Your religion is but a vanity and a show. “Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the LORD hath rejected them” (Jer 6:30).

Now, what is it to have Jesus Christ in you? The Roman Catholic hangs the cross on his bosom; the true Christian carries the cross in his heart. And a cross inside the heart, my friends, is one of the sweetest cures for a cross on the back. If you have a cross in your heart—Christ crucified in you, the hope of glory—all the cross of this world’s troubles will seem to you light enough, and you will easily be able to sustain it. Christ in the heart means Christ believed in, Christ beloved, Christ trusted, Christ espoused, Christ communed with, Christ as our daily food, and ourselves as the temple and palace wherein Jesus Christ daily walks. Ah, there are many here that are total strangers to the meaning of this phrase. They do not know what it is to have Jesus Christ in them. Though ye know a little about Christ on Calvary, ye know nothing about Christ in the heart. Now, remember, Christ on Calvary will save no man unless Christ be in the heart. The Son of Mary, born in the manger, will not save a soul, unless He be also born in your hearts and live there—your joy, your strength, and your consolation. “Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”

From a sermon delivered on Sabbath morning, October 10, 1858,
at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892): Influential English Baptist preacher; born at Kelvedon, Essex, England, UK.



Were men more concerned as to their lot and place in the other world, they would be less concerned about the vain pleasures, amusements, and profits of this world.—*Thomas Boston*

¹³ **reprobates** – morally corrupted ones, rejected by God.

¹⁴ **spurious** – resembling but lacking the true quality of; counterfeit.

EXAMINE YOUR FAITH

Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635-1711)

FAITH is the soul of Christianity. Whoever is in error here, errs unto his eternal damnation. Many, having a false notion concerning this, perish with a false peace. Others spend their days in sorrow, being fearful that they do not possess true faith, whereas, being true believers, they have reason to go on their way rejoicing. It is therefore necessary to distinguish in the clearest possible manner between true and temporal faith. May the Lord grant me grace and ability to do so.

One should not imagine that true faith and temporal faith resemble each other so closely that they can scarcely be distinguished from each other, merely differing in degree and duration. They differ from each other in their essential nature. The difference between them is comparable to the difference between death and life, darkness and light. The difficulty in distinguishing between them is to be found in man, however, and in the manner in which he discriminates¹ in applying this to himself. A true believer, having received light to distinguish between various matters, can be more readily convinced that he possesses true faith than a temporal believer of the contrary. For the temporal believer is ignorant of the true essence and unique nature of saving faith, even though he is able to discourse about it on the basis of God's Word, as well as by means of what he has read and heard from God's children who have spoken or written about it.

We wish to pursue this further and demonstrate the necessity of self-examination: whoever you are, as you read or hear this read, I ask you—give your answer to an omniscient God—what do you say about yourself? Are you a true believer or not? Come, search yourself closely and examine yourself, for:

First, you are at this present moment either a child of God or a child of Satan. You cannot be both at once, neither can you be neutral, as there is no third option. Impress this upon your heart, regardless of how prominent or despised you are, or how blessed or wretched you are. Is it not worth the effort to examine yourself as to who you are? Should one be careless in such a weighty matter? For

¹ **discriminates** – distinguishes.

such is the practice of foolish virgins, upon whose end we should reflect.

Secondly, not those who are baptized, and not all who attend church and partake of the Lord's Supper are true believers. Yes, only a few, and by far the smallest number of them are true believers on the way to eternal felicity.² Think of a multitude as you would find in the marketplace where people can be seen mingling together as ants—or as you would find gathered in a filled church. While doing so, consider the following: Simon the sorcerer was baptized (Act 8:13); the guest without the wedding garment sat at the table (Mat 22:11); half of the virgins were foolish (Mat 25:2). Only few are chosen (Mat 20:16). Only few find the narrow way and enter through the narrow gate, while there are many who are on the broad way who, through the wide gate, run to their damnation (Mat 7:13-14). And thus, our focus is upon *you*—and should you not ask yourself what hope you are entertaining about yourself? “Lord, is it I?” (Mat 26:22); “Master, is it I?” (v. 25).

Thirdly, it is most detrimental³ to neglect self-examination and the searching of one's heart. Such neglect holds man captive in the sleep of carelessness. It causes him to waste time. It renders the means of grace useless and impotent. It hardens his heart against all the threatenings and judgments of God. It holds him captive to the world and to sin; yes, it is the key whereby he closes heaven and opens hell for himself.

Fourthly, self-examination is very beneficial. It causes one to become conscious of the evils that dwell in the heart. It causes one to become acquainted with the avenging justice of God. It causes one to become concerned, frightened, and perplexed. It causes one to flee to Jesus for justification⁴ and sanctification.⁵ It causes one to become serious in heart. And if one may perceive grace, light, life, and faith, it cannot be expressed what joy this generates in the heart and what a strengthening effect this has! It repeatedly provides a person with

² **felicity** – happiness.

³ **detrimental** – damaging; harmful.

⁴ Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein He pardons all our sins (Rom 3:24; Eph 1:7), and accepts us as righteous in His sight (2Co 5:21) only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us (Rom 5:19), and received by faith alone (Gal 2:16; Phi 3:9). (*Spurgeon's Catechism*, Q. 32) See Free Grace Broadcaster 187, *Justification*; both available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

⁵ Sanctification is the work of God's Spirit whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God and are enabled more and more to die to sin and live to righteousness. (*Spurgeon's Catechism*, Q. 34) See Free Grace Broadcaster 215, *Sanctification*.

new courage; he receives more liberty in prayer, and he becomes acquainted with the ways in which God deals with souls. It gladdens his heart, and it has a sanctifying influence upon all his actions. “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1Jo 3:3).

Fifthly, to neglect this self-examination due to laziness, discouragement, or despair robs a person of all comfort and joy, obstructs his growth, and denies God His honor. Therefore, examine yourself frequently, and often give answer to the question, “Simon...lovest thou me?” (Joh 21:17).

It is also God’s express command; whoever neglects this, not surrendering to His will, is disobedient toward God. How can such a person prosper? “Let us search and try our ways” (Lam 3:40); “Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired” (Zep 2:1); “Let a man examine himself” (1Co 11:28); “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?” (2Co 13:5). Submit to the counsel and command of God, and you will prosper.

Sixthly, it is possible for one to come to the knowledge of his spiritual state—whether one is in the covenant of grace⁶ with God, and whether or not one is a believer. To imagine that such is impossible causes a decline in serious concern about spiritual matters, and therefore I wish to state that it is possible for one to know this. The bride knew that Jesus was hers: “My beloved is mine, and I am his” (Song 2:16). “For I know that my redeemer liveth” (Job 19:25); “...and thou shalt know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob” (Isa 60:16). “For I am persuaded,” etc. (Rom 8:38). “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God” (1Co 2:12). “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live” (Gal 2:20).

Thus, it should be noted that it is possible for a person to be assured. Therefore, strive to attain to such assurance. It is also possible, however, for a natural man to be convinced that he is still in an unregenerate state.

Seventhly, even though it is possible to come to this realization by

⁶ **Covenant of Grace** – God’s gracious, eternal purpose of redemption, conceived before the creation of the world, first announced in Genesis 3:15, progressively revealed in history, accomplished in the person and work of Jesus Christ, and appropriated by faith in Him.

the grace of the Holy Spirit, not everyone does. Many thousands will go to hell who imagine that they will enter heaven. There will also be many, however, who will enter heaven who feared that they would not arrive there. And even those who at times may stand strong can readily become weak and come into darkness. “And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. LORD, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled” (Psa 30:6-7).

In some true partakers of the covenant of grace, there is still much darkness, so that they do not have a clear perception of what constitutes sufficient light and life. Although they know this when considering it divorced from themselves and would be capable of stating this clearly to others, they nevertheless lack sufficient light to observe these graces in themselves. Moreover, so much of the old man yet remains in them—a fact upon which they focus to such an extent that they question whether this can coexist with grace—that they live between hope and fear. Hence, they are poor even though they possess much that is good. Others have good opinions of themselves, but they deceive themselves miserably. “There is a generation that is pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness” (Pro 30:12). Consider, therefore, how necessary it is that we scrutinize our hearts and examine ourselves as to who and how we are.

From *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, Vol. 2, Reformation Heritage Books, 307-310; www.heritagebooks.org; used by permission.

Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635-1711): Dutch theologian and major representative of the Dutch Second Reformation; born in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands.



If you do not test yourself, you may sit down and say, “Oh, I am all right.” Yes, but you may be fostering within your spirit a peace that will end in your final ruin, and you may never open your eyes to your deception until you lift them up in hell.—*Charles H. Spurgeon*

What good doth it do a man to hear that Christ is sent to redeem, that a ransom is paid, that sin is pardonable, hell avoidable, heaven attainable, upon the conditions of faith, and not know whether he hath so advantageous a grace in him? What comfort in Christ, in His meritorious passion, in His triumphant resurrection and ascension, in His prevalent intercession, unless we know that by faith we are united to Him? If we can find this grace in our souls, what a joy unspeakable doth result from thence? Christ as a king will protect my soul, Christ as a priest hath expiated my sins, Christ as a prophet will remove my ignorance; my soul was in His mind upon the cross, my concerns are in His breast in heaven, my name is enrolled in the register of His subjects.—*Stephen Charnock*

AN AGE OF SPIRITUAL DANGER

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

WE live in an age of peculiar *spiritual danger*. Never, perhaps, since the world began was there such an immense amount of mere outward profession of religion as there is in the present day. A painfully large proportion of all the congregations in the land consists of unconverted people, who know nothing of heart-religion, never come to the Lord's Table, and never confess Christ in their daily lives. Myriads of those who are always running after preachers and crowding to hear special sermons are nothing better than empty tubs and tinkling cymbals, without a jot of real, vital Christianity at home. The parable of the sower is continually receiving most vivid and painful illustrations. The way-side hearers, the stony-ground hearers, the thorny-ground hearers abound on every side.

