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Martin Luther

November 10, 1483 to February 18, 1546 (63), Church Father

Martin Luther is a church reformer whose ideas influenced the Protestant Reformation and changed the course of Western civilization.

**Martin Luther**

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1440

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Martin Luther was a German monk, theologian, university professor, Father of Protestantism and church reformer whose ideas influenced the Protestant Reformation and changed the course of Western civilization.



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When the final draft of the Edict of Worms was presented, declaring Luther an outlaw. Frederick III, had him discreetly intercepted on his way home by masked horsemen and escorted to the security of the Wartburg Castle at Eisenach, where Luther grew a beard and lived incognito for nearly eleven months.

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Justification by Faith

From the day he first saw into the meaning of the statement ***“the just shall live by faith”*** until now, the reverberations of Martin Luther’s revelation of justification by faith have greatly impacted the church. The dynamic of Luther’s salvation experience was a combination of things: his being a sensitive and devoted Augustinian monk with a troubled conscience, his observations of the corruption of the papal system, the influence of the mystic writers upon him, and his careful examination of the precise meaning of “justice” and “justification” in the book of Romans.

By the time Luther saw that justification was by faith alone, and not by works, he had virtually exhausted every possible means of saving himself. He had fasted, he had prayed, and he had gone on pilgrimages. He had confessed his sins over and over again to the point that his Augustinian vicar, Johann von Staupitz, said to him, *“Look here, if you expect Christ to forgive you, come in with something to forgive — parricide, blasphemy, adultery — instead of all these peccadilloes.”*

Luther’s troubled conscience was pained over the slightest movement within him, and according to Staupitz, he seemed to thrive on his inward torment. Nevertheless, Luther’s deep turmoil was preparing him to find a Christ that he had never known before. ***“The righteousness of God”*** became a revelation, not of an angry, judging God, but of the way God makes men righteous — through Christ dying on the cross, and by simple faith in that fact. Luther’s own words tell the story of this far-reaching discovery:

I greatly longed to understand Paul’s Epistleto the Romans and nothing stood in the way but that one expression, “the justice of God,” because I took it to mean that justice whereby God is just and deals justly in punishing the unjust. My situation was that, although an impeccable monk, I stood before God as a sinner troubled in conscience, and I had no confidence that my merit would appease Him. Therefore I did not love a just and angry God, but rather hated and murmured against Him. Yet I clung to the dear Paul and had a great yearning to know what he meant.

Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that ***“the just shall live by his faith.”*** Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before the “justice of God” had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul’s became to me a gate to heaven. Instantly all Scripture looked different to me. I passed through the Holy Scriptures, so far as I was able to recall them from memory, and gathered a similar sense from other expressions. Thus the *“work of God”* is that which God works in us; the *“strength of God”* is that through which He makes us strong; the *“wisdom of God”* is that through which He makes us wise; and the *“power of God,”* the *“blessing of God,”* the *“honor of God,”* are expressions used in the same way.

As intensely as I had formerly hated the expression “righteousness of God,” I now loved and praised it as the sweetest of concepts; and so this passage of Paul’s actually was the portal of paradise to me. These words, “the just” and righteousness,” were lightning and thunder in my conscience under the papacy, and merely hearing them mentioned terrified me.

In this tower, in which there was a special place for the monks, I once meditated on these words:

“The just lives by faith” (Hab. 2:4), and “the righteousness of God” (Rom. 1:17).

Then it suddenly came to my mind: If we are to live righteously because of righteousness by faith, and this righteousness of God is intended to save everyone who believes, it follows that righteousness is by faith, and life by righteousness. And my conscience and spirit were lifted up, and I was made certain that it is the righteousness of God which justifies and saves us. And immediately these words became sweet and delightful words to me. These things the Holy Spirit taught me in this tower.… This most excellent righteousness— the righteousness of faith —which God imputes to us through Christ, without our works, is neither a civil (politica) nor a ceremonial righteousness nor one of the divine Law nor one concerned with our works. This righteousness is totally different, that is, a merely passive righteousness, just as those mentioned above are active righteousnesses.

Door of the Schlosskirche (castle church) in Wittenberg to which Luther is said to have nailed his 95 Theses, sparking the Reformation.For in this righteousness we do nothing, nor do we have anything to give to God; we only receive and allow Another to work within us, that is to say, God. That is why this righteousness of faith, or this Christian righteousness, may be called a passive righteousness. This is the righteousness shrouded in mystery (Col. 1:26), a righteousness which the world does not understand, and not only so, but one which even Christians do not sufficiently grasp and which they find difficult to cling to in times of temptation. This is why we must constantly drill it and stress it without ceasing. And he who does not grasp it and cling to it in afflictions and amid the terrors of conscience cannot hold his own; for besides this passive righteousness there is no other comfort of conscience so firm and certain.… All works, however holy they may be, are completely excluded and put aside as necessary for salvation. If a good work saves a man, then apples and pears also save him. Christian righteousness is not a righteousness that is within us and clings to us, as a quality or virtue does, that is, something that is found to be part of us or something that is felt by us. But it is a foreign righteousness entirely outside us, namely, Christ Himself is our formalis Iustitia, our essential Righteousness and complete Satisfaction (1 Cor. 1:30).

Christian righteousness is not a righteousness that is within us and clings to us, as a quality or virtue does . . .

Christ's Righteousness

In order to grasp this matter the better, I am in the habit of imagining that there is no quality in my heart which is called faith or love. Instead, I put Christ in its place and say: “This is my Righteousness.” I do so in order thereby to free myself from looking to the Law for righteousness or from regarding this Christ as merely a Teacher or Giver of knowledge. Rather I want Him to be my Gift and my Doctrine in His own Person, so that I have everything in Him, just as He says: “I am the Way” (John 14:6). He does not say: “I give you the way,” as if He were working and giving me this way while He Himself is standing outside me. He must be, remain, live, speak in me, not through me, as Paul says:

“That we might be the righteousness of God in Him,” not in the love and gifts that follow (2 Cor. 5:21)

If you have a true faith that Christ is your Savior, then at once you have a gracious God, for faith leads you in and opens up God’s heart and will, that you should see pure grace and overflowing love. This it is to behold God in faith that you should look upon His fatherly, friendly heart, in which there is no anger nor ungraciousness. He who sees God as angry does not see Him rightly but looks only on a curtain, as if a dark cloud had been drawn across His face. But this must be our ground and anchor-hold, that Christ is our only perfect righteousness. If we have nothing in which we may trust, yet these three things (as Paul says) faith, hope and love do remain. Therefore we must always believe and always hope; we must always take hold of Christ as the head and fountain of our righteousness. He that believes in Him shall not be ashamed. Moreover, we must labor to be outwardly righteous also: that is to say, not to consent to the flesh, which always entices us to some evil; but to resist it by the spirit. We must not be overcome with impatience for the unthankfulness and contempt of the people who abuse the Christian liberty; but through the Spirit we must overcome this and all other temptations. Look then how much we strive against the flesh by the spirit, so much are we outwardly righteous. Although this righteousness does not commend us before God.

Let no man therefore despair if he feels the flesh oftentimes stirring up new battles against the spirit, or if he cannot by and by subdue the flesh, and make it obedient unto the spirit. I also do wish myself to have a more valiant and constant heart, which might be able, not only boldly to despise the threatenings of tyrants, the heresies, offenses and tumults which the fantastical spirits stir up; but also might by and by shake off the vexations and anguish of spirit, and briefly, might not fear the sharpness of death, but receive and embrace it as a most friendly guest. But I find another law in my members, rebelling against the law of my mind, and so forth. Some others do wrestle with inferior temptations, as poverty, reproach, impatience and such-like.

Let no man marvel therefore or be dismayed when he feels in his body this battle of the flesh against the spirit: but let him pluck up his heart and comfort himself with these words of Paul’s: “The flesh lusts against the spirit,” and so forth, and: “These are contrary one to another, so that you do not do those things that you would.” For by these sentences he comforts them that are tempted. As if he should say: It is impossible for you to follow the guiding of the Spirit in all things without any feeling or hindrance of the flesh; indeed, the flesh will resist: and so resist and hinder you that you cannot do those things that gladly you would. Here, it shall be enough if you resist the flesh and fulfill not the lust thereof: that is to say, if you follow the spirit and not the flesh, which easily is overthrown by impatience, covets to revenge, bites, grudges, hates God, is angry with Him, despairs, and so forth. Therefore when a man feels this battle of the flesh, let him not be discouraged with that, but let him resist in the Spirit, and say: I am a sinner, and I feel sin in me, for I have not yet put off the flesh, in which sin dwells so long as it lives; but I will obey the spirit and not the flesh: that is, I will by faith and hope lay hold upon Christ, and by His word I will raise up myself, and being so raised up, I will not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

The room in Wartburg where Luther translated the New Testament into German. There is an original first edition of the translation under the case on the desk.It is very profitable for the godly to know this, and to bear it well in mind; for it wonderfully comforts them when they are tempted. When I was a monk I thought by and by that I was utterly cast away, if at any time I felt the concupiscence of the flesh: that is to say, if I felt any evil motion, fleshly lust, wrath, hatred, or envy against any brother. I tried many ways, I went to confession daily, and so forth, but it profited me not; for the concupiscence of my flesh did always return, so that I could not rest, but was continually vexed with these thoughts: This or that sin you have committed; you are infected with envy, with impatience, and such other sins; therefore you have entered into this holy order in vain, and all your good works are unprofitable. If then I had rightly understood these sentences of Paul’s: “The flesh lusts contrary to the spirit, and the spirit contrary to the flesh,” and so forth, and “these two are one against another, so that you cannot do the things that you would do,” I should not have so miserably tormented myself, but should have thought and said to myself, as now commonly I do: Martin, you shall not utterly be without sin, for you have yet flesh; you shall therefore feel the battle thereof, according to that saying of Paul’s: “The flesh resists the spirit.” Despair not therefore, but resist it strongly, and fulfill not the lust thereof. Thus doing you are not under the law.

I remember that Staupitius was accustomed to say: “I have vowed unto God more than a thousand times that I would become a better man; but I never performed that which I vowed. Hereafter I will make no such vow: for I have now learned by experience that I am not able to perform it. Unless therefore God be favorable and merciful unto me for Christ’s sake, and grant unto me a blessed and a happy hour when I shall depart out of this miserable life, I shall not be able with all my vows and all my good deeds, to stand before Him.” This was not only a true, but also a godly and a holy desperation: and this must they all confess both with mouth and heart, which will be saved. For the godly trust not to their own righteousness, but say with David:

“Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, for in Your sight shall none that live be justified” (Psa. 143:2), and: “If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?” (Psa.130:3).

They look unto Christ their Reconciler, who gave His life for their sins. Moreover, they know that the remnant of sin which is in their flesh is not laid to their charge, but freely pardoned. Notwithstanding in the meanwhile they fight in the Spirit against the flesh, so that they should not fulfill the lust thereof. And although they feel the flesh to rage and rebel against the spirit, and they themselves also do fall sometimes into sin through infirmity, yet they are not discouraged, nor think therefore that their state and kind of life, and the works which are done according to their calling, displease God: but they raise up themselves by faith.

The faithful therefore receive great consolation by this doctrine of Paul’s, in that they know themselves to have partly the flesh, and partly the spirit, but yet so notwithstanding that the spirit rules and the flesh is subdued, that righteousness reigns and sin serves. He who does not know this doctrine, and thinks that the faithful ought to be without all fault, and yet sees the contrary in himself, will eventually be swallowed up by the spirit of heaviness, and fall into desperation. But whoever knows this doctrine well and uses it rightly, to him the things that are evil turn unto good. For when the flesh provokes him to sin, by occasion thereof he is stirred up and forced to seek forgiveness of sins by Christ, and to embrace the righteousness of faith, which otherwise he would not so greatly esteem, nor seek for the same with so great desire.

Therefore it profits us very much to feel sometimes the wickedness of our nature and corruption of our flesh, that even by this means we may be awakened and stirred up to faith and to call upon Christ. And by this occasion a Christian becomes a mighty workman and a wonderful creator, who of heaviness can make joy, of terror comfort, of sin righteousness, and of death life, when he by this means repressing and bridling the flesh, makes it subject to the Spirit.

Therefore let not them which feel the concupiscence of the flesh, despair of their salvation. Let them feel it and all the force thereof, so that they consent not to it. Let the passions of lust, wrath and such other vices shake them, so that they do not overthrow them. Let sin assail them, so that they do not accomplish it. Indeed, the more godly a man is, the more does he feel that battle. And from this come those lamentable complaints of the saints in the Psalms and in all the Holy Scripture. Of this battle the hermits, the monks, and the schoolmen, and all that seek righteousness and salvation by works, know nothing at all.

Statue of Martin Luther outside the St. Mary's Church, Berlin.But here may some man say, that it is a dangerous matter to teach that a man is not condemned, if by and by he does not overcome the motions and passions of the flesh which he feels. For when this doctrine is taught among the common people, it makes them careless, negligent and slothful. This is what I spoke of a little before, that if we teach faith, then carnal men neglect and reject works: if works be required, then faith and consolation of conscience is lost. Here no man can be compelled, neither can there be any certain rule prescribed. But let every man diligently try himself to see what passion of the flesh he is most subject to, and when he finds that, let him not be careless, nor flatter himself: but let him watch and wrestle in Spirit against it, that if he cannot altogether bridle it, yet at the least he does not fulfill the lust thereof.

This battle of the flesh against the spirit, all the saints have had and felt: and the same do we also feel and prove. He that searches his own conscience, if he is not a hypocrite, shall well perceive this to be true in himself which Paul here says: that the flesh lusts against the spirit. All the faithful therefore do feel and confess that their flesh resists against the spirit, and that these two are so contrary the one to the other in themselves, that, do what they can, they are not able to perform that which they would do. Therefore the flesh hinders us so that we cannot keep the commandments of God, so that we cannot love our neighbors as ourselves, much less can we love God with all our heart, and so forth. Therefore it is impossible for us to become righteous by the works of the law. Indeed there is a good will in us, and so must there be (for it is the Spirit itself which resists the flesh), which would gladly do good, fulfill the law, love God and his neighbor, and such-like, but the flesh does not obey this good will, but resists it: and yet God does not impute unto us this sin, for He is merciful to those that believe, for Christ’s sake.

But it does not follow therefore that you should make a light matter of sin because God does not impute it. True it is that He does not impute it: but to whom, and for what cause? Not to them that are hard-hearted and secure, but to those who repent and lay hold by faith upon Christ the mercy-seat, for whose sake, just as all their sins are forgiven them, even so the remnants of sin which are in them are not imputed unto them. They do not make their sin less than it is, but amplify it and set it out as it is indeed; for they know that it cannot be put away by satisfactions, works, or righteousness, but only by the death of Christ. And yet notwithstanding, the greatness and enormity of their sin does not cause them to despair, but they assure themselves that the same shall not be imputed unto them, or laid unto their charge, for Christ’s sake.

His tombstone in the Castle Church in Wittenberg.Just as Martin Luther was, you may be troubled in your conscience because of personal sins and wrongdoings. Your conscience is loaded with guilt. Perhaps you have attempted to relieve that guilt by making promises to God, or by making determined resolutions to change your ways, or even by telling someone else about your sins. All these self-made “attempts” have not removed the guilt on your troubled conscience. Why? Because the Bible describes all these attempts as “dead works.” Indeed, the accumulation of guilt on your troubled conscience, as on Luther’s, is waiting for you to see and hear the good news of the gospel. The good news is that God’s righteousness has completely solved your problem.

His righteousness is revealed in His way and method of dealing with your troubled conscience. God’s way is the cross of Christ! When Christ died on the cross and shed His precious blood, God’s righteousness was displayed in how He solved the problem of sin and guilt.

Our sins were laid upon Christ once and for all, and we bear them no more (2 Cor. 5:21). God’s righteous character was satisfied with that death (Isa. 53:10-11). It is the blood of Christ, not your own “dead works,” that cleanses your conscience. Hebrews 9:14 tells us, “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

You may need to repent of your repentance that was based upon dead works, and simply look at God’s righteousness manifested on the cross. Only the blood of Jesus Christ can relieve a guilt-ridden conscience. Trust in God’s way of solving your problem of sin and guilt through the cross, and you will find Him!

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If you have a true faith that Christ is your Savior, then at once you have a gracious God, for faith leads you in and opens up God’s heart and will, that you should see pure grace and overflowing love. This it is to behold God in faith that you should look upon His fatherly, friendly heart, in which there is no anger nor ungraciousness. He who sees God as angry does not see Him rightly but looks only on a curtain, as if a dark cloud had been drawn across His face. But this must be our ground and anchor-hold, that Christ is our only perfect righteousness. If we have nothing in which we may trust, yet these three things (as Paul says) faith, hope and love do remain. Therefore we must always believe and always hope; we must always take hold of Christ as the head and fountain of our righteousness. He that believes in Him shall not be ashamed. Moreover, we must labor to be outwardly righteous also: that is to say, not to consent to the flesh, which always entices us to some evil; but to resist it by the spirit. We must not be overcome with impatience for the unthankfulness and contempt of the people who abuse the Christian liberty; but through the Spirit we must overcome this and all other temptations. Look then how much we strive against the flesh by the spirit, so much are we outwardly righteous. Although this righteousness does not commend us before God.

Let no man therefore despair if he feels the flesh oftentimes stirring up new battles against the spirit, or if he cannot by and by subdue the flesh, and make it obedient unto the spirit. I also do wish myself to have a more valiant and constant heart, which might be able, not only boldly to despise the threatenings of tyrants, the heresies, offenses and tumults which the fantastical spirits stir up; but also might by and by shake off the vexations and anguish of spirit, and briefly, might not fear the sharpness of death, but receive and embrace it as a most friendly guest. But I find another law in my members, rebelling against the law of my mind, and so forth. Some others do wrestle with inferior temptations, as poverty, reproach, impatience and such-like.

Let no man marvel therefore or be dismayed when he feels in his body this battle of the flesh against the spirit: but let him pluck up his heart and comfort himself with these words of Paul’s: “The flesh lusts against the spirit,” and so forth, and: “These are contrary one to another, so that you do not do those things that you would.” For by these sentences he comforts them that are tempted. As if he should say: It is impossible for you to follow the guiding of the Spirit in all things without any feeling or hindrance of the flesh; indeed, the flesh will resist: and so resist and hinder you that you cannot do those things that gladly you would. Here, it shall be enough if you resist the flesh and fulfill not the lust thereof: that is to say, if you follow the spirit and not the flesh, which easily is overthrown by impatience, covets to revenge, bites, grudges, hates God, is angry with Him, despairs, and so forth. Therefore when a man feels this battle of the flesh, let him not be discouraged with that, but let him resist in the Spirit, and say: I am a sinner, and I feel sin in me, for I have not yet put off the flesh, in which sin dwells so long as it lives; but I will obey the spirit and not the flesh: that is, I will by faith and hope lay hold upon Christ, and by His word I will raise up myself, and being so raised up, I will not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

The room in Wartburg where Luther translated the New Testament into German. There is an original first edition of the translation under the case on the desk.It is very profitable for the godly to know this, and to bear it well in mind; for it wonderfully comforts them when they are tempted. When I was a monk I thought by and by that I was utterly cast away, if at any time I felt the concupiscence of the flesh: that is to say, if I felt any evil motion, fleshly lust, wrath, hatred, or envy against any brother. I tried many ways, I went to confession daily, and so forth, but it profited me not; for the concupiscence of my flesh did always return, so that I could not rest, but was continually vexed with these thoughts: This or that sin you have committed; you are infected with envy, with impatience, and such other sins; therefore you have entered into this holy order in vain, and all your good works are unprofitable. If then I had rightly understood these sentences of Paul’s: “The flesh lusts contrary to the spirit, and the spirit contrary to the flesh,” and so forth, and “these two are one against another, so that you cannot do the things that you would do,” I should not have so miserably tormented myself, but should have thought and said to myself, as now commonly I do: Martin, you shall not utterly be without sin, for you have yet flesh; you shall therefore feel the battle thereof, according to that saying of Paul’s: “The flesh resists the spirit.” Despair not therefore, but resist it strongly, and fulfill not the lust thereof. Thus doing you are not under the law.

I remember that Staupitius was accustomed to say: “I have vowed unto God more than a thousand times that I would become a better man; but I never performed that which I vowed. Hereafter I will make no such vow: for I have now learned by experience that I am not able to perform it. Unless therefore God be favorable and merciful unto me for Christ’s sake, and grant unto me a blessed and a happy hour when I shall depart out of this miserable life, I shall not be able with all my vows and all my good deeds, to stand before Him.” This was not only a true, but also a godly and a holy desperation: and this must they all confess both with mouth and heart, which will be saved. For the godly trust not to their own righteousness, but say with David:

“Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, for in Your sight shall none that live be justified” (Psa. 143:2), and: “If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?” (Psa.130:3).

They look unto Christ their Reconciler, who gave His life for their sins. Moreover, they know that the remnant of sin which is in their flesh is not laid to their charge, but freely pardoned. Notwithstanding in the meanwhile they fight in the Spirit against the flesh, so that they should not fulfill the lust thereof. And although they feel the flesh to rage and rebel against the spirit, and they themselves also do fall sometimes into sin through infirmity, yet they are not discouraged, nor think therefore that their state and kind of life, and the works which are done according to their calling, displease God: but they raise up themselves by faith.

The faithful therefore receive great consolation by this doctrine of Paul’s, in that they know themselves to have partly the flesh, and partly the spirit, but yet so notwithstanding that the spirit rules and the flesh is subdued, that righteousness reigns and sin serves. He who does not know this doctrine, and thinks that the faithful ought to be without all fault, and yet sees the contrary in himself, will eventually be swallowed up by the spirit of heaviness, and fall into desperation. But whoever knows this doctrine well and uses it rightly, to him the things that are evil turn unto good. For when the flesh provokes him to sin, by occasion thereof he is stirred up and forced to seek forgiveness of sins by Christ, and to embrace the righteousness of faith, which otherwise he would not so greatly esteem, nor seek for the same with so great desire.

Therefore it profits us very much to feel sometimes the wickedness of our nature and corruption of our flesh, that even by this means we may be awakened and stirred up to faith and to call upon Christ. And by this occasion a Christian becomes a mighty workman and a wonderful creator, who of heaviness can make joy, of terror comfort, of sin righteousness, and of death life, when he by this means repressing and bridling the flesh, makes it subject to the Spirit.

Therefore let not them which feel the concupiscence of the flesh, despair of their salvation. Let them feel it and all the force thereof, so that they consent not to it. Let the passions of lust, wrath and such other vices shake them, so that they do not overthrow them. Let sin assail them, so that they do not accomplish it. Indeed, the more godly a man is, the more does he feel that battle. And from this come those lamentable complaints of the saints in the Psalms and in all the Holy Scripture. Of this battle the hermits, the monks, and the schoolmen, and all that seek righteousness and salvation by works, know nothing at all.

Statue of Martin Luther outside the St. Mary's Church, Berlin.But here may some man say, that it is a dangerous matter to teach that a man is not condemned, if by and by he does not overcome the motions and passions of the flesh which he feels. For when this doctrine is taught among the common people, it makes them careless, negligent and slothful. This is what I spoke of a little before, that if we teach faith, then carnal men neglect and reject works: if works be required, then faith and consolation of conscience is lost. Here no man can be compelled, neither can there be any certain rule prescribed. But let every man diligently try himself to see what passion of the flesh he is most subject to, and when he finds that, let him not be careless, nor flatter himself: but let him watch and wrestle in Spirit against it, that if he cannot altogether bridle it, yet at the least he does not fulfill the lust thereof.

This battle of the flesh against the spirit, all the saints have had and felt: and the same do we also feel and prove. He that searches his own conscience, if he is not a hypocrite, shall well perceive this to be true in himself which Paul here says: that the flesh lusts against the spirit. All the faithful therefore do feel and confess that their flesh resists against the spirit, and that these two are so contrary the one to the other in themselves, that, do what they can, they are not able to perform that which they would do. Therefore the flesh hinders us so that we cannot keep the commandments of God, so that we cannot love our neighbors as ourselves, much less can we love God with all our heart, and so forth. Therefore it is impossible for us to become righteous by the works of the law. Indeed there is a good will in us, and so must there be (for it is the Spirit itself which resists the flesh), which would gladly do good, fulfill the law, love God and his neighbor, and such-like, but the flesh does not obey this good will, but resists it: and yet God does not impute unto us this sin, for He is merciful to those that believe, for Christ’s sake.

But it does not follow therefore that you should make a light matter of sin because God does not impute it. True it is that He does not impute it: but to whom, and for what cause? Not to them that are hard-hearted and secure, but to those who repent and lay hold by faith upon Christ the mercy-seat, for whose sake, just as all their sins are forgiven them, even so the remnants of sin which are in them are not imputed unto them. They do not make their sin less than it is, but amplify it and set it out as it is indeed; for they know that it cannot be put away by satisfactions, works, or righteousness, but only by the death of Christ. And yet notwithstanding, the greatness and enormity of their sin does not cause them to despair, but they assure themselves that the same shall not be imputed unto them, or laid unto their charge, for Christ’s sake.

His tombstone in the Castle Church in Wittenberg.Just as Martin Luther was, you may be troubled in your conscience because of personal sins and wrongdoings. Your conscience is loaded with guilt. Perhaps you have attempted to relieve that guilt by making promises to God, or by making determined resolutions to change your ways, or even by telling someone else about your sins. All these self-made “attempts” have not removed the guilt on your troubled conscience. Why? Because the Bible describes all these attempts as “dead works.” Indeed, the accumulation of guilt on your troubled conscience, as on Luther’s, is waiting for you to see and hear the good news of the gospel. The good news is that God’s righteousness has completely solved your problem.

His righteousness is revealed in His way and method of dealing with your troubled conscience. God’s way is the cross of Christ! When Christ died on the cross and shed His precious blood, God’s righteousness was displayed in how He solved the problem of sin and guilt.

