

Solemn Inquiries; and Counsel to Careless Sinners

Reader, you have a soul, an immortal soul, a soul which must shortly live either in heaven, or in hell. Do you ever think of this? Do you *seriously* reflect upon it? For which state is your soul prepared? To which is it hastening? The inquiry is important; for what will it profit you to gain the whole world and lose your soul (Matt. 16:26)? Can you endure everlasting burnings! But you hope to be saved. Take care, then, that your hope be well founded. You trust perhaps to the mere mercy of God; but remember, that God is just and true, as well as merciful. God has made laws, every one of which you and I have broken. Are you not bound to love God with all your heart; yet do you not love the world? The world is at enmity with God, and the Apostle John says, that “if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15). Are you not living as the generality of the world are living? Then you are in the broad road which leadeth to destruction (Matt. 7:13-14). Have you not profaned God’s holy name and Sabbath? Have you not indulged anger, envy, lust, and many evil affections? Has there been no deceit in your lips? I will suppose that you never omit morning nor evening prayer; but do you pray for mercy as fervently as a starving beggar asks for a piece of bread, or a condemned criminal for pardon? I will suppose that you never omit to praise God twice every day for the blessings you receive from Him; but do you return God thanks for sending His own Son to suffer for the ungodly, as heartily as you would thank a man that had saved you from being drowned? Your conscience must plead guilty, and God’s Word declares that such as you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. But perhaps you think that they only who live *constantly* in open sins deserve eternal punishment. There you are mistaken. God’s holy law curses us for one offense (Gal. 3:10). Think then how many curses must hang over you! If for one offense you are condemned forever, what an account have you to give! What a dreadful sentence have you to expect!

And now let me ask if you know how to escape this misery? Suppose you are sorry for your sins: will that sorrow procure your pardon? No. Would *you* forgive a man twenty pounds, because he was sorry that he owed it to you? Neither will God forgive you merely on account of your sorrow. Judas repented thus, but was not saved (Matt. 27:3; Acts 1:25). Will sorrow for the past, and amendment for the future, save you? No. Would *you* forgive a man a large debt, because he did not continue to increase that debt? Neither will God.

God, however, out of His great mercy, has provided a way in which He can pardon sinners, without violating either His justice or His truth. Do you know this way? Do you know how mercy and truth can meet together? Have you lived so many years exposed to eternal death, in hourly danger of its execution, and are you ignorant of the only method by which you may escape it? In what a deplorable condition is your soul! Oh, think, if you die this day, what must be your state forever? Had you died yesterday, where would your soul have been at this instant? Would it have been in heaven? How could you have been there, when, so far from having embraced the way of salvation declared in the Gospel, you do not even know what it is? Well, then, bless God that He has spared your life, and may He enable you to receive instruction.

Do you ask what you must do to be saved? To this most important question, I answer, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (See Acts 16:25-31). “He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned...” (Mark 16:16).

But what is it to believe in Him? It is to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the brightness of His glory, the express image of His Person; that He took our nature upon Him in order to obey that law which we had broken, and bear the punishment which our sins deserved; and that no man, however honest, chaste, sober, and charitable he may be, can be delivered from hell, or enjoy the happiness of heaven, but *only* on account of the sufferings and death of Christ. It is, in short, to receive and rest upon Christ alone for salvation, as He is freely offered in the Gospel. Let me beseech you, then, to go to Christ with the publican’s humble prayer, “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13). Look on Christ as nailed to the cross for your sins, and as dying that you might live. Do not imagine that your own works will save you; or that you are to be saved, partly by your own works, and partly by the righteousness of Jesus Christ. If you are ever saved, it must be through the merits of *Christ alone*; “for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). And if God, by His Holy Spirit, enable you to receive it as “a

faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Tim. 1:15), you will trust in *Christ alone* for the forgiveness of your sins; you will look to Christ for grace to follow the example of His holy life; in short, you will take Christ as your Prophet to teach you, your Priest to atone and intercede for you, and your King to rule over you and in you. *Do this, and you shall be saved.*

I said above, that you cannot be saved on account of your sorrow for sin, or amendment; yet both of these are so necessary, that you cannot be saved without them. You may dread the consequences of your sins, and on this account be sorry for them, and in a sense forsake them, and yet be lost. There is a sorrow of the world which worketh death. But *godly sorrow* for sin proceeds from the Spirit of God (2 Cor. 7:10). And if you have that Spirit, you will look on Him whom you have pierced by your iniquities, and mourn (Zech. 12:10). You will hate sin, and abhor yourself from a sense of your own vileness. Faith in Christ can be found only in a heart sanctified by the Holy Spirit. If any man be in Christ, he is *a new creature* (2 Cor. 5:17); he is *born again* (John 3:3). Have you been born again? If so, you love those things which you before hated, and hate what you before loved. You have hitherto loved the world, self, and sin; now you love God, His Word, commandments, house and ordinances. You have hitherto neglected your soul; now you are looking to Christ for pardon, grace, and glory. Unless all your aims, designs, and pursuits, be changed, that is, “Except you be born again, you cannot see the kingdom of God.”

The new birth is an inward work upon the soul, wrought by the Spirit of God. I beseech you, do not rest, but search the Scriptures daily, that you may obtain further instruction in the nature of this new birth. When you understand the true state of every man who is born into the world, as set forth in Romans 3, you will be better able to see the nature and necessity of the new birth spoken of in John 3.

Attend to the Scriptures of truth, as the word of the living God, who cannot lie; believe what they testify concerning your lost state by nature, and the character of Jesus, as having finished the work of salvation, and now exalted as a Prince and Savior, to give repentance and remission of sins, able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him (Heb. 7:25). In believing, you shall assuredly experience a peace and joy which the world cannot give or take away.

May God bless these words to the benefit of your soul.—*Author Unknown*