The life of many religious professors in this age, I fear, is nothing better than a continual course of spiritual dram-drinking.¹ They are always morbidly craving fresh excitement; and they seem to care little what it is, if they only get it. All preaching seems to come alike to them; and they appear unable to “see differences,” so long as they hear what is clever, have their ears tickled, and sit in a crowd. Worst of all, there are hundreds of young, unestablished believers who are so infected with the same love of excitement that they actually think it a duty to be always seeking it. Insensibly almost to themselves, they take up a kind of hysterical, sensational, sentimental Christianity until they are never content with the “old paths,” and, like the Athenians, are always running after something new (Act 17:21). To see a calm-minded young believer, who is not stuck up, self-confident, self-conceited, and more ready to teach than learn but content with a daily, steady effort to grow up into Christ's likeness, and to do Christ's work quietly and unostentatiously² at home, is really becoming almost a rarity! Too many young professors...show how little deep root they have and how little knowledge of their own hearts, by noise, forwardness, readiness to contradict and set down old Christians, and overweening³ trust in their own fancied soundness and wisdom! Well will it be for many young professors of this age if they do not end—

¹ **dram-drinking** – habitually drinking strong liquor.

² **unostentatiously** – modestly.

³ **overweening** – conceited.

after being tossed about for a while and carried to and fro by every wind of doctrine—by joining some petty, narrow-minded, censorious sect,⁴ or embracing some senseless, unreasoning, crotchety⁵ heresy. Surely, in times like these, there is great need for self-examination. When we look around us, we may well ask, “How do we do about our souls?”

In handling this question, I think the shortest plan will be to suggest a list of subjects for self-inquiry and to go through them in order. By so doing, I shall hope to meet the case of everyone into whose hands this [article] may fall. I invite every reader of this paper to join me in calm, searching self-examination for a few short minutes. I desire to speak to myself as well as to you. I approach you not as an enemy, but as a friend. “My heart’s desire and prayer to God...is, that [you] might be saved” (Rom 10:1). Bear with me if I say things that at first sight look harsh and severe. Believe me: he is your best friend who tells you the most truth.

Let me ask, in the first place, *do we ever think about our souls at all?* Thousands of...people, I fear, cannot answer that question satisfactorily. They never give the subject of religion any place in their thoughts. From the beginning of the year to the end, they are absorbed in the pursuit of business, pleasure, politics, money, or self-indulgence of some kind or another. Death, judgment, eternity, heaven, hell, and a world to come are never calmly looked at and considered. They live on as if they were never going to die, rise again, stand at the bar of God, or receive an eternal sentence! They do not openly oppose religion, for they have not sufficient reflection about it to do so; but they eat, drink, sleep, get money, spend money, as if religion was a mere fiction and not a reality. They are neither Romanists, Socinians,⁶ infidels,⁷ high church, low church, nor broad church.⁸ They are just *nothing at all*, and do not take the trouble to have opinions. A more senseless and unreasonable way of living cannot be conceived; but they do not pretend to reason about it. They simply never think about God, unless frightened for a few minutes by sickness, death in their families, or an accident. Barring such interruptions, they appear

⁴ **censorious sect** – religious group that is severely critical of others.

⁵ **crotchety** – perverse or peculiar belief on some point (usually consider unimportant).

⁶ **Socinians** – followers of the sect founded by Faustus Socinus.

⁷ **infidels** – atheists.

⁸ **high church...broad church** – three parties in the Church of England in the mid-19th century; high church represented the Anglo-Catholics, low church adherents were evangelicals, and broad church represented those whose approach to doctrine and worship was more tolerant and liberal than the other two.

to ignore religion altogether and hold on their way—cool and undisturbed—as if there were nothing worth thinking of except this world.

It is hard to imagine a life more unworthy of an immortal creature than such a life as I have just described, for it reduces a man to the level of a beast. But it is literally and truly the life of multitudes in [our country]; and as they pass away, their place is taken by multitudes like them. The picture, no doubt, is horrible, distressing, and revolting, but, unhappily, it is only too true. In every large town, in every market, on every stock-exchange, in every club, you may see specimens of this class by scores—men who think of everything under the sun except the one thing needful: the salvation of their souls. Like the Jews of old, they do not consider their ways, they do not “consider their latter end...they consider not that they do evil” (Isa 1:3; Hag 1:7; Deu 32:29; Ecc 5:1). Like Gallio, they care for none of these things; they are not in their way (Act 18:17). If they prosper in the world, get rich, and succeed in their line of life, they are praised and admired by their contemporaries. Nothing succeeds in England like success! But for all this they cannot live forever. They will have to die and appear before the bar of God [to] be judged; and then what will the end be? When a large class of this kind exists in our country, no reader need wonder that I ask whether he belongs to it. If you do, you ought to have a mark set on your door, as there used to be a mark on a plague-stricken house two centuries ago, with the words, “Lord, have mercy on us,” written on it. Look at the class I have been describing, and then look at your own soul.

Let me ask, in the second place, *whether we overdo anything about our souls?* There are multitudes in [our country] who think occasionally about religion, but, unhappily, never get beyond thinking. After a stirring sermon, after a funeral, under the pressure of illness, on Sunday evening, when things are going on badly in their families, when they meet some bright example of a Christian, or when they fall in with some striking religious book or tract, they will at the time think a good deal and even talk a little about religion in a vague way. But they stop short, as if thinking and talking were enough to save them. They are always meaning, intending, purposing, resolving, wishing, and telling us that they “know” what is right and “hope” to be found right at last; but they never attain to any *action*. There is no actual separation from the service of the world and sin, no real taking up the cross and following Christ, no positive *doing* in their Christianity. Their life is spent in playing the part of the son in our Lord’s parable to whom the father said, “Go work...in my vineyard...He answered

and said, I go, sir: and went not” (Mat 21:28-30). They are like those whom Ezekiel describes, who liked his preaching, but never practiced what he preached: “They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them...And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not” (Eze 33:31-32). In a day like this, when hearing and thinking without *doing* is so common, no one can justly wonder that I press upon men the absolute need of self-examination. Once more, then, I ask my readers to consider the question of my text: “How do we do about our souls?”

Let me ask, in the third place, *whether we are trying to satisfy our consciences with a mere formal religion?* There are myriads⁹ in [our country] at this moment who are making shipwreck on this rock. Like the Pharisees of old, they make much ado¹⁰ about the outward part of Christianity, while the inward and spiritual part is totally neglected. They are careful to attend all the services of their place of worship and regular in using all its forms and ordinances. They are never absent from communion when the Lord’s Supper is administered...They are often keen partisans¹¹ of their own church, sect, or congregation and ready to contend with anyone who does not agree with them. Yet all this time there is no *heart* in their religion. Anyone who knows them intimately can see with half an eye that their affections are set on things below and not on things above; and that they are trying to make up for the want of inward Christianity by an excessive quantity of outward form. And this formal religion does them no real good. They are not satisfied. Beginning at the wrong end by making the outward things first, they know nothing of inward joy and peace and pass their lives in a constant struggle, secretly conscious that there is something wrong and yet not knowing why. Well, after all, [they may] go on from one stage of formality to another until, in despair, they take a fatal plunge and fall into popery! When professing Christians of this kind are so painfully numerous, no one need wonder if I press upon him the paramount importance of close self-examination. If you love life, do not be content with the husk, shell, and scaffolding of religion. Remember our Savior’s words about the Jewish formalists of His day: “This people draweth nigh...with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from

⁹ **myriads** – countless numbers of people.

¹⁰ **much ado** – commotion; big fuss.

¹¹ **partisans** – dedicated supporters of a party, person, or cause.

me. But in vain they do worship” (Mat 15:8-9). It needs something more than going diligently to church and receiving the Lord’s Supper to take our souls to heaven. Means of grace and forms of religion are useful in their way, and God seldom does anything for His church without them. But let us beware of making shipwreck on the very lighthouse that helps to show the channel into the harbor. Once more I ask, “How do we do about our souls?”

Let me ask, in the fourth place, *whether we have received the forgiveness of our sins?* Few reasonable [people] would think of denying that they are sinners. Many perhaps would say that they are not so bad as many and that they have not been so very wicked, and so forth. But few, I repeat, would pretend to say that they had always lived like angels and never done, said, or thought a wrong thing all their days. In short, all of us must confess that we are more or less “sinners,” and, as sinners, are guilty before God; and, as guilty, we must be [either] forgiven or lost and condemned forever at the last day.

Now, it is the glory of the Christian religion that it provides for us the very forgiveness that we need—full, free, perfect, eternal, and complete...This forgiveness of sins has been purchased for us by the eternal Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. He has purchased it for us by coming into the world to be our Savior and by living, dying, and rising again as our substitute in our behalf. He has bought it for us at the price of His own most precious blood, by suffering in our stead on the cross, and making satisfaction for our sins. But this forgiveness—great, full, and glorious as it is—does not become the property of every man and woman as a matter of course. It is not a privilege that every member of a church possesses merely because he is a [member]. It is a thing that each individual must receive for himself by his own personal faith—lay hold on by faith, appropriate by faith, and make his own by faith; or else, so far as he is concerned, Christ will have died in vain. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (Joh 3:36). No terms can be imagined more simple and more suitable to man...It is only faith that is required; and faith is nothing more than the humble, heartfelt trust of the soul that desires to be saved. Jesus is able and willing to save; but man must come to Jesus and believe. All that believe are at once justified and forgiven; *but without believing there is no forgiveness at all.*

Now, here is exactly the point, I am afraid, where multitudes of [professing Christian] people fail and are in imminent danger of being lost forever. They know that there is no forgiveness of sin except-

ing in Christ Jesus. They can tell you that there is no Savior for sinners, no redeemer, no mediator, excepting Him Who was born of the Virgin Mary and was crucified under Pontius Pilate, dead, and buried. But here they stop and get no further! They never come to the point of actually laying hold on Christ by faith and becoming one with Christ and Christ in them. They can say, He is a savior, but not “my Savior”—a redeemer, but not “my Redeemer”—a priest, but not “my Priest”—an advocate, but not “my Advocate.” So, they live and die unforgiven! No wonder that Martin Luther said, “Many are lost because they cannot use possessive pronouns.”¹² When this is the state of many in this day, no one need wonder that I ask men whether they have received the forgiveness of sins. An eminent Christian lady once said in her old age, “The beginning of eternal life in my soul was a conversation I had with an old gentleman, who came to visit my father when I was only a little girl. He took me by the hand one day and said, ‘My dear child, my life is nearly over, and you will probably live many years after I am gone. But never forget two things. One is that there is such a thing as having our sins forgiven while we live. The other is that there is such a thing as knowing and feeling that we are forgiven.’ I thank God I have never forgotten his words”...Once more let us ask: In the matter of forgiveness of sins, “How do we do?”