Our sins were laid upon Christ once and for all, and we bear them no more (2 Cor. 5:21). God’s righteous character was satisfied with that death (Isa. 53:10-11). It is the blood of Christ, not your own “dead works,” that cleanses your conscience. Hebrews 9:14 tells us, “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

You may need to repent of your repentance that was based upon dead works, and simply look at God’s righteousness manifested on the cross. Only the blood of Jesus Christ can relieve a guilt-ridden conscience. Trust in God’s way of solving your problem of sin and guilt through the cross, and you will find Him!

Luther's Misconception

If ever a religious man would get to heaven by his good works, Martin was determined to be that man. If ever a religious man were to be forgiven for the sins he had committed, Martin was also determined to be that man. In attempting to be religious and to receive forgiveness, Martin entered the Augustinian order of monks. He fasted for days at a time. He dressed simply and lived even more simply. He prayed for hours, doing penance in such a way that he was in physical danger because of the stresses upon his body. He sought direction from those in authority over him, and following their teachings made lists of his sins in order to seek Christ's forgiveness.

His Conversion

He was faithful in his duties as a monk, and studied hard from a Latin Bible. As he read, one day a verse seemed to leap from the page: ***"The just shall live by faith."*** Not works? Not devotions? How could this be? He continued to strive to serve God faithfully and to find the peace he so desperately sought. He traveled to Rome and visited every shrine that he could. He studied the Bible books of Romans, Psalms and Galatians. The University of Wittenberg granted him a Doctor of Theology degree, entitling him to teach theology, yet this teacher still did not know how to find God's peace. While teaching the book of Romans, he wrestled with the idea of justification by faith. He could not see how to resolve the righteousness of God with the sins of man. As he continued to study the scriptures, God finally showed him the light. *"I saw that the righteousness of God is received from God by faith as a gift. I saw that this was the means by which the merciful God declares the believers righteous. I felt myself newborn. All the scriptures appeared different to me. Instead of hating, now I intensely loved God's righteousness."*

And so, the teacher who had been a seeker now became the teacher who had received the greatest of gifts: the forgiveness of all of his sin and an eternal life communing with Christ. At last he could share real truths with others. This powerful biblical idea of justification by faith became such a mighty force, that Martin Luther's name came to stand for a person who was wholly resting upon Christ's sacrifice as payment for his sins.

* Uplifting and motivational

[](http://www.christians.com/node/6)

Charles Finney

August 29, 1792 to August 16, 1875 (83), Preacher

Charles Finney was a fiery New York preacher and an important figure in the Second Great Awakening.

# Charles Grandison Finney

* [At A Glance](http://www.christians.com/charlesfinney/main)
* [**Testimony**](http://www.christians.com/charlesfinney/main)
* [Biography](http://www.christians.com/charlesfinney/main)
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Historical Timeline

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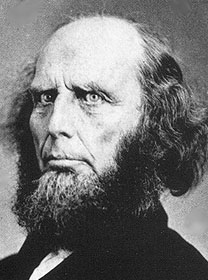


1750

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It was while studying law and attending church at Adams that Finney became interested in Bible study. He found so many references to the Scriptures in his law books, he decided to buy himself a Bible, and he soon became deeply absorbed in studying it.



In addition to becoming a popular Christian evangelist, Finney was involved with the abolitionist movement and frequently denounced slavery from the pulpit. Beginning in 1821, he denied communion to slaveholders in his churches.



Charles Finney moved to New York City in 1832 where he pastored the Free Presbyterian Chatham Street Chapel and later founded and pastored the Broadway Tabernacle, known today as Broadway United Church of Christ (pictured above).



In 1835, he moved to Ohio where he would become an appointed professor of Theology and later president of Oberlin College. Oberlin's First Church (pictured above) was built in 1842.

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Searching for Salvation

On a Sabbath evening in the autumn of 1821, I made up my mind that I would settle the question of my soul's salvation at once, that if it were possible I would make my peace with God. But as I was very busy in the affairs of the office, I knew that without great firmness of purpose, I should never effectually attend to the subject. I therefore, then and there resolved, as far as possible, to avoid all business, and everything that would divert my attention, and to give myself wholly to the work of securing the salvation of my soul. I carried this resolution into execution as sternly and thoroughly as I could. I was, however, obliged to be a good deal in the office. But as the providence of God would have it, I was not much occupied either on Monday or Tuesday; and had opportunity to read my Bible and engage in prayer most of the time.

But I was very proud without knowing it. I had supposed that I had not much regard for the opinions of others, whether they thought this or that in regard to myself; and I had in fact been quite singular in attending prayer meetings, and in the degree of attention that I had paid to religion, while in Adams. In this respect I had not been so singular as to lead the church at times to think that I must be an anxious inquirer. But I found, when I came to face the question, that I was very unwilling to have anyone know that I was seeking the salvation of my soul. When I prayed I would only whisper my prayer, after having stopped the key hole to the door, lest someone should discover that I was engaged in prayer. Before that time I had my Bible lying on the table with the law books; and it never had occurred to me to be ashamed of being found reading it, any more than I should be ashamed of being found reading any of my other books.

Salvation, it seemed to me, instead of being a thing to be wrought out, by my own works, was a thing to be found entirely in the Lord Jesus Christ, who presented Himself before me as my God and my Savior.

But after I had addressed myself in earnest to the subject of my own salvation, I kept my Bible, as much as I could, out of sight. If I was reading it when anybody came in, I would throw my law books upon it, to create the impression that I had not had it in my hand. Instead of being outspoken and willing to talk with anybody and everybody on the subject as before, I found myself unwilling to converse with anybody. I did not want to see my minister, because I did not want to let him know how I felt, and I had no confidence that he would understand my case, and give me the direction that I needed. For the same reasons I avoided conversation with the elders of the church, or with any of the Christian people. I was ashamed to let them know how I felt, on the one hand; and on the other, I was afraid they would misdirect me. I felt myself shut up to the Bible.

During Monday and Tuesday my convictions increased; but still it seemed as if my heart grew harder. I could not shed a tear; I could not pray. I had no opportunity to pray above my breath; and frequently I felt, that if I could be alone where I could use my voice and let myself out, I should find relief in prayer. I was shy, and avoided, as much as I could, speaking to anybody on any subject. I endeavored, however, to do this in a way that would excite no suspicion, in any mind, that I was seeking the salvation of my soul.

Tuesday night I had become very nervous; and in the night a strange feeling came over me as if I was about to die. I knew that if I did I should sink down to hell; but I quieted myself as best I could until morning.

The Conversion

At an early hour I started for the office. But just before I arrived at the office, something seemed to confront me with questions like these: Indeed, it seemed as if the inquiry was within myself, as if an inward voice said to me, "What are you waiting for? Did you not promise to give your heart to God? And what are you trying to do? Are you endeavoring to work out a righteousness of your own?"

Just at this point the whole question of Gospel salvation opened to my mind in a manner most marvelous to me at the time. I think I then saw, as clearly as I ever have in my life, the reality and fullness of the atonement of Christ. I saw that His work was a finished work; and that instead of having, or needing, any righteousness of my own to recommend me to God, I had to submit myself to the righteousness of God through Christ. Gospel salvation seemed to me to be an offer of something to be accepted; and that it was full and complete; and that all that was necessary on my part, was to get my own consent to give up my sins, and accept Christ. Salvation, it seemed to me, instead of being a thing to be wrought out, by my own works, was a thing to be found entirely in the Lord Jesus Christ, who presented Himself before me as my God and my Savior.

Without being distinctly aware of it, I had stopped in the street right where the inward voice seemed to arrest me. How long I remained in that position I cannot say. But after this distinct revelation had stood for some little time before my mind, the question seemed to be put, "Will you accept it now, today?" I replied," Yes; I will accept it today, or I will die in the attempt."

North of the village, and over a hill, lay a piece of woods, in which I was in the almost daily habit of walking, more or less, when it was pleasant weather. It was now October, and the time was past for my frequent walks there. Nevertheless, instead of going to the office, I turned and bent my course toward the woods, feeling that I must be alone, and away from all human eyes and ears, so that I could pour out my prayer to God.

But still my pride must show itself. As I went over the hill, it occurred to me that someone might see me and suppose that I was going away to pray. Yet probably there was not a person on earth that would have suspected such a thing, had he seen me going. But so great was my pride, and so much was I possessed with the fear of man, that I recollect that I skulked along under the fence, till I got so far out of sight that no one from the village could see me. I then penetrated into the woods, I should think, a quarter of a mile, went over on the other side of the hill, and found a place where some large trees had fallen across each other, leaving an open place between. There I saw I could make a kind of closet. I crept into this place and knelt down for prayer. As I turned to go up into the woods, I recollect to have said, "I will give my heart to God, or I never will come down from there." I recollect repeating this as I went up: ;"I will give my heart to God before I ever come down again."

But when I attempted to pray I found that my heart would not pray. I had supposed that if I could only be where I could speak aloud, without being overheard, I could pray freely. But lo! when I came to try, I was dumb; that is, I had nothing to say to God; or at least I could say but a few words, and those without heart. In attempting to pray I would hear a rustling in the leaves, as I thought, and would stop and look up to see if somebody were not coming. This I did several times.

"I will give my heart to God before I ever come down again."

Finally I found myself verging fast to despair. I said to myself, "I cannot pray. My heart is dead to God, and will not pray." I then reproached myself for having promised to give my heart to God before I left the woods. When I came to try, I found I could not give my heart to God. My inward soul hung back, and there was no going out of my heart to God. I began to feel deeply that it was too late; that it must be that I was given up of God and was past hope.

The thought was pressing me of the rashness of my promise, that I would give my heart to God that day or die in the attempt. It seemed to me as if that was binding upon my soul; and yet I was going to break my vow. A great sinking and discouragement came over me, and I felt almost too weak to stand upon my knees.

Just at this moment I again thought I heard someone approach me, and I opened my eyes to see whether it were so. But right there the revelation of my pride of heart, as the great difficulty that stood in the way, was distinctly shown to me. An overwhelming sense of my wickedness in being ashamed to have a human being see me on my knees before God, took such powerful possession of me, that I cried at the top of my voice, and exclaimed that I would not leave that place if all the men on earth and all the devils in hell surrounded me. "What!" I said, "such a degraded sinner I am, on my knees confessing my sins to the great and holy God; and ashamed to have any human being, and a sinner like myself, find me on my knees endeavoring to make my peace with my offended God!" The sin appeared awful, infinite. It broke me down before the Lord.

Just at that point this passage of Scripture seemed to drop into my mind with a flood of light: "Then shall ye go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. Then shall ye seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." I instantly seized hold of this with my heart. I had intellectually believed the Bible before; but never had the truth been in my mind that faith was a voluntary trust instead of an intellectual state. I was as conscious as I was of my existence, of trusting at that moment in God's veracity. Somehow I knew that that was a passage of Scripture, though I do not think I had ever read it. I knew that it was God's word, and God's voice, as it were, that spoke to me. I cried to Him, "Lord, I take Thee at Thy word. Now Thou knowest that I do search for Thee with all my heart, and that I have come here to pray to Thee; and Thou hast promised to hear me."

That seemed to settle the question that I could then, that day, perform my vow. The Spirit seemed to lay stress upon that idea in the text, "When you search for me with all your heart." The question of when, that is of the present time, seemed to fall heavily into my heart. I told the Lord that I should take Him at his word; that He could not lie; and that therefore I was sure that He heard my prayer, and that He would be found of me.

He then gave my many other promises, both from the Old and the New Testament, especially some most precious promises respecting our Lord Jesus Christ. I never can, in words, make any human being understand how precious and true those promises appeared to me. I took them one after the other as infallible truth, the assertions of God who could not lie. They did not seem so much to fall into my intellect as into my heart, to be put within the grasp of the voluntary powers of my mind; and I seized hold of them, appropriated them, and fastened upon them with the grasp of a drowning man.

I continued thus to pray, and to receive and appropriate promises for a long time, I know not how long. I prayed till my mind became so full that, before I was aware of it, I was on my feet and tripping up the ascent toward the road. The question of my being converted, had not so much as arisen to my thought; but as I went up, brushing through the leaves and bushes, I recollect saying with emphasis, "If I am ever converted, I will preach the Gospel."

I walked quietly toward the village; and so perfectly quiet was my mind that it seemed as if all nature listened.

I soon reached the road that led to the village, and began to reflect upon what had passed; and I found that my mind had become most wonderfully quiet and peaceful. I said to myself, "What is this? I must have grieved the Holy Ghost entirely away. I have lost all my conviction. I have not a particle of concern about my soul; and it must be that the Spirit has left me." Why! thought I, I never was so far from being concerned about my own salvation in my life.

Then I remembered what I had said to God while I was on my knees, that I had said I would take Him at his word; and indeed I recollected a good many things that I had said, and concluded that it was no wonder that the Spirit had left me; that for such a sinner as I was to take hold of God's Word in that way, was presumption if not blasphemy. I concluded that in my excitement I had grieved the Holy Spirit, and perhaps committed the unpardonable sin.

I walked quietly toward the village; and so perfectly quiet was my mind that it seemed as if all nature listened. It was on the 10th of October, and a very pleasant day. I had gone into the woods immediately after an early breakfast; and when I returned to the village I found it was dinner time. Yet I had been wholly unconscious of the time that had passed; it appeared to me that I had been gone from the village but a short time.

Struggles

But how was I to account for the quiet of my mind? I tried to recall my convictions, to get back again the load of sin under which I had been laboring. But all sense of sin, all consciousness of present sin or guilt, had departed from me. I said to myself,

What is this, that I cannot arouse any sense of guilt in my soul, as great a sinner as I am?

I tried in vain to make myself anxious about my present state. I was so quiet and peaceful that I tried to feel concerned about that, lest it should be a result of my having grieved the Spirit away. But take any view of it I would, I could not be anxious at all about my soul, and about my spiritual state. The repose of my mind was unspeakably great. I never can describe it in words. The thought of God was sweet to my mind, and the most profound spiritual tranquillity had taken full possession of me. This was a great mystery; but it did not distress or perplex me.

I went to my dinner, and found I had no appetite to eat. I then went to the office, and found that Squire W had gone to dinner. I took down my bass viol, and, as I was accustomed to do, began to play and sing some pieces of sacred music. But as soon as I began to sing those sacred words, I began to weep. It seemed as if my heart was all liquid; and my feelings were in such a state that I could not hear my own voice in singing without causing my sensibility to overflow. I wondered at this, and tried to suppress my tears, but could not. After trying in vain to suppress my tears, I put up my instrument and stopped singing.

After dinner we were engaged in removing our books and furniture to another office. We were very busy in this, and had but little conversation all the afternoon. My mind, however, remained in that profoundly tranquil state. There was a great sweetness and tenderness in my thoughts and feelings. Everything appeared to be going right, and nothing seemed to ruffle or disturb me in the least.

Just before evening the thought took possession of my mind, that as soon as I was left alone in the new office, I would try to pray again--that I was not going to abandon the subject of religion and give it up, at any rate; and therefore, although I no longer had any concern about my soul, still I would continue to pray.

By evening we got the books and furniture adjusted; and I made up, in an open fireplace, a good fire, hoping to spend the evening alone. Just at dark Squire W, seeing that everything was adjusted, bade me goodnight and went to his home. I had accompanied him to the door; and as I closed the door and turned around, my heart seemed to be liquid within me. All my feelings seemed to rise and flow out; and the utterance of my heart was, "I want to pour my whole soul out to God." The rising of my soul was so great that I rushed into the room back of the front office, to pray.

There was no fire, and no light, in the room; nevertheless it appeared to me as if it were perfectly light. As I went in and shut the door after me, it seemed as if I met the Lord Jesus Christ face to face. It did not occur to me then, nor did it for some time afterward, that it was wholly a mental state. On the contrary it seemed to me that I saw Him as I would see any other man. He said nothing, but looked at me in such a manner as to break me right down at his feet. I have always since regarded this as a most remarkable state of mind; for it seemed to me a reality, that He stood before me, and I fell down at his feet and poured out my soul to Him. I wept aloud like a child, and made such confessions as I could with my choked utterance. It seemed to me that I bathed His feet with my tears; and yet I had no distinct impression that I touched Him, that I recollect.

There was no fire, and no light, in the room; nevertheless it appeared to me as if it were perfectly light.

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No words can express the wonderful love that was shed abroad in my heart. I wept aloud with joy and love; and I do not know but I should say, I literally bellowed out the unutterable gushings of my heart. These waves came over me, and over me, and over me, one after the other, until I recollect I cried out, "I shall die if these waves continue to pass over me." I said, "Lord, I cannot bear any more;" yet I had no fear of death.

How long I continued in this state, with this baptism continuing to roll over me and go through me, I do not know. But I know it was late in the evening when a member of my choir--for I was the leader of the choir--came into the office to see me. He was a member of the church. He found me in this state of loud weeping, and said to me, "Mr. Finney, what ails you?" I could make him no answer for some time. He then said, "Are you in pain?" I gathered myself up as best I could, and replied, "No, but so happy that I cannot live."

He turned and left the office, and in a few minutes returned with one of the elders of the church, whose shop was nearly across the way from our office. This elder was a very serious man; and in my presence had been very watchful, and I had scarcely ever seen him laugh. When he came in, I was very much in the state in which I was when the young man went out to call him. He asked me how I felt, and I began to tell him. Instead of saying anything, he fell into a most spasmodic laughter. It seemed as if it was impossible for him to keep from laughing from the very bottom of his heart.

There was a young man in the neighborhood who was preparing for college, with whom I had been very intimate. Our minister, as I afterward learned, had repeatedly talked with him on the subject of religion, and warned him against being misled by me. He informed him that I was a very careless young man about religion; and he thought that if he associated much with me his mind would be diverted, and he would not be converted.

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But just at the time when I was giving an account of my feelings to this elder of the church, and to the other member who was with him, this young man came into the office. I was sitting with my back toward the door, and barely observed that he came in. He listened with astonishment to what I was saying, and the first I knew he partly fell upon the floor, and cried out in the greatest agony of mind, "Do pray for me!" The elder of the church and the other member knelt down and began to pray for him; and when they had prayed, I prayed for him myself. Soon after this they all retired and left me alone.

The question then arose in my mind, "Why did Elder B laugh so? Did he not think that I was under a delusion, or crazy?" This suggestion brought a kind of darkness over my mind; and I began to query with myself whether it was proper for me, such a sinner as I had been, to pray for that young man. A cloud seemed to shut in over me; I had no hold upon anything in which I could rest; and after a little while I retired to bed, not distressed in mind, but still at a loss to know what to make of my present state. Notwithstanding the baptism I had received, this temptation so obscured my view that I went to bed without feeling sure that my peace was made with God.

I soon fell asleep, but almost as soon awoke again on account of the great flow of the love of God that was in my heart. I was so filled with love that I could not sleep. Soon I fell asleep again, and awoke in the same manner. When I awoke, this temptation would return upon me, and the love that seemed to be in my heart would abate; but as soon as I was asleep, it was so warm within me that I would immediately awake. Thus I continued till, late at night, I obtained some sound repose.

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When I awoke in the morning the sun had risen, and was pouring a clear light into my room. Words cannot express the impression that this sunlight made upon me.

In this state I was taught the doctrine of justification by faith, as a present experience. That doctrine had never taken any such possession of my mind, that I had ever viewed it distinctly as a fundamental doctrine of the Gospel. Indeed, I did not know at all what it meant in the proper sense. But I could now see and understand what was meant by the passage, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." I could see that the moment I believed, while up in the woods, all sense of condemnation had entirely dropped out of my mind; and that from that moment I could not feel a sense of guilt or condemnation by any effort that I could make. My sense of guilt was gone; my sins were gone; and I do not think I felt any more sense of guilt than if I never had sinned.

This was just the revelation that I needed. I felt myself justified by faith; and, so far as I could see, I was in a state in which I did not sin. Instead of feeling that I was sinning all the time, my heart was so full of love that it overflowed. My cup ran over with blessing and with love; and I could not feel that I was sinning against God. Nor could I recover the least sense of guilt for my past sins. Of this experience I said nothing that I recollect, at the time, to anybody; that is, of this experience of justification.

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Charles Finney

August 29, 1792 to August 16, 1875 (83), Preacher

Charles Finney was a fiery New York preacher and an important figure in the Second Great Awakening.

# Charles Grandison Finney

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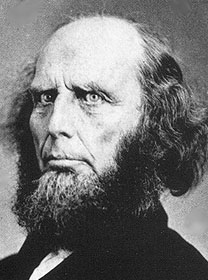


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It was while studying law and attending church at Adams that Finney became interested in Bible study. He found so many references to the Scriptures in his law books, he decided to buy himself a Bible, and he soon became deeply absorbed in studying it.



In addition to becoming a popular Christian evangelist, Finney was involved with the abolitionist movement and frequently denounced slavery from the pulpit. Beginning in 1821, he denied communion to slaveholders in his churches.



Charles Finney moved to New York City in 1832 where he pastored the Free Presbyterian Chatham Street Chapel and later founded and pastored the Broadway Tabernacle, known today as Broadway United Church of Christ (pictured above).



In 1835, he moved to Ohio where he would become an appointed professor of Theology and later president of Oberlin College. Oberlin's First Church (pictured above) was built in 1842.

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Searching for Salvation

On a Sabbath evening in the autumn of 1821, I made up my mind that I would settle the question of my soul's salvation at once, that if it were possible I would make my peace with God. But as I was very busy in the affairs of the office, I knew that without great firmness of purpose, I should never effectually attend to the subject. I therefore, then and there resolved, as far as possible, to avoid all business, and everything that would divert my attention, and to give myself wholly to the work of securing the salvation of my soul. I carried this resolution into execution as sternly and thoroughly as I could. I was, however, obliged to be a good deal in the office. But as the providence of God would have it, I was not much occupied either on Monday or Tuesday; and had opportunity to read my Bible and engage in prayer most of the time.

But I was very proud without knowing it. I had supposed that I had not much regard for the opinions of others, whether they thought this or that in regard to myself; and I had in fact been quite singular in attending prayer meetings, and in the degree of attention that I had paid to religion, while in Adams. In this respect I had not been so singular as to lead the church at times to think that I must be an anxious inquirer. But I found, when I came to face the question, that I was very unwilling to have anyone know that I was seeking the salvation of my soul. When I prayed I would only whisper my prayer, after having stopped the key hole to the door, lest someone should discover that I was engaged in prayer. Before that time I had my Bible lying on the table with the law books; and it never had occurred to me to be ashamed of being found reading it, any more than I should be ashamed of being found reading any of my other books.

Salvation, it seemed to me, instead of being a thing to be wrought out, by my own works, was a thing to be found entirely in the Lord Jesus Christ, who presented Himself before me as my God and my Savior.

But after I had addressed myself in earnest to the subject of my own salvation, I kept my Bible, as much as I could, out of sight. If I was reading it when anybody came in, I would throw my law books upon it, to create the impression that I had not had it in my hand. Instead of being outspoken and willing to talk with anybody and everybody on the subject as before, I found myself unwilling to converse with anybody. I did not want to see my minister, because I did not want to let him know how I felt, and I had no confidence that he would understand my case, and give me the direction that I needed. For the same reasons I avoided conversation with the elders of the church, or with any of the Christian people. I was ashamed to let them know how I felt, on the one hand; and on the other, I was afraid they would misdirect me. I felt myself shut up to the Bible.

During Monday and Tuesday my convictions increased; but still it seemed as if my heart grew harder. I could not shed a tear; I could not pray. I had no opportunity to pray above my breath; and frequently I felt, that if I could be alone where I could use my voice and let myself out, I should find relief in prayer. I was shy, and avoided, as much as I could, speaking to anybody on any subject. I endeavored, however, to do this in a way that would excite no suspicion, in any mind, that I was seeking the salvation of my soul.

Tuesday night I had become very nervous; and in the night a strange feeling came over me as if I was about to die. I knew that if I did I should sink down to hell; but I quieted myself as best I could until morning.

The Conversion

At an early hour I started for the office. But just before I arrived at the office, something seemed to confront me with questions like these: Indeed, it seemed as if the inquiry was within myself, as if an inward voice said to me, "What are you waiting for? Did you not promise to give your heart to God? And what are you trying to do? Are you endeavoring to work out a righteousness of your own?"

Just at this point the whole question of Gospel salvation opened to my mind in a manner most marvelous to me at the time. I think I then saw, as clearly as I ever have in my life, the reality and fullness of the atonement of Christ. I saw that His work was a finished work; and that instead of having, or needing, any righteousness of my own to recommend me to God, I had to submit myself to the righteousness of God through Christ. Gospel salvation seemed to me to be an offer of something to be accepted; and that it was full and complete; and that all that was necessary on my part, was to get my own consent to give up my sins, and accept Christ. Salvation, it seemed to me, instead of being a thing to be wrought out, by my own works, was a thing to be found entirely in the Lord Jesus Christ, who presented Himself before me as my God and my Savior.

Without being distinctly aware of it, I had stopped in the street right where the inward voice seemed to arrest me. How long I remained in that position I cannot say. But after this distinct revelation had stood for some little time before my mind, the question seemed to be put, "Will you accept it now, today?" I replied," Yes; I will accept it today, or I will die in the attempt."

North of the village, and over a hill, lay a piece of woods, in which I was in the almost daily habit of walking, more or less, when it was pleasant weather. It was now October, and the time was past for my frequent walks there. Nevertheless, instead of going to the office, I turned and bent my course toward the woods, feeling that I must be alone, and away from all human eyes and ears, so that I could pour out my prayer to God.

But still my pride must show itself. As I went over the hill, it occurred to me that someone might see me and suppose that I was going away to pray. Yet probably there was not a person on earth that would have suspected such a thing, had he seen me going. But so great was my pride, and so much was I possessed with the fear of man, that I recollect that I skulked along under the fence, till I got so far out of sight that no one from the village could see me. I then penetrated into the woods, I should think, a quarter of a mile, went over on the other side of the hill, and found a place where some large trees had fallen across each other, leaving an open place between. There I saw I could make a kind of closet. I crept into this place and knelt down for prayer. As I turned to go up into the woods, I recollect to have said, "I will give my heart to God, or I never will come down from there." I recollect repeating this as I went up: ;"I will give my heart to God before I ever come down again."

But when I attempted to pray I found that my heart would not pray. I had supposed that if I could only be where I could speak aloud, without being overheard, I could pray freely. But lo! when I came to try, I was dumb; that is, I had nothing to say to God; or at least I could say but a few words, and those without heart. In attempting to pray I would hear a rustling in the leaves, as I thought, and would stop and look up to see if somebody were not coming. This I did several times.

"I will give my heart to God before I ever come down again."

Finally I found myself verging fast to despair. I said to myself, "I cannot pray. My heart is dead to God, and will not pray." I then reproached myself for having promised to give my heart to God before I left the woods. When I came to try, I found I could not give my heart to God. My inward soul hung back, and there was no going out of my heart to God. I began to feel deeply that it was too late; that it must be that I was given up of God and was past hope.

The thought was pressing me of the rashness of my promise, that I would give my heart to God that day or die in the attempt. It seemed to me as if that was binding upon my soul; and yet I was going to break my vow. A great sinking and discouragement came over me, and I felt almost too weak to stand upon my knees.

Just at this moment I again thought I heard someone approach me, and I opened my eyes to see whether it were so. But right there the revelation of my pride of heart, as the great difficulty that stood in the way, was distinctly shown to me. An overwhelming sense of my wickedness in being ashamed to have a human being see me on my knees before God, took such powerful possession of me, that I cried at the top of my voice, and exclaimed that I would not leave that place if all the men on earth and all the devils in hell surrounded me. "What!" I said, "such a degraded sinner I am, on my knees confessing my sins to the great and holy God; and ashamed to have any human being, and a sinner like myself, find me on my knees endeavoring to make my peace with my offended God!" The sin appeared awful, infinite. It broke me down before the Lord.

Just at that point this passage of Scripture seemed to drop into my mind with a flood of light: "Then shall ye go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. Then shall ye seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." I instantly seized hold of this with my heart. I had intellectually believed the Bible before; but never had the truth been in my mind that faith was a voluntary trust instead of an intellectual state. I was as conscious as I was of my existence, of trusting at that moment in God's veracity. Somehow I knew that that was a passage of Scripture, though I do not think I had ever read it. I knew that it was God's word, and God's voice, as it were, that spoke to me. I cried to Him, "Lord, I take Thee at Thy word. Now Thou knowest that I do search for Thee with all my heart, and that I have come here to pray to Thee; and Thou hast promised to hear me."

That seemed to settle the question that I could then, that day, perform my vow. The Spirit seemed to lay stress upon that idea in the text, "When you search for me with all your heart." The question of when, that is of the present time, seemed to fall heavily into my heart. I told the Lord that I should take Him at his word; that He could not lie; and that therefore I was sure that He heard my prayer, and that He would be found of me.

He then gave my many other promises, both from the Old and the New Testament, especially some most precious promises respecting our Lord Jesus Christ. I never can, in words, make any human being understand how precious and true those promises appeared to me. I took them one after the other as infallible truth, the assertions of God who could not lie. They did not seem so much to fall into my intellect as into my heart, to be put within the grasp of the voluntary powers of my mind; and I seized hold of them, appropriated them, and fastened upon them with the grasp of a drowning man.

I continued thus to pray, and to receive and appropriate promises for a long time, I know not how long. I prayed till my mind became so full that, before I was aware of it, I was on my feet and tripping up the ascent toward the road. The question of my being converted, had not so much as arisen to my thought; but as I went up, brushing through the leaves and bushes, I recollect saying with emphasis, "If I am ever converted, I will preach the Gospel."

I walked quietly toward the village; and so perfectly quiet was my mind that it seemed as if all nature listened.

I soon reached the road that led to the village, and began to reflect upon what had passed; and I found that my mind had become most wonderfully quiet and peaceful. I said to myself, "What is this? I must have grieved the Holy Ghost entirely away. I have lost all my conviction. I have not a particle of concern about my soul; and it must be that the Spirit has left me." Why! thought I, I never was so far from being concerned about my own salvation in my life.

Then I remembered what I had said to God while I was on my knees, that I had said I would take Him at his word; and indeed I recollected a good many things that I had said, and concluded that it was no wonder that the Spirit had left me; that for such a sinner as I was to take hold of God's Word in that way, was presumption if not blasphemy. I concluded that in my excitement I had grieved the Holy Spirit, and perhaps committed the unpardonable sin.

I walked quietly toward the village; and so perfectly quiet was my mind that it seemed as if all nature listened. It was on the 10th of October, and a very pleasant day. I had gone into the woods immediately after an early breakfast; and when I returned to the village I found it was dinner time. Yet I had been wholly unconscious of the time that had passed; it appeared to me that I had been gone from the village but a short time.

Struggles

But how was I to account for the quiet of my mind? I tried to recall my convictions, to get back again the load of sin under which I had been laboring. But all sense of sin, all consciousness of present sin or guilt, had departed from me. I said to myself,

What is this, that I cannot arouse any sense of guilt in my soul, as great a sinner as I am?

I tried in vain to make myself anxious about my present state. I was so quiet and peaceful that I tried to feel concerned about that, lest it should be a result of my having grieved the Spirit away. But take any view of it I would, I could not be anxious at all about my soul, and about my spiritual state. The repose of my mind was unspeakably great. I never can describe it in words. The thought of God was sweet to my mind, and the most profound spiritual tranquillity had taken full possession of me. This was a great mystery; but it did not distress or perplex me.

I went to my dinner, and found I had no appetite to eat. I then went to the office, and found that Squire W had gone to dinner. I took down my bass viol, and, as I was accustomed to do, began to play and sing some pieces of sacred music. But as soon as I began to sing those sacred words, I began to weep. It seemed as if my heart was all liquid; and my feelings were in such a state that I could not hear my own voice in singing without causing my sensibility to overflow. I wondered at this, and tried to suppress my tears, but could not. After trying in vain to suppress my tears, I put up my instrument and stopped singing.

After dinner we were engaged in removing our books and furniture to another office. We were very busy in this, and had but little conversation all the afternoon. My mind, however, remained in that profoundly tranquil state. There was a great sweetness and tenderness in my thoughts and feelings. Everything appeared to be going right, and nothing seemed to ruffle or disturb me in the least.

Just before evening the thought took possession of my mind, that as soon as I was left alone in the new office, I would try to pray again--that I was not going to abandon the subject of religion and give it up, at any rate; and therefore, although I no longer had any concern about my soul, still I would continue to pray.

By evening we got the books and furniture adjusted; and I made up, in an open fireplace, a good fire, hoping to spend the evening alone. Just at dark Squire W, seeing that everything was adjusted, bade me goodnight and went to his home. I had accompanied him to the door; and as I closed the door and turned around, my heart seemed to be liquid within me. All my feelings seemed to rise and flow out; and the utterance of my heart was, "I want to pour my whole soul out to God." The rising of my soul was so great that I rushed into the room back of the front office, to pray.

There was no fire, and no light, in the room; nevertheless it appeared to me as if it were perfectly light. As I went in and shut the door after me, it seemed as if I met the Lord Jesus Christ face to face. It did not occur to me then, nor did it for some time afterward, that it was wholly a mental state. On the contrary it seemed to me that I saw Him as I would see any other man. He said nothing, but looked at me in such a manner as to break me right down at his feet. I have always since regarded this as a most remarkable state of mind; for it seemed to me a reality, that He stood before me, and I fell down at his feet and poured out my soul to Him. I wept aloud like a child, and made such confessions as I could with my choked utterance. It seemed to me that I bathed His feet with my tears; and yet I had no distinct impression that I touched Him, that I recollect.

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How long I continued in this state, with this baptism continuing to roll over me and go through me, I do not know. But I know it was late in the evening when a member of my choir--for I was the leader of the choir--came into the office to see me. He was a member of the church. He found me in this state of loud weeping, and said to me, "Mr. Finney, what ails you?" I could make him no answer for some time. He then said, "Are you in pain?" I gathered myself up as best I could, and replied, "No, but so happy that I cannot live."

He turned and left the office, and in a few minutes returned with one of the elders of the church, whose shop was nearly across the way from our office. This elder was a very serious man; and in my presence had been very watchful, and I had scarcely ever seen him laugh. When he came in, I was very much in the state in which I was when the young man went out to call him. He asked me how I felt, and I began to tell him. Instead of saying anything, he fell into a most spasmodic laughter. It seemed as if it was impossible for him to keep from laughing from the very bottom of his heart.

There was a young man in the neighborhood who was preparing for college, with whom I had been very intimate. Our minister, as I afterward learned, had repeatedly talked with him on the subject of religion, and warned him against being misled by me. He informed him that I was a very careless young man about religion; and he thought that if he associated much with me his mind would be diverted, and he would not be converted.

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But just at the time when I was giving an account of my feelings to this elder of the church, and to the other member who was with him, this young man came into the office. I was sitting with my back toward the door, and barely observed that he came in. He listened with astonishment to what I was saying, and the first I knew he partly fell upon the floor, and cried out in the greatest agony of mind, "Do pray for me!" The elder of the church and the other member knelt down and began to pray for him; and when they had prayed, I prayed for him myself. Soon after this they all retired and left me alone.

The question then arose in my mind, "Why did Elder B laugh so? Did he not think that I was under a delusion, or crazy?" This suggestion brought a kind of darkness over my mind; and I began to query with myself whether it was proper for me, such a sinner as I had been, to pray for that young man. A cloud seemed to shut in over me; I had no hold upon anything in which I could rest; and after a little while I retired to bed, not distressed in mind, but still at a loss to know what to make of my present state. Notwithstanding the baptism I had received, this temptation so obscured my view that I went to bed without feeling sure that my peace was made with God.

I soon fell asleep, but almost as soon awoke again on account of the great flow of the love of God that was in my heart. I was so filled with love that I could not sleep. Soon I fell asleep again, and awoke in the same manner. When I awoke, this temptation would return upon me, and the love that seemed to be in my heart would abate; but as soon as I was asleep, it was so warm within me that I would immediately awake. Thus I continued till, late at night, I obtained some sound repose.

When I awoke in the morning the sun had risen, and was pouring a clear light into my room. Words cannot express the impression that this sunlight made upon me. Instantly the baptism that I had received the night before, returned upon me in the same manner. I arose upon my knees in the bed and wept aloud with joy, and remained for some time too much overwhelmed with the baptism of the Spirit to do anything but pour out my soul to God. It seemed as if this morning's baptism was accompanied with a gentle reproof, and the Spirit seemed to say to me, "Will you doubt? Will you doubt?" I cried, "No! I will not doubt; I cannot doubt." He then cleared the subject up so much to my mind that it was in fact impossible for me to doubt that the Spirit of God had taken possession of my soul.

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In this state I was taught the doctrine of justification by faith, as a present experience. That doctrine had never taken any such possession of my mind, that I had ever viewed it distinctly as a fundamental doctrine of the Gospel. Indeed, I did not know at all what it meant in the proper sense. But I could now see and understand what was meant by the passage, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." I could see that the moment I believed, while up in the woods, all sense of condemnation had entirely dropped out of my mind; and that from that moment I could not feel a sense of guilt or condemnation by any effort that I could make. My sense of guilt was gone; my sins were gone; and I do not think I felt any more sense of guilt than if I never had sinned.

This was just the revelation that I needed. I felt myself justified by faith; and, so far as I could see, I was in a state in which I did not sin. Instead of feeling that I was sinning all the time, my heart was so full of love that it overflowed. My cup ran over with blessing and with love; and I could not feel that I was sinning against God. Nor could I recover the least sense of guilt for my past sins. Of this experience I said nothing that I recollect, at the time, to anybody; that is, of this experience of justification.

Great Evangelist

The writer is inclined to regard Charles G. Finney as the greatest evangelist and theologian since the days of the apostles. It is estimated that during the year 1857-58 over a hundred thousand persons were led to Christ as the direct or indirect result of Finney's labours, while five hundred thousand persons professed conversion to Christ in the great revival which began in his meetings. Another remarkable fact is that it was found by actual research that over eighty-five in every hundred persons professing conversion to Christ in Finney's meetings remained true to God, whereas seventy per cent of those professing conversion in the meetings of even so great an evangelist as Moody afterwards became backsliders. Finney seems to have had the power of impressing the consciences of men with the necessity of holy living in such a manner as to procure the most lasting results. It is said that at Governeur, New York, not a dance or theatrical play could be held in the place for six years after Finney held meetings there.

Finney's Background

Prior to his conversion, he had been a Freemason, but became a staunch opponent of Masonry, and wrote an extensive book attacking it, entitled The Character, Claims, and Practical Workings of FreemasonryThe "Autobiography of Charles G. Finney" is perhaps the most remarkable account of the manifestations of the Holy Spirit's power since apostolic days. It is crowded with accounts of spiritual outpourings which remind one of the day of Pentecost. Finney's "Systematic Theology" is probably the greatest work on theology outside the Scriptures. The wonderful anointing of God's Spirit, combined with Finney's remarkable reasoning powers and his legal training, enabled him to present clearer views of Christian doctrine than has any other theologian since the days of early Christianity. His views with regard to the difference between physical and moral law and physical and moral depravity, on the reasonableness of the moral law and the atonement, and on the nature of regeneration and sanctification are the clearest of any the writer has had the privilege of reading or hearing. Finney's teachings probably did more than all other causes combined to bring the Old School Calvinists over to a belief in man's free agency and moral responsibility, or the views commonly known as New School Calvinism.

Charles Grandison Finney was a descendant of the New England Puritans, and was born in Connecticut in 1792. He removed with his parents to Western New York when two years of age. This part of New York was then a frontier wilderness, with few educational or religious privileges. Finney had a good common school education, however, and at twenty years of age he went to New England to attend high school, but soon afterward went to New Jersey to teach school and to continue his studies. He became quite proficient in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and in other college studies. In 1818 he commenced the study of law in the office of Squire Wright, of Adams, near his old home in Western New York.

At Adams Finney had the first religious privileges worthy of the name. During the three years he taught school in New Jersey, about the only preaching in his neighborhood was in German, and the preaching he heard while at high school in New England was not of a kind calculated to arrest his attention. The aged preacher he heard there read old manuscript sermons in a monotonous, humdrum way that made no serious impression on the mind of Finney. Finney's parents were not professing Christians, and in his childhood days in Western New York the only preaching he heard was during an occasional visit from some itinerant preacher. At Adams, while studying law, he attended the Presbyterian Church. The pastor, George W. Gale, was an able and highly educated man. His preaching, though of the Old School Calvinistic type, arrested the attention of Finney, although to his keen and logical mind it seemed like a mass of absurdities and contradictions.

Seeking God

It was while studying law and attending church at Adams that Finney became interested in Bible study. He found so many references to the Scriptures in his law books, he decided to buy himself a Bible, and he soon became deeply absorbed in studying it. He had many conversations with Mr. Gale, who frequently dropped into the office to talk with him, but they could scarcely agree on any point of doctrine. This fact probably led Finney to study the Scriptures much more diligently than though he had agreed with Mr. Gale in everything. The fact that the church members were constantly praying prayers which did not seem to be answered, and to which they hardly seemed to expect an answer, was a great drawback to Finney. But he became more and more concerned about his own soul. He felt that if there was a life beyond he was not prepared for it. Some of the church members wanted to pray for him, but he told them that he did not see that it would do any good because they were continually asking without receiving.

While groups such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and Seventh-day Adventists became closed and exclusivist, Finney was widely accepted and influential amongst more mainstream groups.Finney remained in a skeptical yet troubled frame of mind for two or three years. At last he came to a decision that the Bible was the true Word of God, and that it was the fault of the people if their prayers were not answered. He was then brought face to face with the question as to whether or not he would accept Christ. "On a Sabbath evening, in the autumn of 1821," says he, "I made up my mind that I would settle the question of my soul's salvation at once, that if it were possible I would make my peace with God." He was obliged to be in the office, however, and could not devote the entire time to seeking his soul's salvation, although on the following Monday and Tuesday he spent most of his time in prayer and reading the Scriptures. Pride was the great obstacle which hindered him from accepting Christ as his Saviour. He found that he was unwilling that anyone should know that he was seeking salvation. Before praying he stopped the keyhole of the door, and then only prayed in a whisper for fear that someone should hear him. If he was reading the Bible when anyone came in, he would throw his law books on top of it to create the impression that he had been reading them instead of the Bible.

During Monday and Tuesday his conviction of sin increased, but his heart seemed to grow harder. Tuesday night he had become very nervous, and imagined that he was about to die, and sink into hell, but he quieted himself as best he could until morning. Next morning, on the way to the office, he had as clear a view of the atonement of Christ as he ever had afterwards. The Holy Spirit seemed to present Christ: hanging on the cross for him. The vision was so clear that almost unconsciously he stopped in the middle of the street for several minutes when it came to him. North of the village and over a hill lay a piece of woods, or forest, and he decided to go there and pour out his heart in prayer. So great was his pride, he kept out of sight so far as possible for fear that some one should see him on the way to the woods and should think that he was going there to pray. He penetrated far into the woods where some large trees had fallen across each other leaving an open space between. Into this space he crept to pray. "But when I attempted to pray," says he, "I found that my heart would not pray." He was in great fear lest someone should come and find him praying. He was on the verge of despair, having promised God not to leave the spot until he settled the question of his soul's salvation, and yet it seemed impossible to him to settle the question. "Just at this moment," says he, "I again thought I heard some one approach me, and I opened my eyes to see whether it were so. But right there the revelation of my pride of heart, as the great difficulty that stood in the way, was distinctly shown me. An overwhelming sense of my wickedness in being ashamed to have a human being see me on my knees before God, took such powerful possession of me, that I cried at the top of my voice, and exclaimed that I would not leave that place if all the men on earth and all the devils in hell surrounded me." He was completely humbled in soul by the thought of his pride. Then the most comforting verses of Scripture seemed to pour into his soul. He saw clearly that faith was not an intellectual state but a voluntary act, and he accepted the promise of God.

Promises of salvation, from both Old and New Testaments, continued to pour into his soul, and he continued to pray. "I prayed," says he, "until my mind became so full that, before I was aware of it, I was on my feet and tripping up the ascent toward the road." On reaching the village he found that it was noon, although he had gone into the woods immediately after an early breakfast. He had been so absorbed in prayer that he had no idea of the time. There was now a great calm in his soul, and the burden of sin had completely rolled away, yet he was tempted to believe that he was not yet born of God. He went to his dinner, but found that he had no appetite. He then went to the office and took down his bass viol, and began to play some hymns, but his soul was so overflowing that he could not sing without weeping.

On the evening of the same day in which Finney received the pardon of his sins, in the manner already described, he received a mighty overwhelming baptism of the Holy Spirit which started him immediately to preaching the gospel. We will allow him to describe this filling of the Spirit in his own words. Continuing the narrative of his conversion, he says:

After dinner we (Squire Wright and himself) were engaged in removing the books and furniture to another office. We were very busy in this, and had but little conversation all the afternoon. My mind, however, remained in that profoundly tranquil state. There was a great sweetness and tenderness in my thoughts and feelings. Everything appeared to be going right, and nothing seemed to disturb me or ruffle me in the least.

Just before evening the thought took possession of my mind, that as soon as I was left alone in the new office, I would try to pray again--that I was not going to abandon the subject of religion and give it up, at any rate; and therefore, although I no longer had any concern about my soul, still, I would continue to pray.

By evening we got the books and furniture adjusted; and I made up, in an open fire-place, a good fire, hoping to spend the evening alone. Just at dark Squire W----, seeing that everything was adjusted, bade me good-night and went to his home. I had accompanied him to the door; and as I closed the door and turned around, my heart seemed to be liquid within me. All my feelings seemed to rise and flow out; and the utterance of my heart was, 'I want to pour my whole soul out to God.' The rising of my soul was so great that I rushed into the room back of the front office, to pray.

There was no fire, and no light, in the room; nevertheless it appeared to me as if it were perfectly light. As I went in and shut the door after me, it seemed as if I met the Lord Jesus Christ face to face. It did not occur to me then, nor did it for some time afterward, that it was wholly a mental state. On the contrary it seemed to me that I saw Him as I would see any other man. He said nothing, but looked at me in such a manner as to break me right down at His feet. I have always since regarded this as a most remarkable state of mind; for it seemed to me a reality, that He stood before me, and I fell down at His feet and poured out my soul to Him. I wept aloud like a child, and made such confession as I could with my choked utterance. It seemed to me that I bathed His feet with my tears; and yet I had no distinct impression that I touched Him, that I recollect.

I must have continued in this state for a good while; but my mind was too much absorbed with the interview to recollect anything that I said. But I know, as soon as my mind became calm enough to break off from the interview, I returned to the front office, and found that the fire that I had made of large wood was nearly burned out. But as I turned and was about to take a seat by the fire, I received a mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost. Without any expectation of it, without ever having the thought in my mind that there was any such thing for me, without any recollection that I had ever heard the thing mentioned by any person in the world, the Holy Ghost descended on me in a manner that seemed to go through me, body and soul. I could feel the impression, like a wave of electricity, going through and through me. Indeed it seemed to come in waves and waves of liquid love; for I could not express it in any other way. It seemed like the very breath of God. I can recollect distinctly that it seemed to fan me, like immense wings.

No words can express the wonderful love that was shed abroad in my heart. I wept aloud with joy and love; and I do not know but I should say, I literally bellowed out the unutterable gushings of my heart. The waves came over me, and over me, one after the other, until I recollect I cried out, 'I shall die if these waves continue to pass over me.' I said, 'Lord, I cannot bear any more;' yet I had no fear of death.

Finney continued for some time under this remarkable manifestation of the Holy Spirit's power. Wave after wave of spiritual power rolled over him, and through him, thrilling every fibre of his being. Late in the evening a member of his choir--for he was the leader of the choir--came into the office. He was a member of the church, but was astonished to see Finney weeping under the power of the Spirit. After asking a few questions, he went after an elder of the church who was a very serious man, but who laughed with joy when he saw Finney weeping under the Spirit's power. A young man who had associated much with Finney came into the office while Finney was trying to relate his experience to the elder and the member of the choir. He listened with astonishment to what Finney was saying, and suddenly fell upon the floor, crying out in the greatest agony of mind and saying, "Do pray for me!"

Although he had experienced so remarkable a baptism of the Holy Spirit, Finney was tempted the same night, when retiring to bed, to believe that he had been deluded in some way or other, and that he had not received the real baptism of the Spirit. "I soon fell asleep," says he, "but almost as soon woke again on account of the great flow of the love of God that was in my heart. I was so filled with love that I could not sleep. Soon I fell asleep again and awoke in the same manner. When I awoke this temptation would return upon me, and the love that seemed to be in my heart would abate; but as soon as I was asleep it was so warm within me that I would immediately awake. Thus I continued till, late at night, I obtained some sound repose.

"When I awoke in the morning the sun had risen, and was pouring a clear light into my room. Words cannot express the impression that the sunlight made upon me. Instantly the baptism that I had received the night before, returned upon me in the same manner. I arose upon my knees in the bed and wept aloud with joy, and remained for some time too much overwhelmed with the baptism of the Spirit to do anything but pour out my soul to God. It seemed as if this morning's baptism was accompanied with a gentle reproof, and the Spirit seemed to say to me, 'Will you doubt?" Will you doubt?' I cried, 'No! I will not doubt; I cannot doubt.' He then cleared the subject up so much to my mind that it was in fact impossible for me to doubt that the Spirit of God had taken possession of my soul."

When I awoke in the morning the sun had risen, and was pouring a clear light into my room. Words cannot express the impression that the sunlight made upon me . . .

On the morning just described Finney went to his office, and the waves of power continued to flood his soul. When Squire Wright came into the office, Finney said a few words to him about the salvation of his soul. He made no reply, but dropped his head and went away. Finney says, "I thought no more of it then, but afterward found that the remark I made pierced him like a sword; and he did not recover from it till he was converted."

Almost every person Finney spoke to during the day was stricken with conviction of sin and afterwards found peace with God. His words seemed to pierce their hearts like arrows. Although he had been fond of law, Finney now lost all taste for it and for every other secular business. His whole desire now was to preach the gospel and to win men to Christ. Nothing else seemed of any consequence. He left the office and went out to talk to individuals concerning the salvation of their souls. Among those brought to Christ through his efforts that day were a Universalist and a distiller. During the day there had been much conversation and excitement concerning Finney's conversion, and in the evening most of the people in the village gathered at the church, although no meeting had been appointed so far as Finney could learn. All the people seemed to be waiting for him to speak, and he arose and related what the Lord had done for his soul. A certain Mr. C----, who was present, was so convicted of sin that he arose and rushed out and went home without his hat. Many others were also deeply-convicted of sin. Finney spoke and prayed with liberty, although he had never prayed in public before. The meeting was a wonderful one, and from that day meetings were held every night for some time. The revival spread among all classes in the village and to many surrounding places. All of Finney's former companions, with one exception, were brought to Christ.

Finney soon visited his home at Henderson, New York, and his parents were brought to Christ. On his return to Adams, he continued his meetings, and spent much time in fasting and prayer. One time as he approached the meeting-house "a light perfectly ineffable" shone in his soul, and almost prostrated him to the ground. It seemed greater than the light of the noon-day sun, as did the light which prostrated Saul on the way to Damascus. He now learned what it was to have real travail of soul for the unsaved. "When Zion travails she shall bring forth" became a precious promise to him.

Under the ministry of George Washington Gale, Charles Grandison Finney professed faith in Christ and undertook to become a Christian minister.  
  
Gale later settled in what would become Galesburg, Illinois to found Knox College (then called the Knox Manual Labor College) in 1837, site of one of the famous Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858.