Let me ask, in the fifth place, *whether we know anything by experience of conversion to God*. Without conversion there is no salvation. “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven...Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God...If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his...If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” (Mat 18:3; Joh 3:3; Rom 8:9; 2Co 5:17). We are all by nature so weak, so worldly, so earthly-minded, so inclined to sin, that without a thorough change we cannot serve God in life and could not enjoy Him after death. Just as ducks, as soon as they are hatched, take naturally to water, so do children, as soon as they can do anything, take to selfishness, lying, and deceit; and none pray or love God unless they are taught. High or low, rich or poor, gentle or simple, we all need a complete change—a change that is the special office of the Holy Ghost to give us. Call it what you please—new birth, regeneration, renewal, new creation, quickening, repentance—the thing must be had if we are to be saved. And if we have the thing, it will be *seen*.

Sense of sin and deep hatred to it, faith in Christ and love to Him,

¹² EDITOR'S NOTE: No source could be found for this quote.

delight in holiness and longing after more of it, love to God's people and distaste for the things of the world—these, these are the signs and evidences that always accompany conversion. Myriads around us, it may be feared, know nothing about it. They are, in Scripture language, dead, asleep, blind, and unfit for the kingdom of God. Year after year, perhaps, they go on repeating the words of the Creed,¹³ “I believe in the Holy Ghost”; but they are utterly ignorant of His changing operations on the inward man. Sometimes they flatter themselves [that] they are born again because they have been baptized, go to church, and receive the Lord's Supper, while they are totally destitute of the marks of the new birth as described by John in his first epistle. And all this time the words of Scripture are clear and plain: “Except ye be converted...ye shall not enter into the kingdom” (Mat 18:3). In times like these, no reader ought to wonder that I press the subject of conversion on men's souls. No doubt there are plenty of sham conversions in such a day of religious excitement as this. But bad coin is no proof that there is no good money; nay, rather it is a sign that there is some money current that is valuable and is worth imitation. Hypocrites and sham Christians are indirect evidence that there is such a thing as real grace among men. Let us search our own hearts, then, and see how it is with ourselves. Once more let us ask, in the matter of conversion, “How do we do?”

From *Practical Religion: Being Plain Papers on the Daily Duties, Experience, Dangers, and Privileges of Professing Christians* (London: Charles Murray, 1900), 3-9; in the public domain.

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900): Bishop of the Anglican Church; born at Macclesfield, Cheshire County, England, UK.



This self-examination is an exact and thorough search into a man's self, an exquisite consideration in what posture he stands to God. The Word is the rule, a glass [mirror] wherein we see God's will; and conscience is the examiner, that is, the glass wherein we see our lives and the motions of our hearts, and which, by the help of the Word, doth dissect and open the soul to itself.—*Stephen Charnock*

It is as certain as anything in the Bible that without holiness no man shall see the Lord (Heb 12:14). It is equally certain that it is the invariable fruit of saving faith, the real test of regeneration, the only sound evidence of indwelling grace, the certain consequence of vital union with Christ.—*J. C. Ryle*

¹³ **Apostles' Creed** – early (2nd to 4th century) summary of Christian belief, used primarily in Western congregations; probably not written by the apostles, it was believed to be in harmony with apostolic teaching.

A CALL TO EXAMINATION

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God.—Hebrews 12:15

THIS is a call to examination: first, to self-examination. Its immediate force is derived from the closing words of the preceding verse, where the solemn and searching statement is made that “without which (namely ‘holiness’) no man shall see the Lord.” No matter though I am in fellowship with the people of God, a member of a scriptural church, a regular attender upon the means of grace, a firm believer in all the doctrines of the Word; yet, if I have never been sanctified by the Spirit of God, if I am not diligently and earnestly cultivating practical holiness, both of heart and life, then I shall never enter heaven and enjoy the beatific vision.¹ Hence the pertinency² and urgency of this exhortation, “*Looking diligently* lest any man fail of the grace of God.” There is far too much at stake to remain in uncertainty upon such a vital matter, and only the religious trifler³ will disregard this imperative summons.

The call to careful self-examination receives its urgency from the very great danger there is of *self-deception*. Sin darkens the understanding, so that man is unable to perceive his real state before God. Satan “hath blinded the minds of them which believe not” (2Co 4:4). The deep-rooted pride of our hearts makes us think the best of ourselves, so that if a question is raised in our hearts, we are ever prone to give ourselves the benefit of the doubt. A spirit of sloth possesses us by nature, so that we are unwilling to go to the trouble that real self-examination calls for. Hence, the vast majority of religious professors remain with a head knowledge of the truth with outward attention to forms and ceremonies or resting on a mere consent to the letter of some verse like John 3:16, refusing to “make their calling and election *sure*” (2Pe 1:10).

God has warned us plainly in His Word, “There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness” (Pro 30:12). He has set before us those who say, “I am rich, and

¹ **beatific vision** – sight of the glories of heaven.

² **pertinency** – relevance to the matter at hand.

³ **trifler** – someone not to be believed or taken seriously.

increased with goods, and have need of nothing,” and who know not that they are “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Rev 3:17). And let it be duly noted that *those* were in church association and that at a time before the last of the apostles had left the earth. Christ has told us that “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?” Yea, that they affirm, “we have eaten and drunk in thy presence” (Luk 13:26); yet will He answer them, “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Mat 7:23). How such words as those should make *each of us* tremble! How it behooves us to be “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God.” Alas, that such words—written first to those who had been addressed as “holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling” (3:1)—should, for the most part, fall upon unheeding ears.

The fact is our diligence and honesty in self-examination will largely be determined by the value that we set upon our soul and its eternal interests. Alas, the vast majority of professing Christians today are far, far more concerned about their bodies than their souls, about carnal pleasures than spiritual riches, about earthly comforts than heavenly consolations, about the good opinion of their fellows rather than the approbation⁴ of God. But a few—and *O how few!*—are made serious, become in deadly earnest to examine well their foundations, and test every inch of the ground they stand on. With them, religion is not something to be taken up and laid down according to their fitful moods. Where will they spend ETERNITY is their all-absorbing concern. Every other interest in life sinks into utter insignificance before the vital consideration of seeking to make sure that they have “the root of the matter” in them.

O my reader, can you be satisfied with the cheap, easy-going religion of the day, which utterly ignores the clamant⁵ call of the Son of God: “Strive [*agonize*] to enter in at the strait gate” (Luk 13:24)? Can you rest content with the “smooth things” now being proclaimed from well-nigh every pulpit...? Can you follow the great crowd who claim to have “received Christ as their personal Savior” when no miracle of grace has been wrought in their hearts, while the Lord Himself declares, “Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Mat 7:14)? Dare you rest up-

⁴ **approbation** – approval.

⁵ **clamant** – urgent.

on some “decision” made when you were deeply stirred by some anecdotes addressed to your emotions? Have you nothing more than some change in your religious views or some reformation in your outward ways to show that you are “a new creature in Christ Jesus”? Slight not, we beseech you, this pressing word: “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God”...

“Lest any man fail of the grace of God”—this is the clause that has occasioned controversy, though really it affords no warrant for it, nor will the Greek permit of the marginal rendering. The root word that is here rendered “fail” occurs many times in the New Testament, but never once has it the force of “fall from.” It means “to lack” or “be deficient of.” In Romans 3:23, it is rendered “come short of,” in Luke 15:14 to “want,” in 2 Corinthians 12:11 “come behind,” in Mathew 19:20 “lack,” in Philippians 4:12 “suffer need,” in Hebrews 11:37 to be “destitute.” Thus, there is no room for uncertainty as to the meaning of this exhortation: “Looking diligently lest any man fail—come short of, be deficient in, lack—the grace of God.”

But to what does “the grace of God” here refer? That is not quite so easy to answer, for sometimes “grace” is to be regarded objectively, sometimes subjectively. In some passages, it refers to the free favor of God, in others to His benevolent operation within the heart, in still others to the effects produced thereby. In our present passage, it seems to the writer to be used more abstractly, having a comprehensive scope as it is applicable to widely different cases...According to our light, we will endeavor to show some of the different cases to which this exhortation belongs.

“By the ‘grace of God,’ God’s gracious favor and acceptance in Christ, as it is proposed and declared by the gospel, is intended. Herein all spiritual mercies and privileges, in adoption, justification, sanctification, and consolation do consist. For these things proceeding from the love, grace, and goodness of God in Christ; and being effects thereof, are called ‘the grace of God.’ The attaining and participation of these things is that which in the faith and profession of the gospel men aim at and design; without which both the one and the other are in vain. This grace, under all their profession of the gospel, men may ‘fail of,’ which is the evil cautioned against.”⁶

Men may “fail of the grace of God,” then, by *not submitting* themselves to the terms of the gospel. Those terms are repugnant to the

⁶ John Owen, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ed. W. H. Goold, Vol. 24, Works of John Owen (Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1854), 290.

natural man: they are distasteful to his carnal lusts; they are humbling to his pride. But it is at the former of these two points that the majority “fail.” The gospel calls upon sinners to repent, and they cannot do that with sincerity unless they throw down the weapons of their rebellion against God. The thrice holy God will pardon no man so long as he is determined to please himself and continue in a course of sinning. Again, the gospel calls on sinners to receive Christ Jesus as Lord—to give Him the throne of their hearts, to bow to His scepter. The holy Redeemer will save no man who is unwilling for Him to “rule over” him (Luk 19:14).