Soon after receiving the anointing of the Holy Spirit, Finney had a lengthy conversation with his pastor, Mr. Gale, concerning the advisability of preparing for the ministry. Mr. Gale was a graduate of Princeton University, but was a firm believer in the Old School Calvinistic doctrines, which to Finney's mind seemed very absurd and contradictory. Mr. Gale and he could scarcely agree on any point of doctrine. Mr. Gale believed in the doctrine of a limited atonement, or that Christ died only for the elect, while Finney believed that He died for all. Mr. Gale held that men were so depraved by nature that they had no free agency, while Finney believed that all men had the power to accept or reject salvation. Mr. Gale believed that Christ paid the exact penalty of the sinner, while Finney believed that He did not bear the exact penalty but that He bore sufficient [suffering] to enable God to forgive sin without mankind thinking that He was allowing sin to go unpunished. Notwithstanding their differences Finney, in 1822, placed himself under the care of the Presbytery as a candidate for the ministry. Some of the ministers urged him to go to Princeton, but he declined. They then appointed Mr. Gale to superintend his studies. His studies, so far as Mr. Gale was concerned, were only a series of controversies, but he made good use of Mr. Gale's library. He felt that he would rather not preach than teach the doctrines held by Mr. Gale, but a good elder in the church who held similar views to Finney gave him much encouragement, and prayed with him frequently. During the few months that Finney studied under Mr. Gale a Universalist minister came to Adams and greatly disturbed the faith of many. Finney replied to his arguments and completely overthrew them.

Preaching Sermons

The Presbytery was finally called together at Adams, in 1824, and licensed Finney to preach. The two written sermons he prepared for them were, with two exceptions, the only written sermons he ever prepared. He tried one other time to preach from a written sermon, but believed that it hindered the Spirit of God from speaking through him.

Finney's first regular meetings were held at Evans Mills, Oneida County, New York. The people praised his sermons, but for two or three weeks no one decided for Christ. Then Finney urged all who were willing to accept Christ to rise to their feet and all who were willing to reject him to remain on their seats. This was very unusual in those days, and made the people so angry that they were almost ready to mob Finney. Next day he spent the day in fasting and prayer, and in the evening preached with such unction and power that a great conviction of sin swept over the people. All night long they were sending for him to come and pray with them. Even hardened atheists were brought to Christ.

He continued to preach the gospel, with increasing power and results, visiting many of the leading cities of America and Great Britain. Sometimes the power of God was so manifest in his meetings that almost the entire audience fell on their knees in prayer or were prostrated on the floor. When in the pulpit he sometimes felt almost lifted off his feet by the power of the Spirit of God. Some persons believe that the moral work of the Holy Spirit is not accompanied by any physical manifestations; but both in Bible times and in Finney's meetings remarkable physical manifestations seemed to accompany the moral work of the Holy Spirit when the moral work was deep and powerful. At times, when Finney was speaking, the power of the Spirit seemed to descend like a cloud of glory upon him. Often a hallowed calm, noticeable even to the unsaved, seemed to settle down upon cities where he was holding meetings. Sinners were often brought under conviction of sin almost as soon as they entered these cities.

Finney seemed so anointed with the Holy Spirit that people were often brought under conviction of sin just by looking at him. When holding meetings at Utica, New York, he visited a large factory there and was looking at the machinery. At the sight of him one of the operatives, and then another, and then another broke down and wept under a sense of their sins, and finally so many were sobbing and weeping that the machinery had to be stopped while Finney pointed them to Christ.

At a country place named Sodom, in the state of New York, Finney gave one address in which he described the condition of Sodom before God destroyed it. "I had not spoken in this strain more than a quarter of an hour," says he, "when an awful solemnity seemed to settle upon them; the congregation began to fall from their seats in every direction, and cried for mercy. If I had had a sword in each hand, I could not have cut them down as fast as they fell. Nearly the whole congregation were either on their knees or prostrate, I should think, in less than two minutes from the first shock that fell upon them. Every one prayed who was able to speak at all." Similar scenes were witnessed in many other places.

In London, England, between 1,500 and 2,000 persons were seeking salvation in one day in Finney's meetings. Enormous numbers inquired the way of salvation in his meetings in New York, Boston, Rochester, and many other important cities of America. The great revival of 1858-1859, one of the greatest revivals in the world's history, was the direct result of his meetings. "That was the greatest work of God, and the greatest revival of religion the world has ever seen," says Dr. Lyman Beecher. It is estimated that six hundred thousand persons were brought to Christ in this revival.

In 1833 Finney became a Congregationalist, and later a President of Oberlin College, Ohio. The great object in founding this college was to train students for the ministry. The remainder of Finney's time was divided between his work at Oberlin and holding meetings in different parts of the country.

Finney's writings have had an enormous circulation and have greatly influenced the religious life of the world. This is especially true of his "Autobiography," his "Lectures on Revivals," "Lectures to Professing Christians," and his "Systematic Theology." These books have all had a worldwide circulation.

Finney continued to preach and to lecture to the students at Oberlin until two weeks before he was eighty-three years of age, when he was called up higher to enjoy the reward of those who have "turned many to righteousness."

**Sermons**

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* [**Conditions of Being Saved**](http://www.christians.com/charlesfinney/sermons/conditions_of_being_saved)

"What must I do to be saved?" -- Acts 16:30

* [**The Way Of Salvation**](http://www.christians.com/charlesfinney/sermons/the_way_of_salvation)

"Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." - Acts 16:30,31 with 1 Cor. 1:30.

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# The Way Of Salvation

by Charles Finney

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## What Is Salvation?

To add a word or two of exhortation to you, to excite you to be not only almost, but altogether Christians. O let us scorn all base and treacherous treatment of our King and Savior, of our God and Creator. Let us not take some pains all our lives to go to haven, and yet plunge ourselves into hell as last. Let us give to God our whole hearts, and no longer halt between two opinions: if the world be God, let us serve that; if pleasure be a God, let us serve that; but if the Lord he be God, let us, O let us serve him alone. Alas! why, why should we stand out any longer? Why should we be so in love with slavery, as not wholly to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil, which, like so many spiritual chains, bind down our souls, and hinder them from flying up to God. Alas! what are we afraid of? Is not God able to reward our entire obedience? If he is, as the almost Christian's lame way of serving him, seems to grant, why then will we not serve him entirely? For the same reason we do so much, why do we not do more? Or do you think that being only half religious will make you happy, but that going farther, will render you miserable and uneasy? Alas! this, my brethren, is delusion all over: for what is it but this half piety, this wavering between God and the world, that makes so many, that are seemingly well disposed, such utter strangers to the comforts of religion? They choose just so much of religion as will disturb them in their lusts, and follow their lusts so far as to deprive themselves of the comforts of religion. Whereas on the contrary, would they sincerely leave all in affection, and give their hearts wholly to God, they would then (and they cannot till then) experience the unspeakable pleasure of having a mind at unity with itself, and enjoy such a peace of God, which even in this life passes all understanding, and which they were entire strangers to before. It is true, it we will devote ourselves entirely to God, we must meet with contempt; but then it is because contempt is necessary to heal our pride. We must renounce some sensual pleasures, but then it is because those unfit us for spiritual ones, which are infinitely better. We must renounce the love of the world; but then it is that we may be filled with the love of God: and when that has once enlarged our hearts, we shall, like Jacob when he served for his beloved Rachel, think nothing too difficult to undergo, no hardships too tedious to endure, because of the love we shall then have for our dear Redeemer. Thus easy, thus delightful will be the ways of God even in this life: but when once we throw off these bodies, and our souls are filled with all the fullness of God, O! what heart can conceive, what tongue can express, with what unspeakable joy and consolation shall we then look back on our past sincere and hearty services. Think you then, my dear hearers, we shall repent we had done too much; or rather think you not, we shall be ashamed that we did no more; and blush we were so backward to give up all to God; when he intended hereafter to give us himself?

Let me therefore, to conclude, exhort you, my brethren, to have always before you the unspeakable happiness of enjoying God. And think withal, that every degree of holiness you neglect, every act of piety you omit, is a jewel taken out of your crown, a degree of blessedness lost in the vision of God. O! do but always think and act thus, and you will no longer be laboring to compound matters between God and the world; but, on the contrary, be daily endeavoring to give up yourselves more and more unto him; you will be always watching, always praying, always aspiring after farther degrees of purity and love, and consequently always preparing yourselves for a fuller sight and enjoyment of that God, in whose presence there is fullness of joy, and at whose right-hand there are pleasures for ever more.

Salvation includes several things; sanctification, justification, and eternal life and glory. The two prime ideas, are sanctification and justification. Sanctification is the purifying of the mind, or making it holy. Justification relates to the manner in which we are accepted and treated by God.

1. It is by faith, in opposition to works.

Here I design to take a brief view of the gospel plan of salvation, and exhibit it especially in contrast with the original plan on which it was proposed to save mankind.

Originally, the human race was put on the foundation of law for salvation; so that, if saved at all, they were to be saved on the ground of perfect and eternal obedience to the law of God. Adam was the natural head of the race. It has been supposed by many, that there was a covenant made with Adam such as this, that if he continued to obey the law for a limited period, all his posterity should be confirmed in holiness and happiness forever. What the reason is for this belief, I am unable to ascertain; I am not aware that the doctrine is taught in the Bible. And if it is true, the condition of mankind now, does not differ materially from what it was at first. If the salvation of the race originally turned wholly on the obedience of one man, I do not see how it could be called a covenant of works so far as the race is concerned. For if their weal or woe was suspended on the conduct of one head, it was a covenant of grace to them, in the same manner, that the present system is a covenant of grace. For according to that view, all that related to works depended on one man, just as it does under the gospel; and the rest of the race had no more to do with works, than they have now, but all that related to works was done by the representative. Now, I have supposed, and there is nothing in the Bible to the contrary, that if Adam had continued in obedience for ever, his posterity would have stood for ever on the same ground, and must have obeyed the law themselves for ever in order to be saved. It may have been, that if he had obeyed always, the natural influence of his example would have brought about such a state of things, that as a matter of fact all his posterity would have continued in holiness. But the salvation of each individual would still have depended on his own works. But if the works of the first father were to be so set to the account of the race, that on account of his obedience they were to be secured in holiness and happiness forever, I do not see wherein it differs materially from the covenant of grace, or the gospel.

As a matter of fact, Adam was the natural head of the human race, and his sin has involved them in its consequences, but not on the principle that his sin is literally accounted their sin. The truth is simply this; that from the relation in which he stood as their natural head, as a matter of fact his sin has resulted in the sin and ruin of his posterity. I suppose that mankind were originally all under a covenant of works, and that Adam was not so their head or representative, that his obedience or disobedience involved them irresistibly in sin and condemnation, irrespective of their own acts. As a fact it resulted so, that "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners;" as the apostle tells us in the 5th of Romans. So that, when Adam had fallen, there was not the least hope, by the law, of saving any of mankind. Then was revealed THE PLAN, which had been provided in the counsels of eternity, on foresight of this event, for saving mankind by a proceeding of mere grace. Salvation was now placed on an entire new foundation, by a Covenant of Redemption. You will find this covenant in the 89th Psalm, and other places in the Old Testament. This, you will observe, is a covenant between the Father and the Son, regarding the salvation of mankind, and is the foundation of another covenant, the covenant of grace. In the covenant of redemption, man is no party at all, but merely the subject of the covenant; the parties being God the Father and the Son. In this covenant, the Son is made the head or representative of his people. Adam was the natural head of the human family, and Christ is the covenant head of his church.

On this covenant of redemption was founded the covenant of grace. In the covenant of redemption, the Son stipulated with the Father, to work out an atonement; and the Father stipulated that he should have a seed, or people, gathered out of the human race. The covenant of grace was made with men and was revealed to Adam, after the fall, and more fully revealed to Abraham. Of this covenant, Jesus Christ was to be the Mediator, or he that should administer it. It was a covenant of grace, in opposition to the original covenant of works, under which Adam and his posterity were placed at the beginning; and salvation was now to be by faith, instead of works, because the obedience and death of Jesus Christ were to be regarded as the reason why any individual was to be saved, and not each one's personal obedience. Not that his obedience was, strictly speaking, performed for us. As a man, he was under the necessity of obeying, for himself; because he had not put himself under the law, and if he did not obey it he became personally a transgressor. And yet there is a sense in which it may be said that his obedience is reckoned to our account. His obedience has so highly honored the law, and his death has so fully satisfied the demands of public justice, that grace (not justice,) has reckoned his righteousness to us. If he had obeyed the law strictly for us, and had owed no obedience for himself, but was at liberty to obey only for us, then I cannot see why justice should not have accounted his obedience to us, and we could have obtained salvation on the score of right, instead of asking it on the score of grace or favor. But it is only in this sense accounted ours, that he, being God and man, having voluntarily assumed our nature, and then voluntarily laying down his life to make atonement, casts such a glory on the law of God, that grace is willing to consider his obedience in such a sense ours, as, on his account, to treat us as if we were righteous.

Christ is also the covenant head of those that believe. He is not the natural head, as Adam was, but our covenant relation to him is such, that whatever is given to him is given to us. Whatever he is, both in his divine and human nature; whatever he has done, either as God or man, is given to us by covenant, or promise, and is absolutely ours. I want you should understand this. The church, as a body, has never yet understood the fullness and richness of this covenant, and that all there is in Christ is made over to us in the covenant of grace.

And here let me say, that we receive this grace by faith. It is not by works, by any thing we do, more or less, previous to the exercise of faith, that we become interested in this righteousness. But as soon as we exercise faith, all that Christ has done, all there is of Christ, all that is contained in the covenant of grace, becomes ours by faith. Hence it is, that the inspired writers make so much of faith. Faith is the voluntary compliance, on our part, with the condition of the covenant. It is the eye that discerns, the hand that takes hold, the medium by which we become possessed of the blessings of the covenant. By the act of faith, the soul becomes actually possessed of all that is embraced is that act of faith. If there is not enough received to break the bonds of sin and set the soul at once at liberty, it is because the act has not embraced enough of what Christ is and what he has done.

I have read the verse from Corinthians, for the purpose of remarking on some of the fundamental things contained in this covenant of grace. "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." When Christ is received and believed on, he is made to us what is meant by these several particulars. But what is meant? How and in what sense is Christ our wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption? I will dwell a few moments on each.

This is a very peculiar verse, and my mind has long dwelt on it with great anxiety to know its exact and full meaning. I have prayed over it, as much as over any passage in the Bible, that I might be enlightened to understand its real import. I have long been in the habit, when my mind fastened on any passage that I did not understand, to pray over it till I felt satisfied. I have never dared to preach on this verse, because I never felt fully satisfied that I understood it. I think I understand it now. At all events, I am willing to give my opinion on it. And if I have any right knowledge respecting its meaning, I am sure I have received it from the Spirit of God.

## In What Sense is Christ Our Wisdom?

He is often called "the Wisdom of God." And in the Book of Proverbs he is called Wisdom. But how is he made to us wisdom?

One idea contained in it is, that we have absolutely all the benefits of his wisdom; and if we exercise the faith we ought, we are just as certain to be directed by it, and it is in all respects just as well for us, as if we had the same wisdom, originally, of our own. Else it cannot be true that he is made unto us wisdom. As he is the infinite source of wisdom, how can it be said that he is made unto us wisdom, unless we are partakers of his wisdom, and have it guaranteed to us; so that, at any time, if we trust in him, we may have it as certainly, and in any degree we need, to guide us as infallibly, as if we had it originally ourselves? This is what we need from the gospel, and what the gospel must furnish, to be suited to our necessities. And that man who has not learned this, has not known any thing as he ought. If he thinks his own theorising and speculating are going to bring him to any right knowledge on the subject of religion, he knows nothing at all, as yet. His carnal, earthly heart, can no more study out the realities of religion so as to get any available knowledge of them than the heart of a beast. "What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." What can we know, without experience, of the character or Spirit of God? Do you say, "We can reason about God." What if we do reason? What can reason do here? Suppose here was a mind that was all pure intellect, and had no other powers, and I should undertake to teach that pure intellect what it was to love. I could lecture on it, and instruct that pure intellect in the words, so that it could reason and philosophise about love, and yet any body can see that it is impossible to put that pure intellect in possession of the idea of what love is, unless it not only has power to exercise love, but has actually exercised it! It is just as if I should talk about colors to a man born blind. He hears the word, but what idea can he attach to it, unless he has seen? It is impossible to get the idea home to his mind, of the difference of colors. The term is a mere word.

Just so it is in religion. One whose mind has not experienced it, may reason upon it. He may demonstrate the perfections of God, as he would demonstrate a proposition in Euclid. But that which is the spirit and life of the gospel, can no more be carried to the mind by mere words, without experience, than love to a pure intellect, or colors to a man born blind. You may so far give him the letter, as to crush him down to hell with conviction; but to give the spiritual meaning of things, without the Spirit of God, is as absurd as to lecture a blind man about colors.

These two things then are contained in the idea of wisdom. 1. As Christ is our representative, we are interested in all his wisdom, and all the wisdom he has is exercised for us. His infinite wisdom is actually employed for our benefit. And, 2. That his wisdom, just as much as is needed, is guaranteed to be always ready, to be imparted to us, whenever we exercise faith in him for wisdom. From his infinite fullness, in this respect, we may receive all we need. And if we do not receive from him the wisdom which we need, in any and every case, it is because we do not exercise faith.

## He is made unto us Righteousness

Here my mind has long labored to understand the distinction which the apostle intended to make between righteousness and sanctification. Righteousness means holiness or obedience to law; and sanctification means the same.

My present view of the distinction aimed at is, that by his being made unto us righteousness, the apostle meant to be understood, that Christ is our outward righteousness; or, that his obedience is, under the covenant of grace, accounted to us. Not in the sense that on the footing of justice he obeyed for us, and God accounts us just, because our substitute has obeyed; but that we are so interested in his obedience, that as a matter of grace, we are treated as if we had ourselves obeyed.

You are aware there is a view of this subject, which is maintained by some, different from this;--that the righteousness of Christ is so imputed to us, that we are considered as having been always holy. It was at one time extensively maintained that righteousness was so imputed to us, that we had a right to demand salvation, on the score of justice. My view of the matter is entirely different. It is, that Christ's righteousness becomes ours by gift. God has so united us to Christ, as on his account to treat us with favour. It is just like a case, where a father had done some signal service to his country, and the government thinks it proper to reward such signal service with signal reward; and not only is the individual himself rewarded, but all his family receive favours on his account, because they are the children of a father who had greatly benefited their country. Human governments do this, and the ground of it is very plain. It is just so in the divine government. Christ's disciples are in such a sense considered one with him, and God is so highly delighted with the single service he has done the kingdom, from the circumstances under which he became a Savior, that God accounts his righteousness to them as if it were their own; or in other words, treats them just as he would treat Christ himself. As the government of the country, under certain circumstances, treats the son of a father who had greatly benefited the country, just as they would treat the father, and bestow on him the same favors. You will bear in mind, that I am now speaking of what I called the outward righteousness; I mean, the reason out of the individual, why God accepts and saves them that believe in Christ. And this reason includes both the obedience of Christ to the law, and his obedience unto death, or suffering upon the cross to make atonement.

## In What Sense is Christ Made Unto Us Sanctification?

Sanctification is inward purity. And the meaning is, that he is our inward purity. The control which Christ himself exercises over us, his Spirit working in us, to will and to do, his shedding his love abroad in our hearts, so controlling us that we are ourselves, through the faith which is of the operation of God, made actually holy.

I wish you to get the exact idea here. When it is said that Christ is our sanctification, or our holiness, it is meant that he is the author of our holiness. He is not only the procuring cause, by his atonement and intercession, but by his direct intercourse with the soul he himself produces holiness. He is not the remote but the immediate cause of our being sanctified. He works our works in us, not by suspending our own agency, but he so controls our minds, by the influences of his Spirit in us, in a way perfectly consistent with our freedom, as to sanctify us. And this, also, is received by faith. It is by faith that Christ is received and enthroned as KING in our hearts; when the mind, from confidence in Christ, just yields itself up to him, to be led by his Spirit, and guided and controlled by his hand. The act of the mind, that thus throws the soul into the hand of Christ for sanctification, is faith. Nothing is wanting, but for the mind to break off from any confidence in itself, and to give itself up to him, to be led and controlled by him, absolutely: just as the child puts out its little hand to its father, to have him lead it any where he pleases. If the child is distrustful, or not willing to be led, or if it has confidence in its own wisdom and strength, it will break away and try to run alone. But if all that self-confidence fails, it will cease from its own efforts, and come and give itself up to its father again, to be led entirely at his will. I suppose this is similar to the act of faith, by which an individual gives his mind up to be led and controlled by Christ. He ceases from his own efforts to guide and control and sanctify himself; and just gives himself up, as yielding as air, and leaves himself in the hands of Christ as his sanctification.

## Christ is made of God unto us Redemption

Here the apostle plainly refers to the Jewish practice of redeeming estates, or redeeming relatives that had been sold for debt. When an estate had been sold out of the family, or an individual had been deprived of liberty for debt, they could be redeemed, by paying the price of redemption. There are very frequent allusions in the Bible to this practice of redemption. And where Christ is spoken of as our redemption, I suppose it means just what it says. While we are in our sins, under the law, we are sold as slaves, in the hand of public justice, bound over to death, and have no possible way to redeem ourselves from the curse of the law. Now, Christ makes himself the price of our redemption. In other words, he is our redemption money; he buys us out from under the law, by paying himself as a ransom. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; and thus, also, redeems us from the power of sin. But I must leave this train of thought, and return to a consideration of the plan of salvation.

Under this covenant of grace, our own works, or any thing that we do, or can do, as works of law, have no more to do with our salvation, than if we had never existed. I wish your minds to separate entirely between salvation by works, and salvation by grace. Our salvation by grace is founded on a reason entirely separate from and out of ourselves. Before, it depended on ourselves. Now we receive salvation, as a free gift, solely on account of Jesus Christ. He is the sole author, ground, and reason of our salvation. Whether we love God or do not love God, so far as it is a ground of our salvation, is of no account. The whole is entirely a matter of grace, through Jesus Christ. You will not understand me as saying that there is no necessity for love to God or good works. I know that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." But the necessity of holiness is not at all on this ground. Our own holiness does not enter at all into the ground or reason for our acceptance and salvation. We are not going to be indebted to Christ for awhile, until we are sanctified, and all the rest of the time stand in our own righteousness. But however perfect and holy we may become, in this life, or to all eternity, Jesus Christ will for ever be the sole reason in the universe why we are not in hell. Because, however holy we may become, it will be for ever true that we have sinned, and in the eye of justice, nothing in us, short of our eternal damnation can satisfy the law. But now, Jesus Christ has undertaken to help, and he forever remains the sole ground of our salvation.

According to this plan, we have the benefit of his obedience to the law, just as if he had obeyed it for us. Not that he did obey for us, in distinction from himself, but we have the benefits of his obedience, by the gift of grace, the same as if he had done so.

I meant to dwell on the idea of Christ as our Light, and our Life, and our Strength. But I find there is not time to-night. I wish to touch a little on this question, "How does faith put us in possession of Christ, in all these relations?"

Faith in Christ puts us in possession of Christ, as the sum and substance of the blessings of the gospel. Christ was the very blessing promised in the Abrahamic covenant. And throughout the scriptures, he is held forth as the sum and substance of all God's favors to man.--He is the Bread of life, the Water of life, our Strength, our All. The gospel has taxed all the powers of language to describe the vast variety of his relations, and to show that faith is to put believers in possession of Jesus Christ, in all these relations.

The manner in which Faith puts the mind in possession of all these blessings is this: It annihilates all those things that stand in the way of our intercourse with Christ. He says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Here is a door, an obstacle to our intercourse with Christ, something that stands in the way. Take the particular of wisdom. Why do we not receive Christ as our wisdom? Because we depend on our own wisdom, and think we have ourselves some available knowledge of the things of God, and as long as we depend on this, we keep the door shut. That is the door. Now, let us just throw this all away, and give up all wisdom of our own, and see how infinitely empty we are of any available knowledge, as much so as a beast that perisheth, as to the way of salvation, until Christ shall teach us. Until we feel this, there is a door between us and Christ. We have something of our own instead of coming and throwing ourselves perfectly into the hands of Christ, we just come to him to help out our own wisdom.

How does faith put us in possession of the Righteousness of Christ? This is the way. Until our mind takes hold on the righteousness of Christ, we are alive to [our] own righteousness. We are naturally engaged in working out a righteousness of our own, and until we cease entirely from our own works, by absolutely throwing ourselves on Christ for righteousness, we do not come to Christ. Christ will not patch up our own righteousness, to make it answer the purpose. If we depend on our prayers, our tears, our charities, or any thing we have done, or expect to do, he will not receive us. We must have none of this. But the moment an individual takes hold on Christ, he receives and appropriates all Christ's righteousness as his own; as a perfect and unchangeable reason for his acceptance with God, by grace.

It is just so, with regard to Sanctification and Redemption. I cannot dwell on them so particularly as I wished. Until an individual receives Christ, he does not cease from his own works. The moment he does that, by this very act he throws the entire responsibility upon Christ. The moment the mind does fairly yield itself up to Christ, the responsibility comes upon him, just as the person who undertakes to conduct a blind man is responsible for his safe conduct. The believer by the act of faith pledges Christ for his obedience and sanctification. By giving himself up to Christ, all the veracity of the Godhead are put at stake, that he shall be led aright or made holy.

And with regard to Redemption, as long as the sinner supposes that his own sufferings, his prayers or tears, or mental agony, are of any avail, he will never receive Christ. But as soon as he receives Christ, he sinks down as lost and condemned, as in fact a dead person, unless redeemed by Christ.

## Remarks

I. There is no such thing as spiritual life in us, or any thing acceptable to God, until we actually believe in Christ.

The very act of believing, receives Christ as just that influence which alone can wake up the mind to spiritual life.

II. We are nothing, as Christians, any farther than we believe in Christ.

III. Many seem to be waiting to do something first, before they receive Christ.

Some wait to become more dead to the world. Some to get a broken heart. Some to get their doubts cleared up, before they come to Christ. THIS IS A GRAND MISTAKE. It is expecting to do that first, before faith, which is only the result of faith. Your heart will not be broken, your doubts will not be cleared up, you will never die to the world, until you believe. The moment you grasp the things of Christ, your mind will see, as in the light of eternity, the emptiness of the world, of reputation, riches, honor and pleasure. To expect this first, preparatory to the exercise of faith, is beginning at the wrong end. It is seeking that as a preparation for faith, which is always the result of faith.

IV. Perfect faith will produce perfect love.

When the mind duly recognizes Christ, and receives him, in his various relations; when the faith is unwavering and the views clear, there will be nothing left in the mind contrary to the law of God.

V. Abiding faith would produce abiding love.

Faith increasing, would produce increasing love. And here you ought to observe, that love may be perfect at all times, and yet be in different degrees at different times. An individual may love God perfectly and eternally, and yet his love may increase in vigor to all eternity, as I suppose it will. As the saints in glory see more and more of God's excellencies, they will love him more and more, and yet will have perfect love all the time. That is, there will be nothing inconsistent with love in the mind, while the degrees of love will be different as their views of the character of God unfold. As God opens to their view the wonders of his glorious benevolence, they will have their souls thrilled with new love to God. In this life, the exercises of love vary greatly in degree. Sometimes God unfolds to his saints the wonders of his government, and gives them such views as well-nigh prostrate the body, and then love is greatly raised in degree. And yet the love may have been perfect before; that is, the love of God was supreme and single, without any mixture of inconsistent affections. And it is not unreasonable to suppose, that it will be so to all eternity; that occasions will occur in which the love of the saints will be brought into more lively exercise by new unfoldings of God's glory. As God develops to them wonder after wonder, their love will be increased indefinitely, and they will have continually enlarged accessions of its strength and fervor, to all eternity.

I designed to mention some things on the subject of instantaneous and progressive sanctification. But there is not time tonight, and they must be postponed.

VI. You see, beloved, from this subject, the way in which you can be made holy, and when you can be sanctified.

Whenever you come to Christ, and receive him for all that he is, and accept a whole salvation by grace, you will have all that Christ is to you, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. There is nothing but unbelief to hinder you from now enjoying it all. You need not wait for any preparation. There is no preparation that is of any avail. You must RECEIVE a whole salvation, as a FREE GIFT. When will you thus lay hold on Christ? When will you believe? Faith, true faith, always works by love, and purifies the heart, and overcomes the world. Whenever you find any difficulty in your way, you may know what is the matter. It is a want of faith. No matter what may befall you outwardly: if you find yourself thrown back in religion, or your mind thrown all into confusion, unbelief is the cause, and faith the remedy. If you lay hold on Christ, and keep hold, all the devils in hell can never drive you away from God, or put out your light. But if you let unbelief prevail, you may go on in this miserable, halting way, talking about sanctification, using words without knowledge, and dishonoring God, till you die.

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# Conditions of Being Saved

by Charles Finney

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## Introduction

"What must I do to be saved?" -- Acts 16:30

I BRING forward this subject today not because it is new to many in this congregation, but because it is greatly needed. I am happy to know that the great inquiry of our text is beginning to be deeply and extensively agitated in this community, and under these circumstances it is the first duty of a Christian pastor to answer it, fully and plainly.

The circumstances which gave occasion to the words of the text were briefly these. Paul and Silas had gone to Philippi to preach the Gospel. Their preaching excited great opposition and tumult; they were arrested and thrown into prison, and the jailer was charged to keep them safely. At midnight they were praying and singing praises -- God came down -- the earth quaked and the prison rocked -- its doors burst open, and their chains fell off; the jailer sprang up affrighted, and, supposing his prisoners had fled, was about to take his own life, when Paul cried out, "Do thyself no harm; we are all here." He then called for a light, and sprang in and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

This is briefly the history of our text; and I improve it now, by showing;

I. What sinners must not do to be saved; and

II. What they must do.

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## What Sinners Must Not Do To Be Saved

It has now come to be necessary and very important to tell men what they must not do in order to be saved. When the Gospel was first preached, Satan had not introduced as many delusions to mislead men as he has now. It was then enough to give, as Paul did, the simple and direct answer, telling men only what they must at once do. But this seems to be not enough now. So many delusions and perversions have bewildered and darkened the minds of men that they need often a great deal of instruction to lead them back to those simple views of the subject which prevailed at first. Hence the importance of showing what sinners must not do, if they intend to be saved.

1. They must not imagine that they have nothing to do. In Paul's time nobody seems to have thought of this. Then the doctrine of Universalism was not much developed. Men had not begun to dream that they should be saved without doing anything. They had not learned that sinners have nothing to do to be saved. If this idea, so current of late, had been rife at Philippi, the question of our text would not have been asked. No trembling sinner would have cried out, What must I do to be saved?

If men imagine they have nothing to do, they are never likely to be saved. It is not in the nature of falsehood and lies to save men's souls, and surely nothing is more false than this notion. Men know they have something to do to be saved. Why, then, do they pretend that all men will be saved whether they do their duty, or constantly refuse to do it? The very idea is preposterous, and is entertained only by the most palpable outrage upon common sense and an enlightened conscience.

2. You should not mistake what you have to do. The duty required of sinners is very simple, and would be easily understood were it not for the false ideas that prevail as to what religion is, and as to the exact things which God requires as conditions of salvation. On these points erroneous opinions prevail to a most alarming extent. Hence the danger of mistake. Beware lest you be deceived in a matter of so vital moment.

3. Do not say or imagine that you cannot do what God requires. On the contrary, always assume that you can. If you assume that you cannot, this very assumption will be fatal to your salvation.

4. Do not procrastinate. As you ever intend or hope to be saved, you must set your face like a flint against this most pernicious delusion. Probably no other mode of evading present duty has ever prevailed so extensively as this, or has destroyed so many souls. Almost all men in Gospel lands intend to prepare for death -- intend to repent and become religious before they die. Even Universalists expect to become religious at some time -- perhaps after death -- perhaps after being purified from their sins by purgatorial fires; but somehow they expect to become holy, for they know they must before they can see God and enjoy His presence. But you will observe, they put this matter of becoming holy off to the most distant time possible. Feeling a strong dislike to it now, they flatter themselves that God will take care that it shall be done up duly in the next world, how much soever they may frustrate His efforts to do it in this. So long as it remains in their power to choose whether to become holy or not, they improve the time to enjoy sin; and leave it with God to make them holy in the next world -- if they can't prevent it there! Consistency is a jewel!

And all those who put off being religious now in the cherished delusion of becoming so in some future time, whether in this world or the next, are acting out this same inconsistency. You fondly hope that will occur which you are now doing your utmost to prevent.

So sinners by myriads press their way down to hell under this delusion. They often, when pressed with the claims of God, will even name the time when they will repent. It may be very near -- perhaps as soon as they get home from the meeting, or as soon as the sermon is over; or it may be more remote, as, for example, when they have finished their education, or become settled in life, or have made a little more property, or get ready to abandon some business of questionable morality; but no matter whether the time set be near or remote, the delusion is fatal -- the thought of procrastination is murder to the soul. Ah, such sinners are little aware that Satan himself has poured out his spirit upon them and is leading them whithersoever he will. He little cares whether they put off for a longer time or a shorter. If he can persuade them to a long delay, he likes it well; if only to a short one, he feels quite sure he can renew the delay and get another extension -- so it answers his purpose fully in the end.

Now mark, sinner, if you ever mean to be saved you must resist and grieve away this spirit of Satan. You must cease to procrastinate. You can never be converted so long as you operate only in the way of delaying and promising yourself that you will become religious at some future time. Did you ever bring anything to pass in your temporal business by procrastination? Did procrastination ever begin, prosecute, and accomplish any important business?

Suppose you have some business of vast consequence, involving your character, or your whole estate, or your life, to be transacted in Cleveland, but you do not know precisely how soon it must be done. It may be done with safety now, and with greater facility now than ever hereafter; but it might possibly be done although you should delay a little time, but every moment's delay involves an absolute uncertainty of your being able to do it at all. You do not know but a single hour's delay will make yon too late. Now in these circumstances what would a man of sense and discretion do? Would he not be awake and up in an instant?

Would he sleep on a matter of such moment, involving such risks and uncertainties? No. You know that the risk of a hundred dollars, pending on such conditions, would stir the warm blood of any man of business, and you could not tempt him to delay an hour. O, he would say, this is the great business to which I must attend, and everything else must give way. But suppose he should act as a sinner does about repentance, and promise himself that tomorrow will be as this day and much more abundant -- and do nothing today, nor tomorrow, nor the next month, nor the next year -- would you not think him beside himself? Would you expect his business to be done, his money to be secured, his interests to be promoted?

So the sinner accomplishes nothing but his own ruin so long as he procrastinates. Until he says, "Now is my time -- today I will do all my duty" -- he is only playing the fool and laying up his wages accordingly. O, it is infinite madness to defer a matter of such vast interest and of such perilous uncertainty!

5. If you would be saved you must not wait for God to do what He commands you to do. God will surely do all that He can for your salvation. All that the nature of the case allows of His doing, He either has done or stands ready to do as soon as your position and course will allow Him to do it. Long before you were born He anticipated your wants as a sinner, and began on the most liberal scale to make provision for them. He gave His Son to die for you, thus doing all that need be done by way of an atonement. Of a long time past He has been shaping His providence so as to give you the requisite knowledge of duty -- has sent you His Word and Spirit. Indeed, He has given you the highest possible evidence that He will be energetic and prompt on His part -- as one in earnest for your salvation. You know this. What sinner in this house fears lest God should be negligent on His part in the matter of his salvation? Not one. No, many of you are not a little annoyed that God should press you so earnestly and be so energetic in the work of securing your salvation. And now can you quiet your conscience with the excuse of waiting for God to do your duty?

The fact is, there are things for you to do which God can not do for you. Those things which He has enjoined and revealed as the conditions of your salvation, He cannot and will not do Himself. If He could have done them Himself, He would not have asked you to do them. Every sinner ought to consider this. God requires of you repentance and faith because it is naturally impossible that any one else but you should do them. They are your own personal matters -- the voluntary exercises of your own mind; and no other being in heaven, earth, or hell, can do these things for you in your stead. As far as substitution was naturally possible, God has introduced it, as in the case of the atonement. He has never hesitated to march up to meet and to bear all the self-denials which the work of salvation has involved.

6. If you mean to be saved, you must not wait for God to do anything whatever. There is nothing to be waited for. God has either done all on His part already, or if anything more remains, He is ready and waiting this moment for you to do your duty that He may impart all needful grace.

7. Do not flee to any refuge of lies. Lies cannot save you. It is truth, not lies, that alone can save. I have often wondered how men could suppose that Universalism could save any man.

Men must be sanctified by the truth. There is no plainer teaching in the Bible than this, and no Bible doctrine is better sustained by reason and the nature of the case.

Now does Universalism sanctify anybody? Universalists say you must be punished for your sins, and that thus they will be put away -- as if the fires of purgatory would thoroughly consume all sin, and bring out the sinner pure. Is this being sanctified by the truth? You might as well hope to be saved by eating liquid fire! You might as well expect fire to purify your soul from sin in this world, as in the next! Why not?

It is amazing that men should hope to be sanctified and saved by this great error, or, indeed, by any error whatever. God says you must be sanctified by the truth. Suppose you could believe this delusion, would it make you holy? Do you believe that it would make you humble, heavenly-minded, sin-hating, benevolent? Can you believe any such thing? Be assured that Satan is only the father of lies, and he cannot save you -- in fact, he would not if he could; he intends his lies not to save you, but to destroy your very soul, and nothing could be more adapted to its purpose. Lies are only the natural poison of the soul. You take them at your peril!

8. Don't seek for any self-indulgent method of salvation. The great effort among sinners has always been to be saved in some way of self-indulgence. They are slow to admit that self-denial is indispensable -- that total, unqualified self-denial is the condition of being saved. I warn you against supposing that you can be saved in some easy, self-pleasing way. Men ought to know, and always assume, that it is naturally indispensable for selfishness to be utterly put away and its demands resisted and put down.

I often ask -- Does the system of salvation which I preach so perfectly chime with the intuitions of my reason that I know from within myself that this Gospel is the thing I need? Does it in all its parts and relations meet the demands of my intelligence? Are its requisitions obviously just and right? Does its prescribed conditions of salvation obviously befit man's moral position before God, and his moral relations to the government of God?

To these and similar questions I am constrained to answer in the affirmative. The longer I live the more fully I see that the Gospel system is the only one that can alike meet the demands of the human intelligence, and supply the wants of man's sinning, depraved heart. The duties enjoined upon the sinner are just those things which I know must in the nature of the case be the conditions of salvation. Why, then, should any sinner think of being saved on any other conditions? Why desire it even if it were ever so practicable?

9. Don't imagine you will ever have a more favourable time. Impenitent sinners are prone to imagine that just now is by no means so convenient a season as may be expected hereafter. So they put off in hope of a better time. They think perhaps that they shall have more conviction, and fewer obstacles, and less hindrances. So thought Felix. He did not intend to forego salvation, any more than you do; but he was very busy just then -- had certain ends to be secured which seemed peculiarly pressing, and so he begged to be excused on the promise of very faithful attention to the subject at the expected convenient season. But did the convenient season ever come? Never. Nor does it ever come to those who in like manner resist God's solemn call, and grieve away His Spirit. Thousands are now waiting in the pains of hell who said just as he did, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will call for thee." Oh, sinner, when will your convenient season come? Are you aware that no season will ever be "convenient" for you, unless God calls up your attention earnestly and solemnly to the subject? And can you expect Him to do this at the time of your choice, when you scorn His call at the time of His choice? Have you not heard Him say, "Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded, but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you; then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me." O, sinner, that will be a fearful and a final doom! And the myriad voices of God's universe will say, amen.

10. Do not suppose that you will find another time as good, and one in which you can just as well repent as now. Many are ready to suppose that though there may be no better time for themselves, there will at least be one as good. Vain delusion! Sinner, you already owe ten thousand talents, and will you find it just as easy to be forgiven this debt while you are showing that you don't care how much and how long you augment it? In a case like this, where everything turns upon your securing the good-will of your creditor, do you hope to gain it by positively insulting him to his face?

Or take another view of the case. Your heart you know must one day relent for sin, or you are forever damned. You know also that each successive sin increases the hardness of your heart, and makes it a more difficult matter to repent. How, then, can you reasonably hope that a future time will be equally favourable for your repentance? When you have hardened your neck like an iron sinew, and made your heart like an adamant stone, can you hope that repentance will yet be as easy to you as ever?

You know, sinner, that God requires you to break off from your sins now. But you look up into His face and say to Him, "Lord, it is just as well to stop abusing Thee at some future convenient time. Lord, if I can only be saved at last, I shall think it all my gain to go on insulting and abusing Thee as long as it will possibly answer. And since Thou art so very compassionate and long-suffering, I think I may venture on in sin and rebellion against Thee yet these many months and years longer. Lord, don't hurry me -- do let me have my way; let me abase Thee if Thou pleasest, and spit in Thy face -- all will be just as well if I only repent in season so as finally to be saved. I know, indeed, that Thou art entreating me to repent now, but I much prefer to wait a season, and it will be just as well to repent at some future time."

And now do you suppose that God will set His seal to this -- that He will say, "You are right, sinner, I set my seal of approbation upon your course -- it is well that you take so just views of your duty to your Maker and your Father; go on; your course will ensure your salvation." Do you expect such a response from God as this?

11. If you ever expect to be saved, don't wait to see what others will do or say. I was lately astonished to find that a young lady here under conviction was in great trouble about what a beloved brother would think of her if she should give her heart to God. She knew her duty; but he was impenitent, and how could she know what he would think if she should repent now! It amounts to this. She would come before God and say, "O Thou great God, I know I ought to repent, but I can't; for I don't know as my brother will like it. I know that he too is a sinner, and must repent or lose his soul, but I am much more afraid of his frown than I am of Thine, and I care more for his approbation than I do for Thine, and consequently, I dare not repent till he does!" How shocking is this! Strange that on such a subject men will ever ask "What will others say of me?" Are you amenable to God? What, then, have others to say about your duty to Him? God requires you and them also to repent, and why don't you do it at once?

Not long since, as I was preaching abroad, one of the principal men of the city came to the meeting for inquiry, apparently much convicted and in great distress for his soul. But being a man of high political standing, and supposing himself to be very dependent upon his friends, he insisted that he must consult them, and have a regard for their feelings in this matter. I could not possibly beat him off from this ground, although I spent three hours in the effort. He seemed almost ready to repent -- I thought he certainly would; but he slipped away, relapsed by a perpetual backsliding, and I expect will be found at last among the lost in perdition. Would you not expect such a result if he tore himself away under such an excuse as that?

O, sinner, you must not care what others say of you -- let them say what they please. Remember, the question is between your own soul and God, and "He that is wise shall be wise for himself, and he that scorneth, he alone shall bear it." You must die for yourself, and for yourself must appear before God in judgment! Go, young woman, ask your brother, "Can you answer for me when I come to the judgment? Can you pledge yourself that you can stand in my stead and answer for me there?" Now until you have reason to believe that he can, it is wise for you to disregard his opinions if they stand at all in your way. Whoever interposes any objection to your immediate repentance, fail not to ask him -- Can you shield my soul in the judgment? If I can be assured that you can and will, I will make you my Saviour; but if not, then I must attend to my own salvation, and leave you to attend to yours.

I never shall forget the scene which occurred while my own mind was turning upon this great point. Seeking a retired place for prayer, I went into a deep grove, found a perfectly secluded spot behind some large logs, and knelt down. All suddenly, a leaf rustled and I sprang, for somebody must be coming and I shall be seen here at prayer. I had not been aware that I cared what others said of me, but looking back upon my exercises of mind here, I could see that I did care infinitely too much what others thought of me.

Closing my eyes again for prayer, I heard a rustling leaf again, and then the thought came over me like a wave of the sea, "I am ashamed of confessing my sin!" What! thought I, ashamed of being found speaking with God! O, how ashamed I felt of this shame! I can never describe the strong and overpowering impression which this thought made on my mind. I cried aloud at the very top of my voice, for I felt that though all the men on earth and all the devils in hell were present to hear and see me I would not shrink and would not cease to cry unto God; for what is it to me if others see me seeking the face of my God and Saviour? I am hastening to the judgment: there I shall not be ashamed to have the Judge my friend. There I shall not be ashamed to have sought His face and His pardon here. There will be no shrinking away from the gaze of the universe. O, if sinners at the judgment could shrink away, how gladly would they; but they cannot! Nor can they stand there in each other's places to answer for each other's sins. That young woman, can she say then -- O, my brother, you must answer for me; for to please you, I rejected Christ and lost my soul? That brother is himself a guilty rebel, confounded, and agonized, and quailing before the awful Judge, and how can he befriend you in such an awful hour! Fear not his displeasure now, but rather warn him while you can, to escape for his life ere the wrath of the Lord wax hot against him, and there be no remedy.

12. If you would be saved, you must not indulge prejudices against either God, or His ministers, or against Christians, or against anything religious.

There are some persons of peculiar temperament who are greatly in danger of losing their souls because they are tempted to strong prejudices. Once committed either in favour of or against any persons or things they are exceedingly apt to become so fixed as never more to be really honest. And when these persons or things in regard to which they become committed, are so connected with religion, that their prejudices stand arrayed against their fulfilling the great conditions of salvation, the effect can be nothing else than ruinous. For it is naturally indispensable to salvation that you should be entirely honest. Your soul must act before God in the open sincerity of truth, or you cannot be converted.

I have known persons in revivals to remain a long time under great conviction, without submitting themselves to God, and by careful inquiry I have found them wholly hedged in by their prejudices, and yet so blind to this fact that they would not admit that they had any prejudice at all. In my observation of convicted sinners, I have found this among the most common obstacles in the way of the salvation of souls. Men become committed against religion, and remaining in this state it is naturally impossible that they should repent. God will not humour your prejudices, or lower His prescribed conditions of salvation to accommodate your feelings.

Again, you must give up all hostile feelings in cases where you have been really injured. Sometimes I have seen persons evidently shut out from the kingdom of heaven, because having been really injured, they would not forgive and forget, but maintained such a spirit of resistance and revenge, that they could not, in the nature of the case, repent of the sin toward God, nor could God forgive them. Of course they lost heaven. I have heard men say, "I cannot forgive -- I will not forgive -- I have been injured, and I never will forgive that wrong." Now mark: you must not hold on to such feelings; if you do, you cannot be saved.

Again, you must not suffer yourself to be stumbled by the prejudices of others. I have often been struck with the state of things in families, where the parents or older persons had prejudices against the minister, and have wondered why those parents were not more wise than to lay stumbling-blocks before their children to ruin their souls. This is often the true reason why children are not converted. Their minds are turned against the Gospel, by being turned against those from whom they hear it preached. I would rather have persons come into my family, and curse and swear before my children, than to have them speak against those who preach to them the Gospel. Therefore I say to all parents -- take care what you say, if you would not shut the gate of heaven against your children!

Again, do not allow yourself to take some fixed position, and then suffer the stand you have taken to debar you from doing any obvious duty. Persons sometimes allow themselves to be committed against taking what is called "the anxious seat;" and consequently they refuse to go forward under circumstances when it is obviously proper that they should, and where their refusal to do so, places them in an attitude unfavourable, and perhaps fatal to their conversion. Let every sinner beware of this!

Again, do not hold on to anything about which you have any doubt of its lawfulness or propriety. Cases often occur in which persons are not fully satisfied that a thing is wrong, and yet are not satisfied that it is right. Now in cases of this sort it should not be enough to say, "such and such Christians do so;" you ought to have better reasons than this for your course of conduct. If you ever expect to be saved, you must abandon all practices which you even suspect to be wrong. This principle seems to be involved in the passage, "He that doubteth is damned if he eat; for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." To do that which is of doubtful propriety is to allow yourself to tamper with the divine authority, and cannot fail to break down in your mind that solemn dread of sinning which, if you would ever be saved, you must carefully cherish.

Again, if you would be saved, do not look at professors and wait for them to become engaged as they should be in the great work of God. If they are not what they ought to be, let them alone. Let them bear their own awful responsibility. It often happens that convicted sinners compare themselves with professed Christians, and excuse themselves for delaying their duty, because professed Christians are delaying theirs. Sinners must not do this if they would ever be saved. It is very probable that you will always find guilty professors enough to stumble over into hell if you will allow yourself to do so.

But on the other hand, many professors may not be nearly so bad as you suppose, and you must not be censorious, putting the worst constructions upon their conduct. You have other work to do than this. Let them stand or fall to their own master. Unless you abandon the practice of picking flaws in the conduct of professed Christians, it is utterly impossible that you should be saved.

Again, do not depend upon professors -- on their prayers or influence in any way. I have known children hang a long time upon the prayers of their parents, putting those prayers in the place of Jesus Christ, or at least in the place of their own present efforts to do their duty. Now this course pleases Satan entirely. He would ask nothing more to make sure of you. Therefore, depend on no prayers -- not even those of the holiest Christians on earth. The matter of your conversion lies between yourself and God alone, as really as if you were the only sinner in all the world, or as if there were no other beings in the universe but yourself and your God.

Do not seek for any apology or excuse whatever. I dwell upon this and urge it the more because I so often find persons resting on some excuse without being themselves aware of it. In conversation with them upon their spiritual state, I see this and say, "There you are resting on that excuse." "Am I?" say they, "I did not know it."

Do not seek for stumbling-blocks. Sinners, a little disturbed in their stupidity, begin to cast about for stumbling-blocks for self-vindication. All at once they become wide awake to the faults of professors, as if they had to bear the care of all the churches. The real fact is, they are all engaged to find something to which they can take exception, so that they can thereby blunt the keen edge of truth upon their own consciences. This never helps along their own salvation.

Do not tempt the forbearance of God. If you do, you are in the utmost danger of being given over forever. Do not presume that you may go on yet longer in your sins, and still find the gate of mercy. This presumption has paved the way for the ruin of many souls.

Do not despair of salvation and settle down in unbelief, saying, "There is no mercy for me." You must not despair in any such sense as to shut yourself out from the kingdom. You may well despair of being saved without Christ and without repentance; but you are bound to believe the Gospel; and to do this is to believe the glad tidings that Jesus Christ has come to save sinners, even the chief, and that "Him that cometh to Him He will in no wise cast out." You have no right to disbelieve this, and act as if there were no truth in it.

You must not wait for more conviction. Why do you need any more? You know your guilt and know your present duty. Nothing can be more preposterous, therefore, than to wait for more conviction. If you did not know that you are a sinner, or that you are guilty for sin, there might be some fitness in seeking for conviction of the truth on these points.

Do not wait for more or for different feelings. Sinners are often saying, "I must feel differently before I can come to Christ," or, "I must have more feeling." As if this were the great thing which God requires of them. In this they are altogether mistaken.

Do not wait to be better prepared. While you wait you are growing worse and worse, and are fast rendering your salvation impossible.

Don't wait for God to change your heart. Why should you wait for Him to do what He has commanded you to do, and waits for you to do in obedience to His command?

Don't try to recommend yourself to God by prayers or tears or by anything else whatsoever. Do you suppose your prayers lay God under any obligation to forgive you? Suppose you owed a man five hundred talents, and should go a hundred times a week and beg him to remit to you this debt; and then should enter your prayers in account against your creditor, as so much claim against him. Suppose you should pursue this course till you had canceled the debt, as you suppose -- could you hope to prove anything by this course except that you were mad? And yet sinners seem to suppose that their many prayers and tears lay the Lord under real obligation to them to forgive them.

Never rely on anything else whatever than Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. It is preposterous for you to hope, as many do, to make some propitiation by your own sufferings. In my early experience I thought I could not expect to be converted at once, but must be bowed down a long time. I said to myself, "God will not pity me till I feel worse than I do now. I can't expect Him to forgive me till I feel a greater agony of soul than this." Not even if I could have gone on augmenting my sufferings till they equalled the miseries of hell, it could not have changed God. The fact is, God does not ask of you that you should suffer. Your sufferings cannot in the nature of the case avail for atonement. Why, therefore, should you attempt to thrust aside the system of God's providing, and thrust in one of your own?