Second, to “fail of the grace of God” is to be satisfied with *something short of* divine grace communicated to and ruling in the heart. It is to be contented with a religious substitute for it. How many are deceived by “a form of godliness” who know nothing of its “power” (2Ti 3:5). How many mistake a head knowledge of the truth for a miracle of grace wrought in the heart! How many substitute outward forms and ceremonies for an experimental acquaintance with the substance of them! How many confuse an external reformation of life with the divine regeneration and transformation of the soul! Alas, of how very many does it have to be said, “He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul” (Isa 44:20)! O how few there are who know “the grace of God in truth” (Col 1:5). Do *you*, my reader? Do *you*?

“Some have maintained an admirable character to all appearance all their lives and yet have failed of the grace of God because of some secret sin. They persuaded even themselves that they were believers, and yet they were not truly so; they had no inward holiness, they allowed one sin to get the mastery, they indulged in an unsanctified passion, and so though they were laid in the grave like sheep, they died with a false hope and missed eternal life. This is a most dreadful state to be in, and perhaps some of us are in it. Let the prayer be breathed, ‘Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting’ (Psa 139:23-24). Are ye earnest in secret prayer? Do ye love the reading of the Bible? Have ye the fear of God before your eyes? Do you really commune with God? Do you truly love Christ? Ask yourselves these questions often, for though we preach the free gospel of Jesus Christ, I hope as plainly as any, we feel it to be just as needful to set you on self-examination and to excite in you a holy anxiety. It ought to be often a question with you, ‘Have I the grace of God, or do I fall short of it? Am I a piece of rock crystal that

is very like the diamond, but yet is not diamond?”⁷

Third, multitudes “fail of the grace of God” by *not persevering* in the use of the outward means. They are very earnest and zealous at first but become careless and slothful. “There are some persons who for a time appear to possess the grace of God, and for a while exhibit many outward evidences of being Christians, but at last *the* temptation comes, most suitable to their depraved tastes, and they are carried away with it. They fail of the grace of God. They appear to have gained it, but they fail at last—like a man in business who makes money for a time but fails in the end. They fail of the grace of God—like an arrow shot from the bow, which goes straight towards the target for a time, but having too little impetus,⁸ fails to reach the mark. There are some who did run well; what doth hinder them that they should not obey the truth?”⁹

Finally, genuine Christians themselves “fail of the grace of God” by *not improving* that which God has already bestowed upon them. Faith has been imparted to them, but how little they exercise it. There is an infinite fullness in Christ for them, but how little do they draw upon it. Wondrous privileges are theirs, but how little do they use them. Light has been communicated to them, but how little do they walk in it. They fail to watch and pray lest they enter into temptation (Mar 14:38). They fail to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit (2Co 7:1). They fail to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus (2Pe 3:18). They fail to keep themselves from idols (1Jo 5:21). They fail to keep themselves in the love of God (Jude 21). And by so failing, their peace is disturbed, their joy is diminished, their testimony is marred, and frequent chastenings are brought upon them.

From *Studies in the Scriptures*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952): Pastor, itinerate Bible teacher, author; born in Nottingham, England, UK.



Weak and imperfect as the holiness of the best saints may be, it is a real true thing and has a character about it as unmistakable as salt and light. It is not a thing that begins and ends with noisy profession: it will be seen much more than heard.—*J. C. Ryle*

⁷ C. H. Spurgeon, “The Winnowing Fan,” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, Vol. 16 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1870), 393.

⁸ **impetus** – force.

⁹ Spurgeon, 392-393.

ARE YOU ALIVE OR DEAD?

Octavius Winslow (1808-1878)

Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.—Revelation 3:1

THE reader, possessing a taste and an eye for the fine arts, must often have stood entranced before a picture of natural still-life, in which, with masterly genius, the artist had portrayed the subject with such vivid effect as to invest it with all the charm and power of reality. So successful is the illusion and so intense the feeling produced, it would seem, while gazing upon the painting that the fawn must bound from the canvas, the purple flow from the grape, and the perfume breathe from the rose. And yet, with all this appearance and glow of animation, it is but a picture of still-life.

In the passage that suggests the leading thought of this chapter, we find a striking analogy to this. It is the picture of spiritual still-life, or false conversion, sketched by the hand of a divine Artist: “Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.” This delineation¹ of spiritual still-life—in other words, this description of the new birth in profession and appearance only—is perfect. Here is conversion in all but its reality! Here is spiritual life, but it is the appearance of life only. Here is spiritual death, and it is a solemn fact. The one is an illusion, a fiction, a counterfeit; the other a grim, stern, cold reality. The very life itself is death!

Such is the spiritual state we are about to delineate in the present chapter; such [is] the portrait for which thousands might stand as the original. And can the sanctified imagination conceive a state more sad or appalling? To believe that we are born again, to assume the exterior and claim the privileges of the truly converted, while yet dwelling in the region and shadow of spiritual death, is of all spiritual conditions the most dangerous and fatal. In a treatise devoted to an exposition of the nature and evidences of the new birth, it is proper that we take first the *negative* bearings of the subject, showing what is *not* real conversion. We need scarcely bespeak² the reader’s solemn and prayerful consideration of this subject, for it bears upon its surface the impress of infinite importance. Surely, if apart from the new

¹ **delineation** – portraying or depicting in words; describing.

² **bespeak** – request.

birth there is no state of grace here, and no state of glory hereafter, the question must come home to every thoughtful bosom with irresistible impressiveness and power: “Is mine a real or a false conversion? Am I truly born again?” Instructed by the divine Spirit, we propose to assist you in this momentous inquiry, by showing how far you may advance in a profession of Christianity, in the appearance of the new birth, and not be born again, having a name to live, and yet dead!

First, let us remark that a spiritually enlightened understanding, or a mere intellectual acquaintance with divine truth, is not of itself the new birth. Light is not life. We may admit through the window the morning’s roseate³ beams in all their brilliancy and power into the chamber of death, but the corpse around which they play remains pulseless and lifeless—a corpse still. The body is bathed with light, the pallid⁴ countenance is illumined with its radiance, and the shroud is fringed with its hues, but all still is death. The sun has not quickened into life a solitary throb! Thus, there may exist in the religion of an individual an enlightened understanding, much intellectual acquaintance with divine things, a sound judgment, and an intelligent mind, yet entirely dissevered from spiritual life. We may accept the Bible as wholly true—a great concession this! We may believe in it historically, understand it intellectually, and expound it ably, and not be born again, substituting speculative knowledge or a theoretical acquaintance with divine truth for the kingdom of God in the heart, religious light in the understanding for spiritual life in the soul. But the truth as it is in Jesus demands more than the mere assent of the understanding. It does not, indeed, bypass the province of reason nor set aside the aid of the intellectual powers of man; but, while it appeals to this tribunal and exacts its homage and its belief, carrying triumphant the noblest and loftiest powers of the soul, it enters the *heart*, and there puts forth its mightiest power, achieves its greatest triumph, receives its profoundest love and conviction, claiming and securing the affections for Christ. Believe me, my reader, your theology may be biblical, your creed orthodox, your mind well-furnished and fortified with Christian evidence, and yet all this may be accompanied with no more spiritual life than is produced by the moonbeams falling in cold, silvery luster upon an alpine peak.

Religious emotion is not the new birth. You may be the subject of deep, intense, religious feeling. The conscience, brought into close

³ **roseate** – rose-colored.

⁴ **pallid** – pale.

contact with solemn truth, may be aroused. The sensibilities appealed to may be excited. The mind reasoned with may assent, and yet death in the soul [may] maintain its gloomy scepter. A description of Christ's sufferings may dissolve you to tears, a picture of heaven's glory may entrance you with hope, a delineation of hell's woe may paralyze you with fear, and spiritual death [may] still reign within your soul. No subject moves our natural feelings like religion. To nothing does our emotional nature so quickly and deeply respond as this. Hence, how easy and how soon are those sensibilities of our being wrought upon that may assume all the resemblance and actions of life, and yet be spiritually dead. It is life, but, alas, it is still-life. Real conversion does not petrify the natural or the moral feelings. Far from it. There is no real conversion apart from feeling, often the most profound and intense. A true spiritual conviction of sin will sometimes stir the soul to its lowest depths. It was so with the tax-collector, and thus was it with the Philippian jailer. There is nothing so startling, so appalling, so overwhelming, as a spiritual sight of the heart's depravity! Who can have an insight into this dark, mysterious chamber of imagery, this seat of all iniquity, as unfolded by the Holy Spirit, and not shudder, tremble, and weep, exclaiming, "What must I do to be saved?" (Act 16:30). But, in all faithfulness, we must add that intense sensibility, deep religious feeling, and great alarm may coexist with spiritual death in the soul, [yet] it may be found apart from real conversion...Beware, then, of this deception!

Mere religious conviction is not real conversion. There may be in the subject some intelligent knowledge and insight of sin, some vivid apprehension of its existence and guilt, attended with pungent⁵ conviction and mental distress, springing from its present and remote consequences, without any spiritual sense of sin as sin, against the holy Lord God. While there is no real conversion without the conviction of sin, mere natural conviction alone, unaccompanied with a spiritual renewal of the heart, cannot be denominated real conversion. An individual may for months and years be what is termed "under conviction of sin," and his soul yet remain without very decided evidence of spiritual life. But, if these convictions which you have are of the Holy Spirit's producing, if they arise from the effectual work of divine grace in your soul, they will, they must, before long, eventuate in your real conversion to God. If the result of animal excitement⁶ only, the mere emotional part of your nature stirred; if but a transient

⁵ **pungent** – keenly painful.