There is another view of the case. The thing God demands of you is that you should bow your stubborn will to Him. Just as a child in the attitude of disobedience, and required to submit, might fall to weeping and groaning, and to every expression of agony, and might even torture himself, in hope of moving the pity of his father, but all the time refuses to submit to parental authority. He would be very glad to put his own sufferings in the place of the submission demanded. This is what the sinner is doing. He would fain put his own sufferings in the place of submission to God, and move the pity of the Lord so much that He would recede from the hard condition of repentance and submission.

If you would be saved you must not listen at all to those who pity you, and who impliedly take your part against God, and try to make you think you are not so bad as you are. I once knew a woman who, after a long season of distressing conviction, fell into great despair; her health sank, and she seemed about to die. All this time she found no relief, but seemed only to wax worse and worse, sinking down in stern and awful despair. Her friends, instead of dealing plainly and faithfully with her, and probing her guilty heart to the bottom, had taken the course of pitying her, and almost complained of the Lord that He would not have compassion on the poor agonized, dying woman. At length, as she seemed in the last stages of life -- so weak as to be scarcely able to speak in a low voice, there happened in a minister who better understood how to deal with convicted sinners. The woman's friends cautioned him to deal very carefully with her, as she was in a dreadful state and greatly to be pitied; but he judged it best to deal with her very faithfully. As he approached her bed-side, she raised her faint voice and begged for a little water. "Unless you repent, you will soon be," said he, "where there is not a drop of water to cool your tongue." "O," she cried, "must I go down to hell?" "Yes, you must, and you will, soon, unless you repent and submit to God. Why don't you repent and submit immediately?" "O," she replied, "it is an awful thing to go to hell!" "Yes, and for that very reason Christ has provided an atonement through Jesus Christ, but you won't accept it. He brings the cup of salvation to your lips, and you thrust it away. Why will you do this? Why will you persist in being an enemy of God and scorn His offered salvation, when you might become His friend and have salvation if you would?"

This was the strain of their conversation, and its result was, that the woman saw her guilt and her duty, and turning to the Lord, found pardon and peace.

Therefore I say, if your conscience convicts you of sin, don't let anybody take your part against God. Your wound needs not a plaster, but a probe. Don't fear the probe; it is the only thing that can save you. Don't seek to hide your guilt, or veil your eyes from seeing it, nor be afraid to know the worst, for you must know the very worst, and the sooner you know it the better. I warn you, don't look after some physician to give you an opiate, for you don't need it. Shun, as you would death itself, all those who would speak to you smooth things and prophesy deceits. They would surely ruin your soul.

Again, do not suppose that if you become a Christian, it will interfere with any of the necessary or appropriate duties of life, or with anything whatever to which you ought to attend. No; religion never interferes with any real duty. So far is this from being the case, that in fact a proper attention to your various duties is indispensable to your being religious. You cannot serve God without.

Moreover, if you would be saved you must not give heed to anything that would hinder you. It is infinitely important that your soul should be saved. No consideration thrown in your way should be allowed to have the weight of a straw or a feather. Jesus Christ has illustrated and enforced this by several parables, especially in the one which compares the kingdom of heaven to "a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls, who when he had found one pearl of great price went and sold all that he had and bought it." In another parable, the kingdom of heaven is said to be "like treasure hid in a field, which, when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field." Thus forcibly are men taught that they must be ready to make any sacrifice whatever which may be requisite in order to gain the kingdom of heaven.

Again, you must not seek religion selfishly. You must not make your own salvation or happiness the supreme end. Beware, for if you make this your supreme end you will get a false hope, and will probably glide along down the pathway of the hypocrite into the deepest hell.

1. You must understand what you have to do. It is of the utmost importance that you should see this clearly. You need to know that you must return to God, and to understand what this means. The difficulty between yourself and God is that you have stolen yourself and run away from His service. You belong of right to God. He created you for Himself, and hence had a perfectly righteous claim to the homage of your heart, and the service of your life. But you, instead of living to meet His claims, have run away -- have deserted from God's service, and have lived to please yourself. Now your duty is to return and restore yourself to God.

2. You must return and confess your sins to God. You must confess that you have been all wrong, and that God has been all right. Go before the Lord and lay open the depth of your guilt. Tell Him you deserve just as much damnation as He has threatened.

These confessions are naturally indispensable to your being forgiven. In accordance with this the Lord says, "If then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity, then will I remember my covenant." Then God can forgive. But so long as you controvert this point, and will not concede that God is right, or admit that you are wrong, He can never forgive you.

You must moreover confess to man if you have injured any one. And is it not a fact that you have injured some, and perhaps many of your fellow-men? Have you not slandered your neighbour and said things which you have no right to say? Have you not in some instances, which you could call to mind if you would, lied to them, or about them, or covered up or perverted the truth; and have you not been willing that others should have false impressions of you or of your conduct? If so, you must renounce all such iniquity, for "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; while he that confesseth and forsaketh them shall find mercy." And, furthermore, you must not only confess your sins to God and to the men you have injured, but you must also make restitution. You have not taken the position of a penitent before God and man until you have done this also.

God cannot treat you as a penitent until you have done it.

I do not mean by this that God cannot forgive you until you have carried into effect your purpose of restitution by finishing the outward act, for sometimes it may demand time, and may in some cases be itself impossible to you. But the purpose must be sincere and thorough before you can be forgiven of God.

3. You must renounce yourself. In this is implied,

(1.) That you renounce your own righteousness, forever discarding the very idea of having any righteousness in yourself.

(2.) That you forever relinquish the idea of having done any good which ought to commend you to God, or be ever thought of as a ground of your justification.

(3.) That you renounce your own will, and be ever ready to say not in word only, but in heart, "Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." You must consent most heartily that God's will shall be your supreme law.

(4.) That you renounce your own way and let God have His own way in everything. Never suffer yourself to fret and be rasped by anything whatever; for since God's agency extends to all events, you ought to recognize His hand in all things; and of course to fret at anything whatever is to fret against God who has at least permitted that thing to occur as it does. So long, therefore, as you suffer yourself to fret, you are not right with God. You must become before God as a little child, subdued and trustful at His feet. Let the weather be fair or foul, consent that God should have His way. Let all things go well with you, or as men call it, ill; yet let God do His pleasure, and let it be your part to submit in perfect resignation. Until you take this ground you cannot be saved.

4. You must come to Christ. You must accept of Christ really and fully as your Saviour. Renouncing all thought of depending on anything you have done or can do, you must accept of Christ as your atoning sacrifice, and as your ever-living Mediator before God. Without the least qualification or reserve you must place yourself under His wing as your Saviour.

5. You must seek supremely to please Christ, and not yourself. It is naturally impossible that you should be saved until you come into this attitude of mind -- until you are so well pleased with Christ in all respects as to find your pleasure in doing His. It is in the nature of things impossible that you should be happy in any other state of mind, or unhappy in this. For, His pleasure is infinitely good and right. When, therefore, His good pleasure becomes your good pleasure, and your will harmonizes entirely with His, then you will be happy for the same reason that He is happy, and you cannot fail of being happy any more than Jesus Christ can. And this becoming supremely happy in God's will is essentially the idea of salvation. In this state of mind you are saved. Out of it you cannot be.

It has often struck my mind with great force, that many professors of religion are deplorably and utterly mistaken on this point. Their real feeling is that Christ's service is an iron collar -- an insufferably hard yoke. Hence, they labour exceedingly to throw off some of this burden. They try to make it out that Christ does not require much, if any, self-denial -- much, if any, deviation from the course of worldliness and sin. O, if they could only get the standard of Christian duty quite down to a level with the fashions and customs of this world! How much easier then to live a Christian life and wear Christ's yoke!

But taking Christ's yoke as it really is, it becomes in their view an iron collar. Doing the will of Christ, instead of their own, is a hard business. Now if doing Christ's will is religion, (and who can doubt it?) then they only need enough of it; and in their state of mind they will be supremely wretched. Let me ask those who groan under the idea that they must be religious -- who deem it awful hard -- but they must -- how much religion of this kind would it take to make hell? Surely not much! When it gives you no joy to do God's pleasure, and yet you are shut up to the doing of His pleasure as the only way to be saved, and are thereby perpetually dragooned into the doing of what you hate, as the only means of escaping hell, would not this be itself a hell? Can you not see that in this state of mind you are not saved and cannot be?

To be saved you must come into a state of mind in which you will ask no higher joy than to do God's pleasure. This alone will be forever enough to fill your cup to overflowing.

You must have all confidence in Christ, or you cannot so saved. You must absolutely believe in Him -- believe all His words of promise. They were given you to be believed, and unless you believe them they can do you no good at all. So far from helping you without you exercise faith in them, they will only aggravate your guilt for unbelief. God would be believed when He speaks in love to lost sinners. He gave them these "exceeding great and precious promises, that they, by faith in them, might escape the corruption that is in the world through lust." But thousands of professors of religion know not how to use these promises, and as to them or any profitable use they make, the promises might as well have been written on the sands of the sea.

Sinners, too, will go down to hell in unbroken masses, unless they believe and take hold of God by faith in His promise. O, His awful wrath is out against them! And He says, "I would go through them, I would burn them up together; or let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me, and he shall make peace with Me." Yes, let him stir up himself and take hold of My arm, strong to save, and then he may make peace with Me. Do you ask how take hold? By faith. Yes, by faith; believe His words and take hold; take hold of His strong arm and swing right out over hell, and don't be afraid any more than if there were no hell.

But you say -- I do believe, and yet I am not saved. No, you don't believe. A woman said to me, "I believe, I know I do, and yet here I am in my sins." No, said I, you don't. Have you as much confidence in God as you would have in me if I had promised you a dollar? Do you ever pray to God? And, if so, do you come with any such confidence as you would have if you came to me to ask for a promised dollar? Oh, until you have as much faith in God as this, aye and more -- until you have more confidence in God than you would have in ten thousand men, your faith does not honour God, and you cannot hope to please Him. You must say -- Let God be true though every man be a liar."

But you say, "O, I am a sinner, and how can I believe? I know you are a sinner, and so are all men to whom God has given these promises. "O, but I am a great sinner!" Well, "It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom," Paul says, "I am the chief." So you need not despair.

7. You must forsake all that you have, or you cannot be Christ's disciple. There must be absolute and total self-denial.

By this I do not mean that you are never to eat again, or never again to clothe yourself, or never more enjoy the society of your friends -- no, not this; but that you should cease entirely from using any of these enjoyments selfishly. You must no longer think to own yourself: your time, your possessions, or anything you have ever called your own. All these things you must hold as God's, not yours. In this sense you are to forsake all that you have, namely, in the sense of laying all upon God's altar to be devoted supremely and only to His service. When you come back to God for pardon and salvation, come with all you have to lay all at his feet. Come with your body, to offer it as a living sacrifice upon His altar. Come with your soul and all its powers, and yield them in willing consecration to your God and Saviour. Come, bring them all along -- everything, body, soul, intellect, imagination, acquirements -- all, without reserve. Do you say -- Must I bring them all? Yes, all -- absolutely ALL; do not keep back anything -- don't sin against your own soul, like Ananias and Sapphira, by keeping back a part, but renounce your own claim to everything, and recognize God's right to all. Say -- Lord, these things are not mine. I had stolen them, but they were never mine. They were always Thine; I'll have them no longer. Lord, these things are all Thine, henceforth and forever. Now, what wilt Thou have me to do? I have no business of my own to do -- I am wholly at Thy disposal. Lord, what work hast Thou for me to do?

In this spirit you must renounce the world, the flesh, and Satan. Your fellowship is henceforth to be with Christ, and not with those objects. You are to live for Christ, and not for the world, the flesh, or the devil.

8. You must believe the record God hath given of His Son. He that believes not does not receive the record -- does not set to his seal that God is true. "This is the record, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." The condition of your having it is that you believe the record, and of course that you act accordingly. Suppose here is a poor man living at your next door, and the mail brings him a letter stating that a rich man has died in England, leaving him 100,000 pounds sterling, and the cashier of a neighbouring bank writes him that he has received the amount on deposit for him, and holds it subject to his order. Well, the poor man says, I can't believe the record. I can't believe there ever was any such rich man; I can't believe there is 100,000 pounds for me. So he must live and die as poor as Lazarus, because he won't believe the record.

Now, mark; this is just the case with the unbelieving sinner. God has given you eternal life, and it waits your order; but you don't get it because you will not believe, and therefore will not make out the order, and present in due form the application.

Ah, but you say, I must have some feeling before I can believe -- how can I believe till I have the feeling? So the poor man might say -- How can I believe that the 100,000 pounds is mine; I have not got a farthing of it now; I am as poor as ever. Yes, you are poor because you will not believe. If you would believe, you might go and buy out every store in this country. Still you cry, I am as poor as ever. I can't believe it; see my poor worn clothes -- I was never more ragged in my life; I have not a particle of the feeling and the comforts of a rich man. So the sinner can't believe till he gets the inward experience! He must wait to have some of the feeling of a saved sinner before he can believe the record and take hold of the salvation! Preposterous enough! So the poor man must wait to get his new clothes and fine house before he can believe his documents and draw for his money. Of course he dooms himself to everlasting poverty, although mountains of gold were all his own.

Now, sinner, you must understand this. Why should you be lost when eternal life is bought and offered you by the last will and testament of the Lord Jesus Christ? Will you not believe the record and draw for the amount at once! Do for mercy's sake understand this and not lose heaven by your own folly!

I must conclude by saying, that if you would be saved you must accept a prepared salvation, one already prepared and full, and present. You must be willing to give up all your sins, and be saved from them, all, now and henceforth! Until you consent to this, you cannot be saved at all. Many would be willing to be saved in heaven, if they might hold on to some sins while on earth -- or rather they think they would eke heaven on such terms. But the fact is, they would as much dislike a pure heart and a holy life in heaven as they do on earth, and they deceive themselves utterly in supposing that they are ready or even willing to go to such a heaven as God has prepared for His people. No, there can be no heaven except for those who accept a salvation from all sin in this world. They must take the Gospel as a system which holds no compromise with sin -- which contemplates full deliverance from sin even now, and makes provision accordingly. Any other gospel is not the true one, and to accept of Christ's Gospel in any other sense is not to accept it all. Its first and its last condition is swarn and eternal renunciation of all sin.

## Remarks

1. Paul did not give the same answer to this question which a consistent Universalist would give. The latter would say, You are to be saved by being first punished according to your sin. All men must expect to be punished all that their sins deserve. But Paul did not answer thus. Miserable comforter had he been if he had answered after this sort: "You must all be punished according to the letter of the law you have broken." This could scarcely have been called gospel.

Nor again did Paul give the Universalist's answer and say, "Do not concern yourself about this matter of being saved, all men are sure enough of being saved without any particular anxiety about it." Not so Paul; no -- he understood and did not forbear to express the necessity of believing on the Lord Jesus Christ as the condition of being saved.

2. Take care that you do not sin willfully after saying you understood the truth concerning the way of salvation. Your danger of this is great precisely in proportion as you see your duty clearly. The most terrible damnation must fall on the head of those who "knew their duty, but who did it not." When, therefore, you are told plainly and truly what your duty is, be on your guard lest you let salvation slip out of your hands. It may never come so near your reach again.

3. Do not wait, even to go home, before you obey God. Make up your mind now, at once, to close in with the offers of salvation. Why not? Are they not most reasonable?

4. Let your mind act upon this great proposal and embrace it just as you would any other important proposition. God lays the proposition before you; you hear it explained, and you understand it; now the next and only remaining step is -- to embrace it with all your heart. Just as any other great question (we may suppose it a question of life or death) might come before a community -- the case be fully stated, the conditions explained, and then the issue is made. Will you subscribe? Will you engage to meet these conditions? Do you heartily embrace the proposition? Now all this would be intelligible.

Just so, now, in the case of the sinner. You understand the proposition. You know the conditions of salvation. You understand the contract into which you are to enter with your God and Saviour. You covenant to give your all to God -- to lay yourself upon His altar to be used up there just as He pleases to use you. And now the only remaining question is, Will you consent to this at once? Will you go for full and everlasting consecration with all your heart?

5. The jailer made no excuse. When he knew his duty, in a moment he yielded. Paul told him what to do, and he did it. Possibly he might have heard something about Paul's preaching before this night; but probably not much. But now he fears for his life. How often have I been struck with this case! There was a dark-minded heathen. He had heard, we must suppose, a great deal of slang about these apostles; but notwithstanding all, he came to them for truth; hearing, he is convinced, and being convinced, he yields at once. Paul uttered a single sentence -- he received it, embraced it, and it is done.

Now you, sinner, know and admit all this truth, and yet infinitely strange as it is, you will not, in a moment, believe and embrace it with all your heart. O, will not Sodom and Gomorrah rise up against you in the judgment and condemn you! That heathen jailer -- how could you bear to see him on that dread day, and stand rebuked by his example there!

6. It is remarkable that Paul said nothing about the jailer's needing any help in order to believe and repent. He did not even mention the work of the Spirit, or allude to the jailer's need of it. But it should be noticed that Paul gave the jailer just those directions which would most effectually secure the Spirit's aid and promote his action.

7. The jailer seems to have made no delay at all, waiting for no future or better time; but as soon as the conditions are before him he yields and embraces; no sooner is the proposition made than he seizes upon it in a moment.

I was once preaching in a village in New York, and there sat before me a lawyer who had been greatly offended with the Gospel. But that day I noticed he sat with fixed eye and open mouth, leaned forward as if he would seize each word as it came. I was explaining and simplifying the Gospel, and when I came to state just how the Gospel is offered to men, he said to me afterwards: I snatched at it -- I put out my hand, (suiting the action to the thought), and seized it -- and it became mine.

So in my own case while in the woods praying, after I had burst away from the fear of man, and began to give scope to my feelings, this passage fell upon me, "Ye shall seek for Me and find Me when ye shall search for Me with all your heart." For the first time in the world I found that I believed a passage in the Bible. I had supposed that I believed before, but surely never before as I now did. Now, said I to myself, "This is the word of the everlasting God. My God, I take Thee at Thy word. Thou sayest I shall find Thee when I search for Thee with all my heart, and now, Lord, I do search for Thee, I know, with all my heart." And true enough, I did find the Lord. Never in all my life was I more certain of anything than I was then that I had found the Lord.

This is the very idea of His promises -- they were made to be believed -- to be laid hold of as God's own words, and acted upon as if they actually meant just what they say. When God says, "Look unto Me and be ye saved," He would have us look unto Him as if He really had salvation in His hands to give, and withal a heart to give it. The true spirit of faith is well expressed by the Psalmist, "When Thou saidst, 'Seek ye my face,' my heart replied -- 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.'" This is the way -- let your heart at once respond to the blessed words of invitation and of promise.

Ah, but you say, I am not a Christian. And you never will be till you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour. If you never become a Christian, the reason will be because you do not and will not believe the Gospel and embrace it with all your heart.

The promises were made to be believed, and belong to any one who will believe them. They reach forth their precious words to all, and whoever will, may take them as his own. Now will you believe that the Father has given you eternal life? This is the fact declared; will you believe it?

You have now been told what you must not do and what you must do to be saved; are you pre pared to act? Do you say, I am ready to renounce my own pleasure, and henceforth seek no other pleasure than to please God? Can you forego everything else for the sake of this?

Sinner, do you want to please God, or would you choose to please yourself? Are you willing now to please God and to begin by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ unto salvation? Will you be as simple-hearted as the jailer was? And act as promptly?

I demand your decision now. I dare not have you go home first, lest you get to talking about something else, and let slip these words of life and this precious opportunity to grasp an offered salvation. And whom do you suppose I am now addressing? Every impenitent sinner in this house -- every one. I call heaven and earth to record that I have set the Gospel before you today. Will you take it? Is it not reasonable for you to decide at once? Are you ready, now, to say before high heaven and before this congregation, "I will renounce myself and yield to God! I am the Lord's, and let all men and angels bear me witness -- I am forevermore the Lord's." Sinner, the infinite God waits for your consent!

Uplifting and motivational

[](http://www.christians.com/node/50)

John Wesley

June 29, 1703 to March 2, 1791 (88), Church Father

John Wesley was an Anglican minister and Christian theologian who was an early leader in the Methodist movement.

## Relationships

* http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/georgewhitefield_main.mini.jpg[George Whitefield](http://www.christians.com/georgewhitefield/main) and John Wesley were members of Oxford's Holy Club.
* http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/nicolauszinzendorf_main.mini.jpg[Nicolaus Zinzendorf](http://www.christians.com/nicolauszinzendorf/main) was the leader of the Moravian church which John Wesley often visited.

# John Wesley

* [At A Glance](http://www.christians.com/johnwesley/main)
* [Testimony](http://www.christians.com/johnwesley/main)
* [**Biography**](http://www.christians.com/johnwesley/main)
* [Works](http://www.christians.com/johnwesley/main)

Historical Timeline

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1660

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Today, Wesley's influence as a teacher persists. He continues to be the primary theological interpreter for Methodists the world over; Wesley's call to personal and social holiness continues to challenge Christians who struggle to discern what it means to participate in the Kingdom of God.



He knew how to lead and control men to achieve his purposes. He used his power, not to provoke rebellion, but to inspire love. His mission was to spread "Scriptural holiness"; his means and plans were such as Providence indicated. The course thus mapped out for him he pursued with a determination from which nothing could distract him.



Wesley died on Wednesday March 2, 1791, in his eighty-eighth year. As he lay dying, his friends gathered around him, Wesley grasped their hands and said repeatedly, "Farewell, farewell." At the end, summoning all his remaining strength, he cried out, "The best of all is, God is with us."



Wesley was a logical thinker, and expressed himself clearly, concisely and forcefully in writing. His written sermons are characterized by spiritual earnestness and simplicity. They are doctrinal but not dogmatic. Wesley was a fluent, powerful and effective preacher. He usually preached spontaneously and briefly, though occasionally at great length.

[«](http://www.christians.com/johnwesley/main#prev) [1](http://www.christians.com/johnwesley/main#1) [2](http://www.christians.com/johnwesley/main#2) [3](http://www.christians.com/johnwesley/main#3) [4](http://www.christians.com/johnwesley/main#4) [»](http://www.christians.com/johnwesley/main#next)

Family Background

The fifteenth child in his family, John Wesley was raised in a religiously strict home. He was educated at Oxford and ordained as a deacon in the Anglican Church. In 1735 he left England as a missionary to America to preach to the Indians. However, the complete failure of his missionary efforts, coupled with his inability to overcome sin in his own personal life, caused Wesley to evaluate his actual state before God. He was a defeated man. It was then that he began to realize that he had never had a personal encounter with Christ.

After returning to England, he attended a meeting on May 24, 1738, in which Luther’s preface to the Epistle to the Romans was being read. During the reading his heart was “strangely warmed,” and that night Wesley found Christ. From that point on, his outdoor preaching throughout Great Britain brought thousands to Christ. The following is an excerpt from his journals, dated May 24th and 25th, 1738, describing his experience of finding Christ:

What occured on Wednesday the 24th, I think best to relate at large, after premising what may make it the better understood. Let him that cannot receive it ask of the Father of lights that He would give more light to him and me. I believe, till I was about ten years old I had not sinned away that “washing of the Holy Spirit” which was given me in baptism; having been strictly educated and carefully taught that I could only be saved “by universal obedience, by keeping all the commandments of God,” in the meaning of which I was diligently instructed. And those instructions, so far as they respected outward duties and sins, I gladly received and often thought of.

But all that was said to me of inward obedience or holiness I neither understood nor remembered. So that I was indeed as ignorant of the true meaning of the law as I was of the gospel of Christ. The next six or seven years were spent at school; where, outward restraints being removed, I was much more negligent than before, even of outward duties, and almost continually guilty of outward sins, which I knew to be such, though they were not scandalous in the eye of the world. However, I still read the Scriptures, and said my prayers morning and evening. And what I now hoped to be saved by was (1) not being so bad as other people; (2) having still a kindness for religion; and (3) reading the Bible, going to church, and saying my prayers.

Being removed to the University for five years, I still said my prayers both in public and in private, and read, with the Scriptures, several other books of religion, especially comments on the New Testament. Yet I had not all this while so much as a notion of inward holiness; nay, went on habitually, and for the most part very contentedly, in some or other known sin: indeed, with some intermission and short struggles, especially before and after the Holy Communion, which I was obliged to receive three times a year. I cannot well tell what I hoped to be saved by now, when I was continually sinning against that little light I had; unless by those transient fits of what many divines taught me to call repentance.

When I was about twenty-two, my father pressed me to enter into holy orders. At the same time, the providence of God directing me to Kempis’s Christian Pattern, I began to see that true religion was seated in the heart, and that God’s law extended to all our thoughts as well as words and actions. I was, however, very angry at Kempis for being too strict; though I read him only in Dean Stanhope’s translation. Yet I had frequently much sensible comfort in reading him, such as I was an utter stranger to before; and meeting likewise with a religious friend, which I never had till now, I began to alter the whole form of my conversation, and to set in earnest upon a new life. I set apart an hour or two a day for religious retirement. I took holy communion every week.

I watched against all sin, whether in word or deed. I began to aim at, and pray for, inward holiness. So that now, “doing so much, and living so good a life,” I doubted not but I was a good Christian.… In 1730 I began visiting the prisons; assisting the poor and sick in town; and doing what other good I could, by my presence or my little fortune, to the bodies and souls of all men. To this end I abridged myself of all superfluities, and many that are called necessaries of life.…Yet when, after continuing some years in this course, I apprehended myself to be near death, I could not find that all this gave me any comfort or any assurance of acceptance with God. At this I was then not a little surprised; not imagining I had been all this time building on the sand, nor considering that “other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid” by God, “even Christ Jesus.”

Salvation by faith

John Wesley's house on City Road, LondonSoon after, a contemplative man convinced me still more than I was convinced before, that outward works are nothing, being alone; and in several conversations instructed me how to pursue inward holiness, or a union of the soul with God. But even of his instructions (though I then received them as the words of God) I cannot but now observe (1) that he spoke so incautiously against trusting in outward works, that he discouraged me from doing them at all; (2) that he recommended (as it were, to supply what was wanting in them) mental prayer, and the like exercises, as the most effectual means of purifying the soul and uniting it with God. Now these were, in truth, as much my own works as visiting the sick or clothing the naked; and the union with God thus pursued was as really my own righteousness as any I had before pursued under another name.

In this refined way of trusting to my own works and my own righteousness (so zealously inculcated by the Mystic writers), I dragged on heavily, finding no comfort or help therein till the time of my leaving England. On shipboard, however, I was again active in outward works; where it pleased God of His free mercy to give me twenty-six of the Moravian brethren for companions, who endeavored to show me “a more excellent way.” But I understood it not at first. I was too learned and too wise. So that it seemed foolishness unto me. And I continued preaching, and following after, and trusting in, that righteousness whereby no flesh can be justified.

All the time I was at Savannah [Georgia], I was thus beating the air. Being ignorant of the righteousness of Christ, which, by a living faith in Him, brings salvation “to every one that believes,” I sought to establish my own righteousness; and so labored in the fire all my days. I was now properly “under the law.” I knew that the law of God was spiritual; I consented to it that it was good. Yea, I delighted in it, after the inner man. Yet was I carnal, sold under sin. Every day was I constrained to cry out, “What I do, I allow not: for what I would, I do not; but what I hate, that I do. To will is indeed present with me: but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good which I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. I find a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me: even the law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and still bringing me into captivity to the law of sin.”

Life-size statue at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, KYIn this vile, abject state of bondage to sin, I was indeed fighting continually, but not conquering. Before, I had willingly served sin; now it was unwillingly, but still I served it. I fell, and rose, and fell again. Sometimes I was overcome, and in heaviness; sometimes I overcame, and was in joy. For as in the former state I had some foretastes of the terrors of the law; so had I in this, of the comforts of the gospel. During this whole struggle between nature and grace, which had now continued more than ten years, I had many remarkable returns to prayer, especially when I was in trouble; I had many sensible comforts, which are indeed no other than short anticipations of the life of faith. But I was still “under the law,” not “under grace” (the state most who are called Christians are content to live and die in); for I was only striving with, not freed from, sin. Neither had I the witness of the Spirit with my spirit, and indeed could not; for I “sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law.” In my return to England, January 1738, being in imminent danger of death, and very uneasy on that account, I was strongly convinced that the cause of that uneasiness was unbelief; and that the gaining of a true, living faith was the “one thing needful” for me. But still I fixed not this faith on its right object: I meant only faith in God, not faith in or through Christ. Again, I knew not that I was wholly void of this faith; but only thought I had not enough of it. So that when Peter Böhler, whom God prepared for me as soon as I came to London, affirmed of true faith in Christ (which is but one) that it had those two fruits inseparably attending it, “dominion over sin and constant peace from a sense of forgiveness,” I was quite amazed, and looked upon it as a new gospel. If this was so, it was clear I had not faith. But I was not willing to be convinced of this. Therefore I disputed with all my might, and labored to prove that faith might be where these were not: for all the Scriptures relating to this I had been long since taught to construe away; and to call all “Presbyterians” who spoke otherwise. Besides, I well saw no one could, in the nature of things, have such a sense of forgiveness, and not feel it. But I felt it not. If, then, there was no faith without this, all my pretensions to faith dropped at once.

When I met Peter Böhler again, he consented to put the dispute upon the issue which I desired, namely, Scripture and experience. I first consulted the Scripture. But when I set aside the glosses of men, and simply considered the words of God, comparing them together, endeavoring to illustrate the obscure by the plainer passages, I found they all made against me, and was forced to retreat to my last hold, “that experience would never agree with the literal interpretation of those Scriptures.

Nor could I therefore allow it to be true, till I found some living witnesses of it.” He replied, he could show me such at any time; if I desired it, the next day. And accordingly the next day he came again with three others, all of whom testified of their own personal experience, that a true living faith in Christ is inseparable from a sense of pardon for all past and freedom from all present sins. They added with one mouth that this faith was the gift, the free gift of God; and that He would surely bestow it upon every soul who earnestly and perseveringly sought it. I was now thoroughly convinced; and, by the grace of God, I resolved to seek it unto the end (1) by absolutely renouncing all dependence, in whole or in part, upon my own works or righteousness; on which I had really grounded my hope of salvation, though I knew it not, from my youth up; (2) by adding to the constant use of all the other means of grace, continual prayer for this very thing, justifying, saving faith, a full reliance on the blood of Christ shed for me; a trust in Him, as my Christ, as my sole justification, sanctification, and redemption. I continued thus to seek it (though with strange indifference, dullness, and coldness, and unusually frequent relapses into sin) till Wednesday, May 24. I think it was about five this morning that I opened my Testament on those words,

“There are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, even that you should be partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:4).

Just as I went out, I opened it again on those words, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” In the afternoon I was asked to go to St. Paul’s. The anthem was, “Out of the deep have I called unto You, O Lord: Lord, hear my voice. O let Your ears consider well the voice of my complaint. If You, Lord, will be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it? For there is mercy with You; therefore shall You be feared. O Israel, trust in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his sins.”

The Conversion

In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther’s preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.

The year of his return to Oxford (1729) marks the beginning of the rise of Methodism. The famous "holy club" was formed by John's younger brother, Charles Wesley, and some fellow students, derisively called "Methodists" because of their methodical habits.I began to pray with all my might for those who had in a more especial manner despitefully used me and persecuted me. I then testified openly to all there what I now first felt in my heart. But it was not long before the enemy suggested, “This cannot be faith; for where is your joy?” Then was I taught that peace and victory over sin are essential to faith in the Captain of our salvation; but that, as to the transports of joy that usually attend the beginning of it, especially in those who have mourned deeply, God sometimes gives, sometimes withholds them, according to the counsels of His own will. After my return home, I was much buffeted with temptations; but cried out, and they fled away. They returned again and again. I as often lifted up my eyes, and He “sent me help from His holy place.” And herein I found the difference between this and my former state chiefly consisted. I was striving, yea, fighting with all my might under the law, as well as under grace. But then I was sometimes, if not often, conquered; now, I was always conqueror. 1 Perhaps you have a personal history similar to John Wesley’s— outwardly you have lived a religious life, but inwardly you have discovered that you don’t have the ability to overcome sin. You are a defeated person in light of what you know you should be.

What you need to hear is what Wesley heard the night he found Christ. He was listening to Luther’s words that describe the change that God works in the heart through faith in Christ. The following is the part of Luther’s preface referred to by Wesley:

Faith is a divine work in us, which transforms us, gives us a new birth out of God (John 1:13), slays the old Adam, makes us altogether different men in heart, affection, mind, and all powers, and brings with it the Holy Spirit. Oh, it is a living, energetic, active, mighty thing, this faith! It cannot but do good unceasingly. There is no question asked whether good works are to be done, but before the question is asked the works have been done, and there is a continuous doing of them. But any person not doing such works is without faith. He is groping in the dark, looking for faith and good works, and knows neither what faith is nor what good works are, although he indulges in a lot of twaddle and nonsense concerning faith and good works.

Faith is a living, daring confidence in the grace of God, of such assurance that it would risk a thousand deaths. This confidence and knowledge of divine grace makes a person happy, bold, and full of gladness in his relation to God and all creatures. The Holy Spirit is doing this in the believer. Hence it is that a person, without constraint, becomes willing and enthusiastic to do good to everybody, to serve everybody, to suffer all manner of afflictions, from love of God and to the praise of Him who has extended such grace to him. Accordingly, it is impossible to separate works from faith, just as impossible as it is to separate the power to burn and shine from fire. Accordingly, beware of your own false thoughts and of idle talkers, who pretend great wisdom for discerning faith and good works and yet are the greatest fools. Pray God that He may create faith in you; otherwise you will be without faith forever and aye, no matter what you may plan and do.

Your defeated life can turn into victory now by trusting in Christ alone for your salvation.

Acts 4:12 says, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

Turn from your own works and striving. Give up your self-effort and turn this hour to Christ alone for the assurance of your salvation. Wesley could recall that it was “about a quarter before nine.” As you are opening to Christ now, mark the time of your “new birth.”

Early Life

The life and teachings of John Wesley, the famous founder of Methodism, have probably had a greater influence than those of any other man since the days of the apostles in deepening the spiritual life of the present time.

The Canterbury Cathedral houses the throne of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and is the mother church of the Diocese of Canterbury and the Church of England.The Introduction to the Methodist book of Discipline states that Methodism was raised up under God "for the spread of Scriptural holiness." Like a mighty conflagration swept over the world until in less than two centuries it numbered more adherents than almost any other Protestant church. The secret of its success was partly owing to the fact that its theology presented a less fatalistic view of salvation than did that of the Old School Calvinism so common among other Protestant denominations; but it probably owed its success still more to the deep spiritual experiences of the Wesleys and the other early Methodist preachers, many of whom were so anointed with the Holy Spirit's power that multitudes were brought under conviction of sin while listening to their earnest sermons and exhortations. People often trembled and shook, and many were even stricken down in the meetings, under the overwhelming sense of their sins received under the preaching of these men of God. Wesley's great-grandfather his grand-father, and his father were all clergymen in the Church of England, which Wesley was himself an ordained minister and remained such until his death, the Methodist Societies in Britain not having become an independent church until 1791, or two years after he died. Susannah Wesley, the mother of John and Charles Wesley, was the daughter of the great Dr. Annesley, the *"St. Paul of Non-Conformity."*

Her grandfather, as well as her father, were ministers of the gospel, and she was herself famous for her piety and prudence. John Wesley was born at Epworth, in Lincolnshire, England, on June 17, 1703, and was the fifteenth in a family of nineteen children, of whom only ten survived the period of infancy. At the age of six John himself was barely rescued from the flames when his father's rectory burned down.

Wesley's mother was very careful in the training of the children, and they were all brought up *"in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."* They also received a good secular education. John was educated at the Charter House School, in London, until he was seventeen years of age, at which time he was sent to Christ Church College, Oxford University. He was a diligent student and made great progress in his studies. At the age of twenty-three his accomplishments in the classics were so great that he was elected Fellow of Lincoln College, and was also chosen as moderator of classes, and the following year he was made a Master of Arts. Before leaving Oxford University, he seems to have become proficient in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, and logic, and he afterwards obtained a knowledge of German.

Wesley followed the pious advice of his father and mother until after he was ten years of age, without consciously disobeying them in any way. "The next six or seven years were spent at school," says he.

"where, out-ward restraints being removed, I was much more negligent than before, even to outward duties, and almost continually guilty of outward sins, which I knew to be such, though they were not scandalous in the eyes of the world. However, I still read the Scriptures, and said my prayers, morning and evening."

He relied for salvation on these outward acts, and on church-going, and also on the fact that he was not as bad as others. After going to Oxford, for about five years, he constantly did things that he knew were sinful in the sight of God; but he still continued to pray, read his Bible, and go to church. At about twenty-two years of age his eyes were opened to some extent by reading the works of Thomas a Kempis, and he began to see that true religion had to do with the heart, and not with outward actions only. " I was, however, angry at Kempis for being too strict," says he. But he also says: "Yet I frequently had much sensible comfort in reading him, such as I was an utter stranger to before ; and meeting likewise with a religious friend, which I never had till now, I began to alter the whole form of my conversation, and to set in earnest upon a new life." Dr. Taylor's book, "Holy Living and Dying," made a still deeper impression upon him, and his life became a very sincere one.

Ordination

Wesley's friends now urged him to be ordained, and in 1725, in his twenty-second year, after much prayer and consideration, he was ordained by Bishop Potter. In 1727, he read Mr. Law's ***"Christian Perfection"*** and ***"Serious Call,"*** and these books made him resolve more than ever to be wholly the Lord's. The writings of Mr. Law seem to have influenced his life more than any other writings outside the Scriptures, just as the works of Aquinas influenced the life of Savonarola. It was probably Mr. Law's books, more than any other human cause, which led Wesley to start the Methodist Societies. In a letter to Mr. Morgan, written in later years, he thus describes the founding of the first Methodist Society :

In November, 1729, at which time I came to reside at Oxford, your son, my brother, myself and one more, agreed to spend three or four evenings a week together. Our design was to read over the classics, which we had before read in private on common nights, and on Sunday some book on divinity. In the summer following Mr. M. told me he had called at a gaol, to see a man who was condemned for killing his wife ; and that, from a talk he had with one of the debtors, he verily believed it would do much good, if any one would be at the pains of now and then speaking with them. This he so frequently repeated, that on the 24th of August, 1730, my brother and I walked with him to the castle. We were so well satisfied with our conversation there, that we agreed to go thither once or twice a week; which we had not done long, before he desired me to go with him to see a poor woman in the town who was sick. In this employment too, when we came to reflect upon it, we believed it would be worth while to spend an hour or two in a week, provided the minister of the parish, in which such persons were, were not against it.

In this humble manner the first Methodist society was formed, and the great founder of Methodism was thus led to engage in active Christian service. The society thus formed increased in numbers, and when Whitefield joined them there were fifteen members. They soon earned the nickname of the ***"Holy Club,"*** and finally of **"Methodists."** It is remarkable that God brought together in this little group two of the world's greatest preachers and one of the greatest hymn-writers — John Wesley, George Whitefield, and Charles Wesley. The society continued its good work until 1735, when Wesley left the University.

Missions Work

In 1735, John and Charles Wesley sailed for America, intending to become missionaries to the American Indians. On the vessel were a number of Moravian missionaries, and their pious conduct so deeply impressed Wesley that he began to study German so that he would be able to converse with them. A great storm arose, and while the English were screaming and in great distress, and Wesley's heart failed him, the Moravians calmly and joyfully united in prayer and praise. Conversations with these godly people during the voyage, and in Georgia, led the Wesleys to doubt their own conversion to Christ.

The Wesleys seem to have accomplished very little in Georgia. They tried to bring the people to their 'own high standard of living, and preached against the popular sins with such directness and personality as to provoke much opposition, and they finally deemed it wise to return to England. Charles returned first and John soon followed. He says : "I shook off the dust of my feet, and left Georgia, after having preached the gospel there (not as I ought, but as I was able) one year and nearly nine months." During the voyage home, he wrote, "I went to America to convert the Indians ; but oh ! who shall convert me!" He reached England the day after Whitefield sailed for America.

Charles Wesley, John Wesley's younger brother is chiefly remembered for the many hymns he wrote.He preached in England in many places, but the results, as a rule, were not remarkable or encouraging. Much opposition was provoked and but little blessing seemed to attend his preaching. He conversed much with Peter Bohler and other Moravians, and was surprised when they proved to him that almost all the conversions to Christ mentioned in the Bible were instantaneous. He now began to see that people do not grow into salvation, but that they are justified by faith the moment they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. It was from the Moravians that the Methodists learned the doctrine of instantaneous conversion, regeneration, or justification by faith. At first Charles Wesley opposed what he called "the new doctrine," but he was soon convinced of his error, and in May, 1738, through simple faith in Christ, he found a joy he had never known before. The news that Charles had obtained joy and peace in believing greatly deepened John Wesley's desire for a real assurance of salvation. After a ten years' struggle to find peace and rest in Christ, the light began to dawn upon him on May 24, 1738. In the morning of that day his eyes fell upon 2 Peter 1 14, and then on the words, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." During the day he was on the verge of receiving rest and joy through faith in Christ. "In the evening," says he, "I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me, that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

Encouragement and Conviction

The same year that he obtained this blessing through faith in Christ, he visited the Moravian settlement of Hernhuth, on Count Zinzendorf's estate, in Germany. This visit greatly strengthened his faith, and he returned to England to preach with a new zeal, the doctrine of instantaneous conversion and justification through faith in Christ. Many were now converted to Christ in his meetings almost everywhere that he went.

We learn from his Journal of October 15, 1738, and again from the entry made on October 3 of the same year, that Wesley had a great longing for a still deeper experience. "I was asking," he says in the latter entry, "that God would fulfill all His promises in my own soul," etc. His longings seem to have been satisfied, in a measure at least, in a memorable love feast in London, when he and Whitefield and other prominent Methodist ministers were present at a union meeting of the Methodist societies. Describing this meeting in his Journal, Wesley says: "Monday, January I, 1739. Mr. Hall, Kinchin, Ingham, Whitefield, Hutchins, and my brother Charles were present at our lovefeast in Fetterslane, with about sixty of our brethren. About three in the morning, as we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground. As soon as we recovered a little from the awe and amazement at the presence of His majesty, we broke out with one voice, 'We praise Thee, O God, we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord.'"

Wesley must have received a powerful anointing of the Spirit at the time mentioned above, as after the experience described he seems to have preached with greater unction and power. The Methodist societies now began to multiply rapidly, many souls being converted to God.

George Whitefield was a close friend of the Wesleys.The State Churches were closing rapidly against the Methodists, when Whitefield began to preach to gigantic audiences in the open air at Bristol. He had returned from America in 1739, and was now working in harmony with the Wesleys. After continuing in Bristol for some time, he desired John Wesley to come and take the work there off his hands so that he could go elsewhere. After seeking to know the Lord's will in the matter, Wesley complied with his request. Staid Churchman that he was, he had many misgivings about the propriety of preaching in the open air; but when he saw Whiteneld preaching to the great multitudes in the open air at Bristol, his prejudices gradually melted away. He says, "I could scarce reconcile myself at first to this strange way of preaching in the fields, of which he (Whitefield) set me an example on Sunday; having been all my life (till very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin, if it had not been done in a church." It was only after witnessing the marvellous results attending Whitefield's preaching in the open air that Wesley began to speak in open-air meetings, but he soon became famous as an open-air preacher. Until the day of his death he exercised the greatest care to have everything "done decently and in order," and to avoid all fleshly excitements, hallucinations, and delusions; but on the other hand he was careful to encourage every genuine work of the Holy Spirit. "Quench not the Spirit" was to him a solemn warning which he scrupulously and conscientiously tried to follow. Wesley preached for some time in Bristol, to immense audiences sometimes numbering many thousands of people. His open-air meetings were as large, if not larger, than those of Whitefield. Powerful conviction of sin rested upon the people, and multitudes turned to Christ. Three weeks after the remarkable love-feast experience in London, while Wesley was preaching in Bristol, "a well- dressed, middle-aged woman suddenly cried out, as in the agonies of death. She continued to do so for some time," says Wesley, "with all the signs of the sharpest anguish of spirit." She was finally able to " rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of her salvation." On April 17, 1739, there was another remarable case of coviction of sin, in Bristol. Wesley had just expounded Acts 4, on the power of the Holy Spirit. "We then called upon God to confirm His Word," says he. " Immediately one that stood by (to our no small surprise) cried out aloud, with the utmost vehemence, even as the agonies of death. But we continued in prayer, till 'a new song was put in her mouth, a thanksgiving unto our God.' Soon after, two other persons (well known in this place, as laboring to live in all good conscience towards all men) were seized with strong pain, and constrained to roar for the disquietness of their heart." These also found peace.

Many other wonderful cases of conviction of sin attended Wesley's preaching. It was a frequent occurrence for people to cry aloud or fall down as if dead in the meetings, so great was their anguish of heart, caused, no doubt, by the Holy Spirit convicting them of sin. It is a well known fact that great and sudden emotion of any kind will often cause people to faint away. This fact doubtless accounts for people dropping down as if dead in revival and other meetings.

The sudden realization of the enormity of their sins and of the doom of the impenitent, when the Spirit of God convicts them of sin, is so great that it absorbs all their mental faculties and they lose control of themselves and faint away. Instances of this kind were frequently recorded by Wesley. On April 21, 1739, at Weavers Hall, Bristol, "a young man was suddenly seized with a violent trembling all over, and, in a few minutes, the sorrows of his heart being enlarged, sunk down to the ground." He also found peace. On the 25th day of the same month, while Wesley was preaching, "Immediately one, and another, and another sunk to the earth ; they dropped on every side as if thunderstruck."

Day after day Wesley preached to immense audiences in Bristol and Bath and suburbs of those cities. He then went to other places, preaching with the same unction and power, and many Methodist societies sprang up as a result of his and Whitefield's preaching. Many found fault with the outcries of those brought under conviction of sin.

Describing one meeting, Wesley says : "My voice could scarce be heard amidst the groanings of some, and the cries of others, calling aloud to 'Him that is mighty to save.'" He says, "A Quaker who stood by, was not a little displeased at the dissimulation of these creatures, and was biting his lips and knitting his brows, when he dropped down as thunder-struck." Next day, in a little prayer-meeting, "Just as we rose from giving thanks," says Wesley, "another person reeled four or five steps, and then dropped down." A certain J H , a zealous Episcopalian, opposed the Methodists in every way possible, and went to his acquaintances persuading them that people falling in the meetings and crying out in agony was "a delusion of the Devil." While sitting at the table one day, "he changed color, fell off his chair, and began screaming terribly, and beating himself against the ground."

Almost everywhere that Wesley went people were stricken down in his meetings in the manner already described, but these cases were the exception, and they usually found peace in Christ when prayed for. Most of the people had never heard such pointed and powerful preaching as Wesley's and the suddenness with which they were brought face to face with their sinful and lost condition probably had much to do with the fact that many of them swooned away or cried out in agony. People who had en-tertained false hopes of salvation had the masks torn away by the plain preaching of Wesley, and were stricken with great agony until they found peace with God. In one place where he was preaching, the Lord began to make bare His arm, and, "One and another, and another was struck to the earth; exceedingly trembling at the presence of His power. Others cried with a loud and bitter cry, 'What must we do to be saved ?'" The same evening, while Wesley was preaching, a man cried out in agony of soul. Soon after, "Another person dropped down close to one who was a strong asserter of the contrary doctrine. While he stood astonished at the sight, a little boy near him was seized in the same manner. A young man, who stood up behind, fixed his eyes on him, and sunk down himself as one dead."

The plain and fearless preaching of Wesley caused much opposition, and he was often mobbed and came near losing his life. But in the meetings, "The power of God came with His word; so that none scoffed, or interrupted, or opened his mouth." The scoffing and persecution came from those who had never been in the meetings or heard Wesley preach.

I found such light and strength as I never remember to have had before. I had often wondered at myself, that ten thousand cares of various kinds were no more weight to my mind than ten thousand hairs were to my head.

Return to London

On his return to London, Wesley preached at Wapping, and twenty-six people were stricken down under conviction of sin. "Some sunk down and there remained no strength in them," says he, "others exceedingly trembled and quaked ; some were torn with a kind of convulsive motion in every part of their bodies." Wesley had seen many hysterical and many epileptic fits, " but none of them were like these in many respects," says he. "I immediately prayed, ' That God would not suffer those who were weak to be offended.' But one woman was offended greatly; being sure, ' they might help it if they would ; no one should persuade her to the contrary;' and was got three or four yards, when she also dropped down, in as violent an agony as the rest."

In London Wesley preached in the open air to vast audiences of many thousands of people, as Whitefield and he had done in Bristol; and he afterwards held similar great out-door meetings all over Britain. Even when rain was falling or biting frost was on the ground, he sometimes preached to many thousands in the open air, and sometimes the sermons were two or three hours long. When the doors of his home church at Epworth were closed against him, he preached standing on his father's tombstone in the church-yard with an immense crowd around him. He often spoke with great liberty and power when preaching in these open-air meetings. On December 23, 1744, while preaching at Snow-Fields, "I found," says he, "Such light and strength as I never remember to have had before. I had often wondered at myself (and sometimes mentioned it to others), that ten thousand cares of various kinds were no more weight to my mind than ten thousand hairs were to my head." When worn out with overwork he often found new strength in answer to prayer. Writing concerning one of these occasions he says, "I then thought, 'Cannot God heal either man or beast by any means, or without any.' Immediately my weariness and head-ache ceased, and my horses' lameness in the same instant" (Journal, March 17, 1740).

Wesley was a great organizer and a strict disciplinarian. He expelled from the Methodist Societies everyone who was frivolous or trifling. He expelled them by the scores. He insisted upon modesty in dress, in abstinence from worldly amusements, and on daily holy living.

Christian Perfection

In his Journal, May 14, 1765, Wesley explains how he came to believe in the doctrine of "Christian Perfection," and what he believed the experience to be. He says : "But how came this opinion into my mind? I will tell you with all simplicity. In 1725 I met with Bishop Taylor's ' Rules of Holy Living and Dying.' I was struck particularly with the chapter on intention, and felt a fixed intention to give myself up to God. In this I was much confirmed soon after by the Christian Pattern, and longed to give God all my heart. This is just what I mean by Perfection now. I sought after it from that hour." In 1727 I read Mr. Law's 'Christian Perfection' and 'Serious Call,' and more explicitly resolved to be all devoted to God, in body, soul, and spirit. In 1730, I began to be homo unius libri; to study (comparatively) no book but the Bible. I then saw in a stronger light than ever before, that only one thing is needful, even faith that worketh by the love of God and man, all inward and outward holiness, and I groaned to love God with all my heart, and to serve Him with all my strength.

January I, 1733, I preached the sermon on the circumcision of the heart; which contains all that I now teach concerning salvation from all sin, and loving God with an undivided heart. In the same year I printed, (the first time I ventured to print anything), for the use of my pupils, 'A Collection of Forms of Prayer;' and in this I spoke explicitly of giving 'the whole heart and the whole life to God.' This was then as it is now, my idea of Perfection, though I should have started at the word. In 1735, I preached my Farewell Sermon, at Epworth, in Lincolnshire. In this likewise I spoke with the utmost clearness of having one design, one desire, one love, and of pursuing the one end of our life in all our words and actions. In January, 1738, I expressed my desires in these words:

O grant that nothing in my soul,  
  
May dwell but Thy pure love alone ;  
  
O may Thy love possess me whole,  
  
My joy, my treasure and my crown  
  
Strange flames far from my heart remove ;  
  
My every act, word, thought be love.

A statue of John Wesley at Wesley's Chapel in City Road, London where he is said to be buried.I am still persuaded that this is what the Lord Jesus hath bought me with His blood. Wesley was almost constantly traveling and preaching. "The world is my parish" was his famous motto. In 1774 he wrote that he never travelled less than 4,500 miles a year. For many a year his annual record was 8,000 miles, and during this period he seldom preached less than 5,000 times a year. He traveled as an itinerant preacher, after he was 36 years of age, 225,000 miles, and preached more than 40,000 sermons, some of them to congregations of above 20,000 people. He rose at four o'clock in the morning and preached at five nearly every day.