⁶ **animal excitement** – excitement stimulated by the physical nature, not the spiritual.

flash of thought, a sigh, a tear, a passing feeling, it will all evaporate, subside, and vanish as the foam upon the billow, as the morning cloud, and as the early dew. There is, indeed, the appearance of life; but, alas, it is spiritual still-life. “Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.”

Nor does real conversion resolve itself into the mere possession and exercise of spiritual gifts. The history of the church of God affords lamentable proof of the existence of the most splendid and powerful spiritual gifts not in alliance with one atom of converting grace. The Corinthian church supplies a sad chapter to this history. If God endows an individual with great and brilliant parts and that endowment is in connection with a religious profession—it may be the holy office of the Christian ministry—the inference is not necessarily logical and true that the individual so furnished and installed is spiritually, thoroughly, and truly converted. Our adorable Lord, that great prober of the human heart, He Who only knew what was in man, forewarned us of this: “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?” (Mat 7:22). And what is the solemn, the inevitable result? “And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Mat 7:23). Oh, you who are endowed with popular gifts, who plume yourselves with your brilliant attainments, who walk amid the golden candlesticks, distinguished lights and brilliant orbs, tremble, lest in the deep treachery of the heart you should be found substituting these meretricious⁷ ornaments, these tinsel garnishings⁸ of the Christian profession, for that spiritual renewal of the heart that leads its possessor to walk holily and humbly with God. How easy the deception! How woeful the result! We may speak with the entrancing eloquence of men or with the soft music of angels without one spark of real love to God glowing upon the lifeless, flameless altar of the heart. We shudder to think how far human intellectualism and eloquence may pass current⁹ in the office of the Christian ministry with those who fill and with those who worship it, totally [cut off] from all spiritual life. These are grand weapons of Satan and of error. Availing themselves of human learning, an acute intellect, and brilliant attainments, the eloquence of speech, and the fascination of address, those united foes of Christ and the church—Satan and error—seek to up-

⁷ **meretricious** – gaudy; befitting a prostitute.

⁸ **tinsel garnishings** – cheap decorations.

⁹ **pass current** – be considered genuine or authentic.

heave the foundations of truth and righteousness and to sow the seeds of “damnable heresies” (2Pe 2:1), consigning men’s souls to everlasting perdition. Great giftedness, disunited from great grace, has ever been the bane¹⁰ of the professing church. [May] the Lord lead us into solemn self-examination and give us to prize one grain of real grace above all the most splendid gifts of nature, the most polished attractions of art, the noblest attainments of the schools that ever endowed and adorned the human intellect. To walk holily and humbly with God, to lie as a sinner at the feet of Jesus, to be living day by day upon the blood and righteousness of Christ, and to do the Lord’s work in the spirit of self-abnegation,¹¹ lowliness, and love, has more of holiness and heaven in it and brings more honor and glory to God than the most costly gifts and the most brilliant achievements ever possessed—apart from the grace that empties us of self, sanctifies our hearts, and fills us with the mind and temper of Christ.

A high standard of morality may exist apart from true conversion. The ungodly and unconverted world furnishes many and marvelous examples illustrating this thought—men of integrity and uprightness in all the relations of domestic, social, and commercial life, who can walk among their peers with dignity and honor, who yet are living in the region of spiritual unregeneracy¹² and death. True, most true, there is no vital religion without morality, but there may be morality of a high and commanding order without vital religion. The minor morals of life may bud and blossom upon human character and conduct separate from the root of grace in the soul and the soul’s vital engrafting into Christ. It is fruit, but not the fruit of righteousness, nor the result of faith and love. It is life, but not the life that is hid with Christ in God. It is at best but a negative righteousness, such as the proud, vaunting¹³ Pharisee wrapped around him when, with supercilious disdain,¹⁴ he looked down from the height of his self-sufficiency upon his humble fellow-worshiper in the temple, who, meekly standing afar off, smote upon his breast, and exclaimed, “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luk 18:13). You may be able to dignify and adorn all the relations of life, be a man of virtue and honesty, benevolence and integrity, and yet not be born again of the Spirit. Your morality may have much of the appearance, attraction, and fas-

¹⁰ **bane** – cause of destruction or ruin.

¹¹ **self-abnegation** – self-denial.

¹² **unregeneracy** – unrepentance and unbelief.

¹³ **vaunting** – boasting.

¹⁴ **supercilious disdain** – arrogant feeling that someone does not deserve your respect.

cination of real holiness, but it is mere morality still; and mere morality is no passport, signed and sealed by the great King, to a heaven of glory. It may look like the engrafting and the fruit of spiritual life, but it is life in alliance with death—cold, inanimate death—death in all but the name. “Thou hast a name that thou *livest*, and art *dead*.” Yet more pointed and solemn [is] the testimony of Him Who spoke these solemn words: “Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Mat 5:20).

Nor can religious activity and usefulness be regarded as either a substitute for or a valid evidence of real conversion to God. And yet we know not of a more specious¹⁵ and fatal danger than this. In a Christian age like the present, distinguished for its religious spirit and enterprise—an age in which the romance of pious zeal seems to have reached its highest culture—there exists a great and fatal temptation of substituting spiritual still-life for spiritual quickened-life, Christian activity for Christianity, Christianity for Christ, the spasmodic throes¹⁶ and convulsions of religious zeal and excitement for real, vital religion, [and] the name [of being alive] while nothing really lives but—death! Christian energy and success are, at best, but negative and dubious data upon which to predicate the actual existence of spiritual life in the soul. That an individual perfunctorily¹⁷ engaged in religious work may be useful in guiding the steps of others, as the sign-post planted midway between two diverging roads may correctly direct the doubtful footsteps of the traveler, itself remaining stationary, numberless cases testify. We may point the pious pilgrim the right way to heaven; we may lead the anxious inquirer to Jesus. We may, in various ways, be employed in the cause of truth and in the kingdom of Christ: in praying, exhorting, and preaching; in instructing the ignorant, in reforming the vicious,¹⁸ in reclaiming the wanderer; yet the vineyard of our own soul remains untilled by one solitary act of spiritual culture: not a seed, bud, flower, or fruit of grace and holiness relieving its barrenness or evidencing its spiritual life...How delusive and unsafe, then, when we glean from Christian activity and usefulness the evidence that we are personally born again [and] are truly converted to Christ. Such is the danger of becoming ourselves insensible to what we recommend and enforce or assume

¹⁵ **specious** – seeming to be true, but actually false; deceptive.

¹⁶ **spasmodic throes** – irregular fits.

¹⁷ **perfunctorily** – merely for the sake of getting through the duty.

¹⁸ **vicious** – addicted to vice or immorality; wicked.

that we possess it when in reality we do not. We are overwhelmed with the apprehension that in a day of unexampled religious activity and stir, of enterprise and excitement, when association after association starts up, each demanding and each receiving a new host of volunteers, offering not only their wealth and influence, but their talents and time to the work, numbers may be beguiled into the belief that all this is saving religion, that all this is real conversion...In proportion, also, as these associations multiply, and with their multiplication the rate of activity and excitement increases, does the necessity of pausing for self-examination exist.

The increased magnitude and consequent velocity and din of the machinery of Christian activity must necessarily lessen the opportunity and the desire for a quiet converse with our own soul. The necessity, therefore, of special self-examination increases precisely at the same rate with the energy employed in promoting the spiritual well-being of others. Let it not be supposed that no individual can be employed in advancing the kingdom of grace who himself lives without grace; that we cannot promote the holiness of others without the possession of holiness ourselves; that we cannot be spiritually useful to others while we ourselves remain in an unrenewed state. He has studied the history of the Christian church but to little advantage who has not learned that God has often employed unholy agencies for the accomplishment of His will and purpose; and that, when in His sovereignty He has so employed, He can in His sovereignty destroy them. “For the scripture says unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth” (Rom 9:17). How should this truth, then, lead us to dive into our own hearts, bring our souls to the unerring touchstone¹⁹ of God’s Word, drive us out of every subterfuge,²⁰ and allow nothing—the most fair and plausible and good—to come between our hearts and their true, thorough conversion to Christ.

From *Born Again; or From Grace to Glory*,
in the public domain.

Octavius Winslow (1808-1878): Nonconformist pastor; born in London, England, raised in New York, buried in Abbey Cemetery, Bath, UK.



¹⁹ **touchstone** – test; a stone by which metals were examined.

²⁰ **subterfuge** – something turned to for escape or concealment.

BEFORE THE LORD'S SUPPER

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.—1 Corinthians 11:28-29

PERSONS ought to examine themselves of their fitness before they presume to partake of the Lord's Supper, lest by their unworthy partaking, they eat and drink damnation to themselves...There are some qualifications that make a man so unfit that there is no encouragement in the Word of God of any benefit to such an attendant. It is utterly against the mind and will of God that such should come bringing these unfitnesses with them. Therefore,

Before he comes to this ordinance a man ought to examine himself with respect to these following things:

First, whether or no he lives in any known sin. Those persons that live immoral lives, whatever immorality it is that is their practice, that live in the customary indulgence of any lust whatsoever, they are utterly unfit to come to the holy ordinance of the Lord. If the sin that he lives in is of commission or omission,¹ and if it be allowed and known, then he comes unworthily [to the Supper,] if he comes. It makes him unfit.

Whether the sin that he lives in be lesser or greater, yet if against the habitual light of his conscience he comes to the Lord's Table before he forsakes it, he is an unfit and unworthy partaker. Such persons had a thousand times better stay away than come. For such persons to come to the Lord's Supper is an abominable profanation² of the ordinance; it is a defiling of the temple of God and the sacred things of it...As of old, those that were legally unclean were not allowed to come to the Passover or to eat of the sacrifices, so neither are men that live in wicked practices of any kind allowed to come near to the holy ordinance of the Lord's Supper. God doubtless has as much care that this sacrament of the New Testament should not be defiled

¹ **commission or omission** – one commits a sin of omission whenever he does not perform that which is commanded; one commits a sin of commission when one does that which is forbidden or that which is good in itself but does it for the wrong reason.

² **profanation** – treating something holy with contempt.

as He had that the temple and altar and sacrifices and feasts of old should be kept pure. Unclean persons were very strictly forbidden of old to come near; so those that are thus unclean by allowed wickedness are no less strictly [forbidden] to approach to the ordained sacred signs of the body and blood of Christ.

Second, a man ought to examine whether or not it be his serious resolution to avoid all sin and live in obedience to all known commands as long as he lives. Whether he now be in the practice of any known ways of sinning or no, yet if he has a design of sinning hereafter, or, if he doesn't explicitly design it, yet if he stands ready to commit sin as occasions offer, not having any resolutions against [it], having never come to any determination of mind of truly endeavoring to do everything that he ought to do and of avoiding whatever he ought not to do, he is not fit to come to the sacrament,³ as will evidently appear presently.

Therefore, persons before they presume to come to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper ought to examine themselves strictly as to this matter, whether that be their determination, to avoid as long as they live all known sins and to set themselves to walk in a way of obedience. But,

Third, a man should particularly examine himself before he comes to the Lord's Supper to see whether he entertains a spirit of hatred, envy, or revenge towards his neighbor. If a man has such a spirit towards any of his brethren and does not disallow it, but from time to time acts upon it, maintains such a spirit and disposition towards him, and gives vent to it, it renders him unfit to attend the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. And if he does not first draw up a resolution to lay it by and no more to allow it, he eats and drinks unworthily.

Such a spirit in a man renders a man unfit and makes the ordinance void to him in the same manner as having leaven in a house rendered the Passover void. Leaven typified any wickedness, but especially malice and hatred. It fitly represented this by reason of its sourness. The apostle calls malice leaven and directs us to keep the

³ **sacrament and ordinance** – The concept of sacrament rose from the Greek *mysterion*, which means "mystery." *Mysterion* was then translated into the Latin *sacramentum*, classical Latin for a soldier's oath of allegiance, accompanied by the symbol of a tattoo. From this, sacrament came to be known as "a sign of holy things" or "a visible sign of an invisible grace." Roman Catholics, Greek Orthodoxy, Protestants, and Baptists have all used the term with different meanings. *Ordinance* means something that God the Father or Christ the Son has commanded His people to do. Baptists and others often use the term *ordinance* for baptism and the Lord's Supper to distinguish their views from Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Lutheran, Anglican, or Methodist views.

Christian feast without this leaven, as they formerly kept the Passover without leaven: "Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness" (1Co 5:8). Here both wickedness in general or any wicked practice and malice in particular are mentioned as being in the Christian feast as malice was of old in the Jewish feast of the Passover.

Persons, therefore, should particularly examine themselves whether or not they have forgiven their enemies—those that have done them any hurt—so as to allow of no wishing of any hurt to them, and especially so as never to design to do anything to gratify a revengeful disposition towards them.

If men have quarrels one with another, they should see to it to put an end to them before they come to the Lord's Supper. If they come together to the table of the Lord maintaining their quarrels one with another and indulging a contentious spirit, a spirit of hatred, they eat and drink unworthily. Persons should particularly examine themselves whether they have any sincere disposition and desire to these things that are the main designs, ends, and benefits of their profession.

Fourth, persons ought to examine their aim in coming to the Lord's Supper—whether any of those ends for which the ordinance was appointed be what they aim at in coming, or whether it be only and altogether something else that Christ had no respect to in appointing of it. The ordinance was appointed for [the] spiritual good of the partakers. Therefore, if those that come do not seek that in it, and it is not [from] any desire of their spiritual good or from any conscientious regard to God's command that they come, but only for some end, some temporal advantage or credit...they eat and drink unworthily.

Thus did the Corinthians, of whom the apostle speaks in the text. What moved them to come to the sacrament was not that they might commemorate Christ's death according to His institution, or that they might obtain spiritual good, but to nourish their bodies and gratify their sensitive appetite, not discerning the Lord's body.

Persons should examine themselves with respect to those things, that they may not eat and drink damnation to themselves. They that come with this unfitness or in this unworthy manner, all the while living in known sins or having never truly resolved against living in such sins and harboring a spirit of hatred, ill will to their brethren, or aiming at nothing else but only some end perfectly [alien] from the design of the ordinance, eat and drink judgment to themselves. That

is to say, their eating and drinking does but much the more expose them to eternal damnation and seals that damnation.

Those that worthily partake eat and drink eternal life; that is, their eating and drinking will be profitable to their souls and tend to their salvation, and the promise of eternal life is sealed to them. But those that eat and drink unworthily, eat and drink their own damnation; that is, by their eating and drinking, they do greatly expose themselves to damnation and seal their own damnation.

Reasons: Because coming after such a manner is horrid contempt of the ordinance and the things signified in it. To come and pretend to eat Christ's body and blood⁴ and to dare allowedly in the meantime to continue in their wicked practices and to bring them into the presence of Christ, to the communion of His body and blood, shows a great contempt of it. If a person should be invited to a prince's table and should willfully and allowedly come with his garments all over defiled with ordure,⁵ it would show a great contempt of the prince and what he was invited to.

So, it shows a great contempt of the ordinance and of Jesus Christ and His body and blood to improve it only for some temporal design and aim. Such persons are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord; they make themselves mere murderers of Christ. Those that stood by when Christ was crucified and showed that they made a light matter of it and had treated the body of Christ, when dying or dead, contemptuously and with indignity, it might justly be imputed to them as partaking in His murder. So those that contemptuously treat those symbols of the body of Christ slain and His blood shed, why, they make themselves guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, that is, of murdering it.

There are two ways of eating and drinking the body and blood of Christ. One is eating and drinking for spiritual food and nourishment as the worthy partakers do. And another is eating the body and drinking the blood of Christ as a wild beast eats his prey: they do, as it were, drink the blood of Christ out of a murderous bloodthirstiness. They eat His flesh as Job says the men of his tabernacle said of him, that they longed to be revenged on: "O that we had of his flesh!" (Job 31:31). And this is to eat and drink as the murderers of Christ might be metaphorically said to eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ,

⁴ **EDITOR'S NOTE:** The author does not mean literally eating and drinking Christ's flesh and blood, but spiritually by faith.

⁵ **ordure** – filth; excrement.

that is, a prey to their malice. Unworthy partakers, they are partakers with those murderers. They are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

They eat and drink their own damnation because they therein expressed such a contempt of that which is their only remedy from damnation, that is, the body and blood of Jesus Christ. They that in eating and drinking do receive and embrace Jesus Christ, they eat and drink their salvation because they receive the Savior. But they which in eating and drinking do but trample on Christ and, as it were, spit in His face, eat and drink their damnation because they cast this indignity upon the only means of their salvation...

The use of this doctrine is to warn all persons carefully to examine themselves before they come to the Lord's Supper, that they do not seal their own damnation. If you would not, as it were, consign yourself over to Satan, be careful to examine yourself before you come to the Lord's Supper. And if there be any...[that] have hitherto neglected this duty of self-examination before they come, let them no more neglect it. And if there be any that live in any wickedness that have not taken up a resolution, let them by no means approach until they have. If upon self-examination, you find yourself unfit in these respects, it will not excuse you from coming. One wickedness does not excuse you, though, it is true, if you will continue, you had much better stay away than come. But the end of examination is that you may amend before you come.

If there be any now about to approach that are in any of these mentioned ways of wickedness, I forewarn them in the name of Jesus Christ not to presume to touch until they have taken up a resolution. If you live in any known way of wickedness, do not come here to eat and drink damnation to yourselves.

From "Self-Examination and the Lord's Supper," in *Jonathan Edwards Sermons*, ed. Mark Valeri (New Haven, CT: The Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University, 1730-1731).

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758): American Congregational preacher and theologian; born in East Windsor, Connecticut Colony, USA.



In vain do they pretend to be possessed of faith, who do not live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. For they to whom God has shown the good—Christ Himself—and have by faith rolled the burden of their salvation upon Him, will do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with their God.—*Thomas Boston*

A SHORT DIRECTORY

Thomas Wilcox (1621-1687)

DIRECTORY for the great, necessary, and advantageous duty of self-examination, whereby a serious Christian may every evening examine himself.¹

QUESTIONS RELATING TO RELIGIOUS EXERCISES

1. Have I had any sensible communion with God in the exercise?²
2. Have I not neglected my private nor my family duties?
3. Have I not omitted reading the Word of God?
4. Have I not omitted holy meditations 1) concerning the Word preached, 2) concerning God, 3) concerning Christ, 4) concerning sin, 5) concerning Scriptures—the Word of God, 6) providences—the works of God, 7) about my duties, 8) about death, 9) about the Last Judgment, 10) about hell, 11) about heaven?
5. Have I not been careless and formal in prayer, either private in the closet or in family prayer,³ and performed the same out of custom, and not out of love and affection to the duty?
6. Have I not been careless and superficial in reading the Word, but serious and zealous to pray for a blessing, for increase of life and light by that duty?
7. Have I not for haste in worldly business cut my prayers short or lain upon my bed for idleness, when I should have been upon my knees?
8. Have I after duty gone upon my watch tower to look out and watch for a blessing and the fruits of my duties?

QUESTIONS RELATING TO SINS AND TEMPTATIONS

1. Have I guarded against and feared temptations, or have I heedlessly rushed among them?
2. What temptations have I this day striven against and conquered?
3. Have I this day done nothing against or contrary to my knowledge,

¹ **EDITOR'S NOTE:** Not all will agree that believers are obliged to examine themselves by a list of questions every evening as the author recommends. Nevertheless, questions such as these help us to consider our thoughts, words, and deeds before our Savior. Such meditations and examinations are not for condemnation, but for provoking dependence on and greater love for Christ. May the reader find these useful for meditation.

² **sensible communion...exercise** – experienced spiritual communion by the Spirit's power.

³ **family prayer** – another term for family worship; see FGB, 188, *Family Worship*.

- or have I not sinned with full purpose and resolution?
4. Do I not knowingly live in a course of sin, whether of omission or commission?
 5. Have I carefully kept myself from my iniquity, or have I again relapsed into it?
 6. Have I given any man any occasion of offence or been offended unjustly by any this day?
 7. Does not sin lie light upon my heart, so that the gospel and grace and the promises are less sweet and precious to me?
 8. When I fell into any sin, did I seriously without delay rise again by repentance and neither palliated nor extenuated⁴ my sin?

QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE THOUGHT OF THE HEART

1. Have I kept my heart in a serious spiritual and holy frame, so to be ready at all times for the exercise of holy duties, and so have gone from one duty to another?
2. Have I had the Lord always before my eyes, and especially have my thoughts been of Him when I awaked?
3. Hath eternity made any impressions on my heart, and have I set death and judgment with the consequences thereof before my eyes?
4. Have I made conscience of vain, idle, and wandering thoughts and guarded against them?
5. Have I been serious and frequent in holy and heavenly spontaneous prayers all day and so walked with God in all my affairs?
6. Have I endeavored, when private and solitary, to order and govern my thoughts holily?

QUESTIONS RELATING TO SILENCE AND THE USE OF THE TONGUE

1. Have I bridled my tongue from vain, unnecessary, angry, and perverse words?
2. Have I not spoken evil of any man behind his back? Or did the Lord call me by discovering of the wickedness of another to advance and further my neighbor's interest?
3. Have I with reverence used the name and Word of God and spoken thereof to the edification of others and myself at home or abroad at my rising up and lying down?
4. Have I spoken when I should have been silent?

⁴ **palliated nor extenuated** – partially excused nor tried to lessen the seriousness of.

5. Have I been silent when the Lord called me to speak for His glory and the edification of others?
6. Have I always spoken the truth and not something made of lies or half lies?

QUESTIONS RELATING TO OUR BEHAVIOR AMONG OTHERS

1. Have I behaved myself as a Christian ought to do in reference to superiors and inferiors, juniors and seniors, and my equals?
2. Have I not neglected some duties to them to whom I have particular relation? Or have I done nothing contrary to my duty to such, but duly and truly discharged them?
3. Have I (being a father or mother) taken care first for the souls, and then for the bodies, of my children and wrought for them?
4. Have I (being a child) honored my father and mother? Have I loved them, been obedient [to them,] and thankful for them?
5. Have I (being a husband) been careful for the soul and body of my wife and loved her?
6. Have I (being a wife) loved, honored, and obeyed my husband and heartily cared for his and the family's good?
7. Have I (being a ruler in either church or state) been conscientious to do the duties of my place?
8. Have I (being a subject in the state and a member in the church) carried myself as becomes a Christian towards the magistrate and the minister, highly respecting them, being subject and obedient to them?

QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE EXERCISE OF THE PRINCIPAL GIFTS AND GRACES

1. Have I lived by faith, depending constantly upon the promises and on Christ for help, strength, success, and acceptance with God?
2. Have I with all diligence endeavored to express my love to God, to men, and to my enemies themselves this day?
3. Have I denied myself this day and curbed my passions and affections in all occurrences and so behaved myself as one that denies himself?
4. Have I been humble and in all things eschewed⁵ and striven against pride and high-mindedness?
5. Have I walked the whole day in the fear of the Lord, whether in

⁵ **eschewed** – avoided.

- company or alone, in divine worship and service, or in worldly affairs, always guarding against sin?
6. Have I eschewed or shunned sinful anger and carried myself meekly before God and men?
 7. Have I been content with my state and condition, in which the Lord by His providence hath set me?
 8. Have I been patient, not murmuring or [complaining] (when I met with difficulties and oppressions) against God and men?
 9. Have I in all things expressed and declared my uprightness and honesty and shunned and striven against all deceit and hypocrisy?
 10. Have I been heavenly-minded and delighted myself in God and striven against earthly-mindedness.

QUESTIONS RELATING TO OUR TIME AND OPPORTUNITIES

1. Have I this day redeemed time for the good of my soul, as esteeming it precious?
2. Have I not slept too long and more than was necessary, to that my exercises in private or in the family must be shortened or some necessary or profitable work omitted?
3. Have I not misspent my time with idle, unnecessary, and fruitless discourse, or with unnecessary and unreasonable reflections?
4. Have I not fed many idle and vain imaginations and thoughts, which time might have been improved to the advantage of my soul?
5. Have I redeemed time from all those long and unnecessary visits or from long and tedious meals?
6. Have I not lost time with too much and long discourse about worldly things or by doing more about them than was necessary?
7. Have I diligently improved my time this day for God and for my eternal salvation, striving to take heaven by violence?
8. Have I constantly observed every opportunity to the good of my soul, either to my instruction or reproof or to excite to more diligence?

From *A Short Directory for the Great, Necessary, and Advantageous Duty of Self-examination*; in the public domain.

Thomas Wilcox (1621-1687): English Particular Baptist pastor and author; born in Lyndon, Rutland, England, UK.



DOES CHRIST DWELL IN YOU?

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

*Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you,
except ye be reprobates?—2 Corinthians 13:5*

MAY the Spirit of the living God drive the sword in up to its very hilt this morning that now the power of God may be felt in every heart, searching and trying the reins. “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith” (2Co 13:5).

Examine yourselves, first, *because it is a matter of the very highest importance*. Small tradesmen may take coppers¹ over the counter without much examination; but when it comes to gold, they will ring it well,² for they could not afford to lose a sovereign³ out of their little gains. And if it comes to a five-pound note, there is an anxious holding it up to the window to see if the water mark be there and whether all be correct; for it might be ruin to the man if he lost a sum to him so large. Ah, but, merchants and tradesmen, if ye be deceived in the matter of your own souls, ye are deceived indeed. Look well to the title deeds of your estate; look well to your life policies and to all the business that you do; but, remember, all the gold and silver you have are but as the rack and scum⁴ of the furnace compared with the matter now in hand. It is your soul, your own soul, your never-dying soul! Will you risk that?

In times of panic, men will scarcely trust their fellows. I would to God there was a panic this day, so that no man would trust himself. Ye may trust your fellows far more safely than ye may trust yourselves. Will ye think, men and brethren, what your soul is? “The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment” (Luk 12:23). But the soul is as much more to be accounted of than the body, as the body is more important than the raiment. Here are my clothes! Let me be robbed of my garments; if my body be secure, what signifies it? And as for my body, what is it, after all, but the rag that enshrines and covers my soul? Let that be sick, let that become like a worn-out vesture. I can afford to lose my body; but, O God, I cannot afford to have my

¹ coppers – pennies.

² ring it well – strike metal with something hard to see if it is genuine.

³ sovereign – gold coin of England.

⁴ rack and scum – impurities raked from the surface of molten metal.

soul cast into hell! What a frightful hazard is that which you and I are running if we do not examine ourselves! It is an everlasting hazard. It is a hazard of heaven or of hell, of God's eternal favor, or of His everlasting curse! Well might the apostle say, "Examine yourselves."

Again: Examine yourselves *because if ye make a mistake ye can never rectify it, except in this world.* A bankrupt may have lost a fortune once, and yet may make another. But make bankruptcy—*spiritual* bankruptcy—in this life, and you will never have an opportunity to trade for heaven again. A great general may lose one battle; but with skill and courage, he may retrieve his honor by winning another. But [if you] get defeated in the battle of this life, and you can no more gird on your armor, you are defeated forever! The day is lost, and there is no hope of your being able to gain it again, or so much as to make the attempt. Now or never, man! Remember that. Thy soul's eternal state hangs on the turn of today. Loiter thy time away, waste thine abilities, take thy religion at second hand, of thy priest, of thy minister, or of thy friend; and in the next world thou shalt everlastingly rue⁵ the error, but thou shalt have no hope of amending⁶ it.

Examine yourselves *because many have been mistaken.* That is a matter I will undertake to affirm upon my own authority, certain that each one of you can confirm it by your own observation. How many in this world think themselves to be godly when they are not? You have, in the circle of your own friends, persons making a profession, of whom you often stand in astonishment and wonder how they dare to do it! Friend, if others have been mistaken, may not you be? If some here and there fall into an error, may not you also do the same? Are you better than they? No, in no wise. You may be mistaken also. Methinks⁷ I see the rocks on which many souls have been lost—the rocks of presumption and the siren song⁸ of self-confidence entices you on to those rocks this morning. Stay, mariner, stay, I beseech thee! Let yon⁹ bleached bones keep thee back. Many have been lost. Many are lost now and are wailing at this present hour their everlasting ruin, and their loss is to be traced to nothing more than this: that *they never examined themselves* whether they were in the faith.

⁵ **rue** – regret.

⁶ **amending** – correcting.

⁷ **methinks** – I think.

⁸ **siren song** – something mysteriously attractive but dangerous; Greek mythology speaks of sirens, who were part woman, part bird. Their beautiful songs seductively drew sailors too close to the deadly, rocky shoreline of the sirens' island. When the ships crashed, the sirens came down from the rocks to devour the flesh of the shipwrecked sailors.

⁹ **yon** – yonder; distant but within sight.

And here let me appeal to each person now present. Do not tell me that you are an old church member. I am glad to hear it; but still, I beseech you, examine yourself. For a man may be a professor of religion thirty or forty years, and yet there may come a trial day, when his religion shall snap after all and prove to be a rotten bough of the forest. Tell me not you are a deacon. That you may be, and yet you may be damnably deceived. Ay, and whisper not to me that you are a minister. My brethren in the ministry, we may lay aside our cassocks¹⁰ to wear belts of flame in hell! We may go from our pulpit, having preached to others what we never knew ourselves, and have to join the everlasting wailings of souls we have helped to delude. May God save us from such a doom as that! But let no man fold his arms and say, “I need not examine myself,” for there is not a man here or anywhere who has not good cause to test and try himself today.

Furthermore: examine yourselves *because God will examine you.* In the hand of God there is the scale and the balance. You shall not be taken into heaven for what you profess to be; but you shall be weighed—every one of you put into the scale! What a moment will that be with me and with you, when we are in God’s great scale. Surely were it not for faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and for a certainty that we shall be clothed in His righteousness at last, we might all tremble at the thought of ever being there, lest we should have to come out of the scale with this verdict: “*Tekel*”—(“*Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin*”)—“thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting” (Dan 5:25, 27). God will not take His gold and silver by appearance, but every vessel must be purified in the fire. We must each one of us pass through a most searching test and scrutiny. Beloved, if our hearts condemn us, how much more shall God condemn us? If we are afraid to examine ourselves, what cause have we to tremble at the thought of the dread searching of God? Some of you feel that you are condemned this very day by a poor creature like me. How much more, then, shall you be condemned when God, in thunder robed, shall summon you and all your fellows to the last infallible judgment. Oh, may God help us now to examine ourselves!

And I have yet one more reason to give. Examine yourselves, my dear friends, because, if you are in doubt now, the speediest way to get rid of your doubts and fears is by self-examination. I believe that many persons are always doubting their eternal condition because they do not examine themselves.

¹⁰ **cassocks** – robes or gowns worn over other garments, particularly by the clergy.

Self-examination is the safest cure for one half the doubts and fears that vex God's people. Look at the captain over yonder. He is in his ship, and he says to the sailors, "You must sail very warily and carefully, and be upon your watch; for, to tell you the truth, I do not know where I am. I do not exactly know my latitude and longitude; and there may be rocks very close ahead, and we may soon have the ship broken up." He goes down into the cabin, he searches the chart, he takes an inspection of the heavens, he comes up again, and he says, "Hoist every sail, and go along as merrily as you please. I have discovered where we are. The water is deep, and there is a wide sea room. There is no need for you to be in any trouble; searching has satisfied me." And how happy will it be with you, if, after having searched yourself you can say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him" (2Ti 1:12). Why, then you will go along merrily and joyfully, because the search has had a good result. And what if it should have a bad result? Better that you should find it out now than find it out too late. One of the prayers I often pray and desire to pray as long as I live is this: "Lord, let me know the worst of my case. If I have been living in a false comfort, Lord, rend it away. Let me know just what I am and where I am, and rather let me think too harshly of my condition before Thee than think too securely and so be ruined by presumption." May that be a prayer of each heart and be heard in heaven!

And now, how are you to search yourselves? I am to try and help you, though it must be very briefly.

First, if you would examine yourselves, *begin with your public life.* Are you dishonest? Can you thief? Can you swear? Are you given to drunkenness, uncleanness, blasphemy, taking God's name in vain, and violation of His holy day? Make short work with yourself. There will be no need to go into any further tests. He that doeth these things hath no inheritance in the kingdom of God (Eph 5:5). You are reprobate;¹¹ the wrath of God abideth on you. Your state is fearful. You are accursed now, and except you repent, you must be accursed forever.

And yet, Christian, despite thy many sins, canst thou say, "By the grace of God I am what I am; but I seek to live a righteous, godly, and sober life, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation"? Remember, professor, by thy works thou shalt be judged at last. Thy works cannot save thee, but they can prove that thou art saved! Or if they be evil works, they can prove that thou art not saved at all. And

¹¹ **reprobate** – rejected.

here, I must say, every one of us has good cause to tremble, for our outward acts are not what we would have them to be. Let us go to our houses and fall upon our face and cry again, “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luk 18:13); and let us seek for more grace, that henceforth our lives may be more consistent and more in accordance with the spirit of Christ.

Again: another set of tests—*private tests. How about your private life?* Do you live without prayer, without searching the Scriptures? Do you live without thoughts of God? Can you live as a habitual stranger to the Most High, having no love to Him, and no fear of Him? If so, I make short work of the matter: you are “in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity” (Act 8:23). But if thou art right at heart, thou wilt be able to say, “I could not live without prayer. I have to weep over my prayers, but still I should weep ten times more if I did not pray. I do love God’s Word; ‘it is my meditation all the day’ (Psa 119:97). I love His people. I love His house. I can say that my hands are often lifted upward towards Him. And when my heart is busy with this world’s affairs, it is often going up to His throne.” A good sign, Christian, a good sign for thee; if thou canst go through this test, thou mayest hope that all is well.

But go a little deeper. Hast thou ever wept over thy lost condition? Hast thou ever bemoaned thy lost estate before God? Say, hast thou ever tried to save thyself and found it a failure? And hast thou been driven to rely simply, wholly, and entirely on Christ? If so, then thou hast passed the test well enough. And hast thou now faith in Christ—a faith that makes thee love Him? A faith that enables thee to trust Him in the darkest hour? Canst thou say of a truth that thou hast a secret affection towards the Most High—that thou lovest His Son, that thy desire is after His ways, that thou feelest the influence of the divine Spirit and seekest every day to experience the fellowship of the Holy Spirit more and more?

And lastly, canst thou say that Jesus Christ is in thee? If not, thou art reprobate. Sharp though that word be, thou art a reprobate. But if Jesus Christ be in thy heart, though thy heart sometimes be so dark that thou canst scarcely tell He is there, yet thou art accepted in the beloved, and thou mayest “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1Pe 1:8).

From a sermon delivered on Lord’s Day morning, October 10, 1858,
at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.



APPLYING SELF-EXAMINATION

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

I end my inquiries here. I might easily add to them; but I trust I have said enough at the beginning of this volume to stir up self-inquiry and self-examination in many minds. God is my witness that I have said nothing that I do not feel of paramount importance to my own soul. I only want to do good to others. Let me now conclude all with a few words of practical application.

Is any reader of this paper *asleep and utterly thoughtless about religion*? Oh, awake and sleep no more! Look at the churchyards and cemeteries. One by one the people around you are dropping into them, and you must lie there one day. Look forward to a world to come, and lay your hand on your heart, and say, if you dare, that you are fit to die and meet God. Ah! You are like one sleeping in a boat drifting down the stream towards the falls of Niagara! “What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God...Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light” (Jon 1:6; Eph 5:14).

Is any reader of this paper *feeling self-condemned and afraid that there is no hope for his soul*? Cast aside your fears and accept the [call] of our Lord Jesus Christ to sinners. Hear Him saying, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest...If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink...Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (Mat 11:28; Joh 7:37; 6:37). Doubt not that these words are for you as well as for anyone else. Bring all your sins, unbelief, sense of guilt, unfitness, doubts, and infirmities—bring all to Christ. “This man receiveth sinners,” and He will receive you (Luk 15:2). Do not stand still, halting between two opinions, and waiting for a convenient season. “Rise; he calleth thee” (Mar 10:49). Come to Christ this very day.

Is any reader of this paper a professing believer in Christ, but a *believer without much joy and peace and comfort*? Take advice this day. Search your own heart and see whether the fault be not entirely your own. Very likely you are sitting at ease, content with a little faith, a little repentance, a little grace, a little sanctification, and unconsciously shrinking back from extremes. You will never be a very happy Christian at this rate, if you live to the age of Methuselah. If you

love life and would see good days, change your plan without delay. Come out boldly and act decidedly. Be thorough, thorough, *very* thorough in your Christianity, and set your face fully towards the sun. Lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset you. Strive to get nearer to Christ, to abide in Him, to cleave to Him, to sit at His feet like Mary, and to drink full draughts out of the fountain of life. “These things,” says St. John, “write we unto you, that your joy may be full” (1Jo 1:4). “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another” (1Jo 1:7).

Is any reader of this paper *a believer oppressed with doubts and fears, on account of his feebleness, infirmity, and sense of sin?* Remember the text that says of Jesus, “A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench” (Mat 12:20). Take comfort in the thought that this text is for you. What though your faith be feeble? It is better than no faith at all. The least grain of life is better than death. Perhaps you are expecting too much in this world. Earth is not heaven. You are yet in the body. Expect little from self, but much from Christ. Look more to Jesus, and less to self.

Finally, is any reader of this paper *sometimes downcast by the trials he meets with in the way to heaven—bodily trials, family trials, trials of circumstances, trials from neighbors, and trials from the world?* Look up to a sympathizing Savior at God’s right hand and pour out your heart before Him. He can be touched with the feeling of your infirmities, for He suffered, Himself being tempted. Are you alone? So was He. Are you misrepresented and calumniated?¹ So was He. Are you forsaken by friends? So was He. Are you persecuted? So was He. Are you wearied in body and grieved in spirit? So was He. Yes! He can feel for you, and He can help as well as feel. Then learn to draw nearer to Christ. The time is short. Yet a little time, and all will be over: we shall soon be “with the Lord” (1Th 4:17). “There is an end; and thine expectation shall not be cut off...Ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry” (Pro 23:18; Heb 10:36-37).

From *Practical Religion* (London: Charles Murray, 1900),
3-9; in the public domain.



It is well when a man likes a heart-searching ministry, when he says, “Cut deep, sir! Do not spare me. If I am a hypocrite, let me know it.”—*C. H. Spurgeon*

¹ **calumniated** – slandered.