In 1789 Wesley's sight and strength were pretty well exhausted and he felt that he was "an old man;" but he continued to preach and write until within a few days of his death. With the power of God manifestly present, he expired triumphantly on March 2, 1791, his dying testimony being: ***"Best of all, God is with us."***

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John Wesley

June 29, 1703 to March 2, 1791 (88), Church Father

John Wesley was an Anglican minister and Christian theologian who was an early leader in the Methodist movement.

## Relationships

* http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/georgewhitefield_main.mini.jpg[George Whitefield](http://www.christians.com/georgewhitefield/main) and John Wesley were members of Oxford's Holy Club.
* http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/nicolauszinzendorf_main.mini.jpg[Nicolaus Zinzendorf](http://www.christians.com/nicolauszinzendorf/main) was the leader of the Moravian church which John Wesley often visited.

# John Wesley

* [At A Glance](http://www.christians.com/johnwesley/main)
* [**Testimony**](http://www.christians.com/johnwesley/main)
* [Biography](http://www.christians.com/johnwesley/main)
* [Works](http://www.christians.com/johnwesley/main)

Historical Timeline

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1660

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Today, Wesley's influence as a teacher persists. He continues to be the primary theological interpreter for Methodists the world over; Wesley's call to personal and social holiness continues to challenge Christians who struggle to discern what it means to participate in the Kingdom of God.



He knew how to lead and control men to achieve his purposes. He used his power, not to provoke rebellion, but to inspire love. His mission was to spread "Scriptural holiness"; his means and plans were such as Providence indicated. The course thus mapped out for him he pursued with a determination from which nothing could distract him.



Wesley died on Wednesday March 2, 1791, in his eighty-eighth year. As he lay dying, his friends gathered around him, Wesley grasped their hands and said repeatedly, "Farewell, farewell." At the end, summoning all his remaining strength, he cried out, "The best of all is, God is with us."



Wesley was a logical thinker, and expressed himself clearly, concisely and forcefully in writing. His written sermons are characterized by spiritual earnestness and simplicity. They are doctrinal but not dogmatic. Wesley was a fluent, powerful and effective preacher. He usually preached spontaneously and briefly, though occasionally at great length.

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Family Background

The fifteenth child in his family, John Wesley was raised in a religiously strict home. He was educated at Oxford and ordained as a deacon in the Anglican Church. In 1735 he left England as a missionary to America to preach to the Indians. However, the complete failure of his missionary efforts, coupled with his inability to overcome sin in his own personal life, caused Wesley to evaluate his actual state before God. He was a defeated man. It was then that he began to realize that he had never had a personal encounter with Christ.

After returning to England, he attended a meeting on May 24, 1738, in which Luther’s preface to the Epistle to the Romans was being read. During the reading his heart was “strangely warmed,” and that night Wesley found Christ. From that point on, his outdoor preaching throughout Great Britain brought thousands to Christ. The following is an excerpt from his journals, dated May 24th and 25th, 1738, describing his experience of finding Christ:

What occured on Wednesday the 24th, I think best to relate at large, after premising what may make it the better understood. Let him that cannot receive it ask of the Father of lights that He would give more light to him and me. I believe, till I was about ten years old I had not sinned away that “washing of the Holy Spirit” which was given me in baptism; having been strictly educated and carefully taught that I could only be saved “by universal obedience, by keeping all the commandments of God,” in the meaning of which I was diligently instructed. And those instructions, so far as they respected outward duties and sins, I gladly received and often thought of.

But all that was said to me of inward obedience or holiness I neither understood nor remembered. So that I was indeed as ignorant of the true meaning of the law as I was of the gospel of Christ. The next six or seven years were spent at school; where, outward restraints being removed, I was much more negligent than before, even of outward duties, and almost continually guilty of outward sins, which I knew to be such, though they were not scandalous in the eye of the world. However, I still read the Scriptures, and said my prayers morning and evening. And what I now hoped to be saved by was (1) not being so bad as other people; (2) having still a kindness for religion; and (3) reading the Bible, going to church, and saying my prayers.

Being removed to the University for five years, I still said my prayers both in public and in private, and read, with the Scriptures, several other books of religion, especially comments on the New Testament. Yet I had not all this while so much as a notion of inward holiness; nay, went on habitually, and for the most part very contentedly, in some or other known sin: indeed, with some intermission and short struggles, especially before and after the Holy Communion, which I was obliged to receive three times a year. I cannot well tell what I hoped to be saved by now, when I was continually sinning against that little light I had; unless by those transient fits of what many divines taught me to call repentance.

When I was about twenty-two, my father pressed me to enter into holy orders. At the same time, the providence of God directing me to Kempis’s Christian Pattern, I began to see that true religion was seated in the heart, and that God’s law extended to all our thoughts as well as words and actions. I was, however, very angry at Kempis for being too strict; though I read him only in Dean Stanhope’s translation. Yet I had frequently much sensible comfort in reading him, such as I was an utter stranger to before; and meeting likewise with a religious friend, which I never had till now, I began to alter the whole form of my conversation, and to set in earnest upon a new life. I set apart an hour or two a day for religious retirement. I took holy communion every week.

I watched against all sin, whether in word or deed. I began to aim at, and pray for, inward holiness. So that now, “doing so much, and living so good a life,” I doubted not but I was a good Christian.… In 1730 I began visiting the prisons; assisting the poor and sick in town; and doing what other good I could, by my presence or my little fortune, to the bodies and souls of all men. To this end I abridged myself of all superfluities, and many that are called necessaries of life.…Yet when, after continuing some years in this course, I apprehended myself to be near death, I could not find that all this gave me any comfort or any assurance of acceptance with God. At this I was then not a little surprised; not imagining I had been all this time building on the sand, nor considering that “other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid” by God, “even Christ Jesus.”

Salvation by faith

John Wesley's house on City Road, LondonSoon after, a contemplative man convinced me still more than I was convinced before, that outward works are nothing, being alone; and in several conversations instructed me how to pursue inward holiness, or a union of the soul with God. But even of his instructions (though I then received them as the words of God) I cannot but now observe (1) that he spoke so incautiously against trusting in outward works, that he discouraged me from doing them at all; (2) that he recommended (as it were, to supply what was wanting in them) mental prayer, and the like exercises, as the most effectual means of purifying the soul and uniting it with God. Now these were, in truth, as much my own works as visiting the sick or clothing the naked; and the union with God thus pursued was as really my own righteousness as any I had before pursued under another name.

In this refined way of trusting to my own works and my own righteousness (so zealously inculcated by the Mystic writers), I dragged on heavily, finding no comfort or help therein till the time of my leaving England. On shipboard, however, I was again active in outward works; where it pleased God of His free mercy to give me twenty-six of the Moravian brethren for companions, who endeavored to show me “a more excellent way.” But I understood it not at first. I was too learned and too wise. So that it seemed foolishness unto me. And I continued preaching, and following after, and trusting in, that righteousness whereby no flesh can be justified.

All the time I was at Savannah [Georgia], I was thus beating the air. Being ignorant of the righteousness of Christ, which, by a living faith in Him, brings salvation “to every one that believes,” I sought to establish my own righteousness; and so labored in the fire all my days. I was now properly “under the law.” I knew that the law of God was spiritual; I consented to it that it was good. Yea, I delighted in it, after the inner man. Yet was I carnal, sold under sin. Every day was I constrained to cry out, “What I do, I allow not: for what I would, I do not; but what I hate, that I do. To will is indeed present with me: but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good which I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. I find a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me: even the law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and still bringing me into captivity to the law of sin.”

Life-size statue at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, KYIn this vile, abject state of bondage to sin, I was indeed fighting continually, but not conquering. Before, I had willingly served sin; now it was unwillingly, but still I served it. I fell, and rose, and fell again. Sometimes I was overcome, and in heaviness; sometimes I overcame, and was in joy. For as in the former state I had some foretastes of the terrors of the law; so had I in this, of the comforts of the gospel. During this whole struggle between nature and grace, which had now continued more than ten years, I had many remarkable returns to prayer, especially when I was in trouble; I had many sensible comforts, which are indeed no other than short anticipations of the life of faith. But I was still “under the law,” not “under grace” (the state most who are called Christians are content to live and die in); for I was only striving with, not freed from, sin. Neither had I the witness of the Spirit with my spirit, and indeed could not; for I “sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law.” In my return to England, January 1738, being in imminent danger of death, and very uneasy on that account, I was strongly convinced that the cause of that uneasiness was unbelief; and that the gaining of a true, living faith was the “one thing needful” for me. But still I fixed not this faith on its right object: I meant only faith in God, not faith in or through Christ. Again, I knew not that I was wholly void of this faith; but only thought I had not enough of it. So that when Peter Böhler, whom God prepared for me as soon as I came to London, affirmed of true faith in Christ (which is but one) that it had those two fruits inseparably attending it, “dominion over sin and constant peace from a sense of forgiveness,” I was quite amazed, and looked upon it as a new gospel. If this was so, it was clear I had not faith. But I was not willing to be convinced of this. Therefore I disputed with all my might, and labored to prove that faith might be where these were not: for all the Scriptures relating to this I had been long since taught to construe away; and to call all “Presbyterians” who spoke otherwise. Besides, I well saw no one could, in the nature of things, have such a sense of forgiveness, and not feel it. But I felt it not. If, then, there was no faith without this, all my pretensions to faith dropped at once.

When I met Peter Böhler again, he consented to put the dispute upon the issue which I desired, namely, Scripture and experience. I first consulted the Scripture. But when I set aside the glosses of men, and simply considered the words of God, comparing them together, endeavoring to illustrate the obscure by the plainer passages, I found they all made against me, and was forced to retreat to my last hold, “that experience would never agree with the literal interpretation of those Scriptures.

Nor could I therefore allow it to be true, till I found some living witnesses of it.” He replied, he could show me such at any time; if I desired it, the next day. And accordingly the next day he came again with three others, all of whom testified of their own personal experience, that a true living faith in Christ is inseparable from a sense of pardon for all past and freedom from all present sins. They added with one mouth that this faith was the gift, the free gift of God; and that He would surely bestow it upon every soul who earnestly and perseveringly sought it. I was now thoroughly convinced; and, by the grace of God, I resolved to seek it unto the end (1) by absolutely renouncing all dependence, in whole or in part, upon my own works or righteousness; on which I had really grounded my hope of salvation, though I knew it not, from my youth up; (2) by adding to the constant use of all the other means of grace, continual prayer for this very thing, justifying, saving faith, a full reliance on the blood of Christ shed for me; a trust in Him, as my Christ, as my sole justification, sanctification, and redemption. I continued thus to seek it (though with strange indifference, dullness, and coldness, and unusually frequent relapses into sin) till Wednesday, May 24. I think it was about five this morning that I opened my Testament on those words,

“There are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, even that you should be partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:4).

Just as I went out, I opened it again on those words, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” In the afternoon I was asked to go to St. Paul’s. The anthem was, “Out of the deep have I called unto You, O Lord: Lord, hear my voice. O let Your ears consider well the voice of my complaint. If You, Lord, will be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it? For there is mercy with You; therefore shall You be feared. O Israel, trust in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his sins.”

The Conversion

In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther’s preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.

The year of his return to Oxford (1729) marks the beginning of the rise of Methodism. The famous "holy club" was formed by John's younger brother, Charles Wesley, and some fellow students, derisively called "Methodists" because of their methodical habits.I began to pray with all my might for those who had in a more especial manner despitefully used me and persecuted me. I then testified openly to all there what I now first felt in my heart. But it was not long before the enemy suggested, “This cannot be faith; for where is your joy?” Then was I taught that peace and victory over sin are essential to faith in the Captain of our salvation; but that, as to the transports of joy that usually attend the beginning of it, especially in those who have mourned deeply, God sometimes gives, sometimes withholds them, according to the counsels of His own will. After my return home, I was much buffeted with temptations; but cried out, and they fled away. They returned again and again. I as often lifted up my eyes, and He “sent me help from His holy place.” And herein I found the difference between this and my former state chiefly consisted. I was striving, yea, fighting with all my might under the law, as well as under grace. But then I was sometimes, if not often, conquered; now, I was always conqueror. 1 Perhaps you have a personal history similar to John Wesley’s— outwardly you have lived a religious life, but inwardly you have discovered that you don’t have the ability to overcome sin. You are a defeated person in light of what you know you should be.

What you need to hear is what Wesley heard the night he found Christ. He was listening to Luther’s words that describe the change that God works in the heart through faith in Christ. The following is the part of Luther’s preface referred to by Wesley:

Faith is a divine work in us, which transforms us, gives us a new birth out of God (John 1:13), slays the old Adam, makes us altogether different men in heart, affection, mind, and all powers, and brings with it the Holy Spirit. Oh, it is a living, energetic, active, mighty thing, this faith! It cannot but do good unceasingly. There is no question asked whether good works are to be done, but before the question is asked the works have been done, and there is a continuous doing of them. But any person not doing such works is without faith. He is groping in the dark, looking for faith and good works, and knows neither what faith is nor what good works are, although he indulges in a lot of twaddle and nonsense concerning faith and good works.

Faith is a living, daring confidence in the grace of God, of such assurance that it would risk a thousand deaths. This confidence and knowledge of divine grace makes a person happy, bold, and full of gladness in his relation to God and all creatures. The Holy Spirit is doing this in the believer. Hence it is that a person, without constraint, becomes willing and enthusiastic to do good to everybody, to serve everybody, to suffer all manner of afflictions, from love of God and to the praise of Him who has extended such grace to him. Accordingly, it is impossible to separate works from faith, just as impossible as it is to separate the power to burn and shine from fire. Accordingly, beware of your own false thoughts and of idle talkers, who pretend great wisdom for discerning faith and good works and yet are the greatest fools. Pray God that He may create faith in you; otherwise you will be without faith forever and aye, no matter what you may plan and do.

Your defeated life can turn into victory now by trusting in Christ alone for your salvation.

Acts 4:12 says, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

Turn from your own works and striving. Give up your self-effort and turn this hour to Christ alone for the assurance of your salvation. Wesley could recall that it was “about a quarter before nine.” As you are opening to Christ now, mark the time of your “new birth.”

Early Life

The life and teachings of John Wesley, the famous founder of Methodism, have probably had a greater influence than those of any other man since the days of the apostles in deepening the spiritual life of the present time.

The Canterbury Cathedral houses the throne of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and is the mother church of the Diocese of Canterbury and the Church of England.The Introduction to the Methodist book of Discipline states that Methodism was raised up under God "for the spread of Scriptural holiness." Like a mighty conflagration swept over the world until in less than two centuries it numbered more adherents than almost any other Protestant church. The secret of its success was partly owing to the fact that its theology presented a less fatalistic view of salvation than did that of the Old School Calvinism so common among other Protestant denominations; but it probably owed its success still more to the deep spiritual experiences of the Wesleys and the other early Methodist preachers, many of whom were so anointed with the Holy Spirit's power that multitudes were brought under conviction of sin while listening to their earnest sermons and exhortations. People often trembled and shook, and many were even stricken down in the meetings, under the overwhelming sense of their sins received under the preaching of these men of God. Wesley's great-grandfather his grand-father, and his father were all clergymen in the Church of England, which Wesley was himself an ordained minister and remained such until his death, the Methodist Societies in Britain not having become an independent church until 1791, or two years after he died. Susannah Wesley, the mother of John and Charles Wesley, was the daughter of the great Dr. Annesley, the *"St. Paul of Non-Conformity."*

Her grandfather, as well as her father, were ministers of the gospel, and she was herself famous for her piety and prudence. John Wesley was born at Epworth, in Lincolnshire, England, on June 17, 1703, and was the fifteenth in a family of nineteen children, of whom only ten survived the period of infancy. At the age of six John himself was barely rescued from the flames when his father's rectory burned down.

Wesley's mother was very careful in the training of the children, and they were all brought up *"in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."* They also received a good secular education. John was educated at the Charter House School, in London, until he was seventeen years of age, at which time he was sent to Christ Church College, Oxford University. He was a diligent student and made great progress in his studies. At the age of twenty-three his accomplishments in the classics were so great that he was elected Fellow of Lincoln College, and was also chosen as moderator of classes, and the following year he was made a Master of Arts. Before leaving Oxford University, he seems to have become proficient in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, and logic, and he afterwards obtained a knowledge of German.

Wesley followed the pious advice of his father and mother until after he was ten years of age, without consciously disobeying them in any way. "The next six or seven years were spent at school," says he.

"where, out-ward restraints being removed, I was much more negligent than before, even to outward duties, and almost continually guilty of outward sins, which I knew to be such, though they were not scandalous in the eyes of the world. However, I still read the Scriptures, and said my prayers, morning and evening."

He relied for salvation on these outward acts, and on church-going, and also on the fact that he was not as bad as others. After going to Oxford, for about five years, he constantly did things that he knew were sinful in the sight of God; but he still continued to pray, read his Bible, and go to church. At about twenty-two years of age his eyes were opened to some extent by reading the works of Thomas a Kempis, and he began to see that true religion had to do with the heart, and not with outward actions only. " I was, however, angry at Kempis for being too strict," says he. But he also says: "Yet I frequently had much sensible comfort in reading him, such as I was an utter stranger to before ; and meeting likewise with a religious friend, which I never had till now, I began to alter the whole form of my conversation, and to set in earnest upon a new life." Dr. Taylor's book, "Holy Living and Dying," made a still deeper impression upon him, and his life became a very sincere one.

Ordination

Wesley's friends now urged him to be ordained, and in 1725, in his twenty-second year, after much prayer and consideration, he was ordained by Bishop Potter. In 1727, he read Mr. Law's ***"Christian Perfection"*** and ***"Serious Call,"*** and these books made him resolve more than ever to be wholly the Lord's. The writings of Mr. Law seem to have influenced his life more than any other writings outside the Scriptures, just as the works of Aquinas influenced the life of Savonarola. It was probably Mr. Law's books, more than any other human cause, which led Wesley to start the Methodist Societies. In a letter to Mr. Morgan, written in later years, he thus describes the founding of the first Methodist Society :

In November, 1729, at which time I came to reside at Oxford, your son, my brother, myself and one more, agreed to spend three or four evenings a week together. Our design was to read over the classics, which we had before read in private on common nights, and on Sunday some book on divinity. In the summer following Mr. M. told me he had called at a gaol, to see a man who was condemned for killing his wife ; and that, from a talk he had with one of the debtors, he verily believed it would do much good, if any one would be at the pains of now and then speaking with them. This he so frequently repeated, that on the 24th of August, 1730, my brother and I walked with him to the castle. We were so well satisfied with our conversation there, that we agreed to go thither once or twice a week; which we had not done long, before he desired me to go with him to see a poor woman in the town who was sick. In this employment too, when we came to reflect upon it, we believed it would be worth while to spend an hour or two in a week, provided the minister of the parish, in which such persons were, were not against it.

In this humble manner the first Methodist society was formed, and the great founder of Methodism was thus led to engage in active Christian service. The society thus formed increased in numbers, and when Whitefield joined them there were fifteen members. They soon earned the nickname of the ***"Holy Club,"*** and finally of **"Methodists."** It is remarkable that God brought together in this little group two of the world's greatest preachers and one of the greatest hymn-writers — John Wesley, George Whitefield, and Charles Wesley. The society continued its good work until 1735, when Wesley left the University.

Missions Work

In 1735, John and Charles Wesley sailed for America, intending to become missionaries to the American Indians. On the vessel were a number of Moravian missionaries, and their pious conduct so deeply impressed Wesley that he began to study German so that he would be able to converse with them. A great storm arose, and while the English were screaming and in great distress, and Wesley's heart failed him, the Moravians calmly and joyfully united in prayer and praise. Conversations with these godly people during the voyage, and in Georgia, led the Wesleys to doubt their own conversion to Christ.

The Wesleys seem to have accomplished very little in Georgia. They tried to bring the people to their 'own high standard of living, and preached against the popular sins with such directness and personality as to provoke much opposition, and they finally deemed it wise to return to England. Charles returned first and John soon followed. He says : "I shook off the dust of my feet, and left Georgia, after having preached the gospel there (not as I ought, but as I was able) one year and nearly nine months." During the voyage home, he wrote, "I went to America to convert the Indians ; but oh ! who shall convert me!" He reached England the day after Whitefield sailed for America.

Charles Wesley, John Wesley's younger brother is chiefly remembered for the many hymns he wrote.He preached in England in many places, but the results, as a rule, were not remarkable or encouraging. Much opposition was provoked and but little blessing seemed to attend his preaching. He conversed much with Peter Bohler and other Moravians, and was surprised when they proved to him that almost all the conversions to Christ mentioned in the Bible were instantaneous. He now began to see that people do not grow into salvation, but that they are justified by faith the moment they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. It was from the Moravians that the Methodists learned the doctrine of instantaneous conversion, regeneration, or justification by faith. At first Charles Wesley opposed what he called "the new doctrine," but he was soon convinced of his error, and in May, 1738, through simple faith in Christ, he found a joy he had never known before. The news that Charles had obtained joy and peace in believing greatly deepened John Wesley's desire for a real assurance of salvation. After a ten years' struggle to find peace and rest in Christ, the light began to dawn upon him on May 24, 1738. In the morning of that day his eyes fell upon 2 Peter 1 14, and then on the words, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." During the day he was on the verge of receiving rest and joy through faith in Christ. "In the evening," says he, "I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me, that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

Encouragement and Conviction

The same year that he obtained this blessing through faith in Christ, he visited the Moravian settlement of Hernhuth, on Count Zinzendorf's estate, in Germany. This visit greatly strengthened his faith, and he returned to England to preach with a new zeal, the doctrine of instantaneous conversion and justification through faith in Christ. Many were now converted to Christ in his meetings almost everywhere that he went.

We learn from his Journal of October 15, 1738, and again from the entry made on October 3 of the same year, that Wesley had a great longing for a still deeper experience. "I was asking," he says in the latter entry, "that God would fulfill all His promises in my own soul," etc. His longings seem to have been satisfied, in a measure at least, in a memorable love feast in London, when he and Whitefield and other prominent Methodist ministers were present at a union meeting of the Methodist societies. Describing this meeting in his Journal, Wesley says: "Monday, January I, 1739. Mr. Hall, Kinchin, Ingham, Whitefield, Hutchins, and my brother Charles were present at our lovefeast in Fetterslane, with about sixty of our brethren. About three in the morning, as we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground. As soon as we recovered a little from the awe and amazement at the presence of His majesty, we broke out with one voice, 'We praise Thee, O God, we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord.'"

Wesley must have received a powerful anointing of the Spirit at the time mentioned above, as after the experience described he seems to have preached with greater unction and power. The Methodist societies now began to multiply rapidly, many souls being converted to God.

George Whitefield was a close friend of the Wesleys.The State Churches were closing rapidly against the Methodists, when Whitefield began to preach to gigantic audiences in the open air at Bristol. He had returned from America in 1739, and was now working in harmony with the Wesleys. After continuing in Bristol for some time, he desired John Wesley to come and take the work there off his hands so that he could go elsewhere. After seeking to know the Lord's will in the matter, Wesley complied with his request. Staid Churchman that he was, he had many misgivings about the propriety of preaching in the open air; but when he saw Whiteneld preaching to the great multitudes in the open air at Bristol, his prejudices gradually melted away. He says, "I could scarce reconcile myself at first to this strange way of preaching in the fields, of which he (Whitefield) set me an example on Sunday; having been all my life (till very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin, if it had not been done in a church." It was only after witnessing the marvellous results attending Whitefield's preaching in the open air that Wesley began to speak in open-air meetings, but he soon became famous as an open-air preacher. Until the day of his death he exercised the greatest care to have everything "done decently and in order," and to avoid all fleshly excitements, hallucinations, and delusions; but on the other hand he was careful to encourage every genuine work of the Holy Spirit. "Quench not the Spirit" was to him a solemn warning which he scrupulously and conscientiously tried to follow. Wesley preached for some time in Bristol, to immense audiences sometimes numbering many thousands of people. His open-air meetings were as large, if not larger, than those of Whitefield. Powerful conviction of sin rested upon the people, and multitudes turned to Christ. Three weeks after the remarkable love-feast experience in London, while Wesley was preaching in Bristol, "a well- dressed, middle-aged woman suddenly cried out, as in the agonies of death. She continued to do so for some time," says Wesley, "with all the signs of the sharpest anguish of spirit." She was finally able to " rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of her salvation." On April 17, 1739, there was another remarable case of coviction of sin, in Bristol. Wesley had just expounded Acts 4, on the power of the Holy Spirit. "We then called upon God to confirm His Word," says he. " Immediately one that stood by (to our no small surprise) cried out aloud, with the utmost vehemence, even as the agonies of death. But we continued in prayer, till 'a new song was put in her mouth, a thanksgiving unto our God.' Soon after, two other persons (well known in this place, as laboring to live in all good conscience towards all men) were seized with strong pain, and constrained to roar for the disquietness of their heart." These also found peace.

Many other wonderful cases of conviction of sin attended Wesley's preaching. It was a frequent occurrence for people to cry aloud or fall down as if dead in the meetings, so great was their anguish of heart, caused, no doubt, by the Holy Spirit convicting them of sin. It is a well known fact that great and sudden emotion of any kind will often cause people to faint away. This fact doubtless accounts for people dropping down as if dead in revival and other meetings.

The sudden realization of the enormity of their sins and of the doom of the impenitent, when the Spirit of God convicts them of sin, is so great that it absorbs all their mental faculties and they lose control of themselves and faint away. Instances of this kind were frequently recorded by Wesley. On April 21, 1739, at Weavers Hall, Bristol, "a young man was suddenly seized with a violent trembling all over, and, in a few minutes, the sorrows of his heart being enlarged, sunk down to the ground." He also found peace. On the 25th day of the same month, while Wesley was preaching, "Immediately one, and another, and another sunk to the earth ; they dropped on every side as if thunderstruck."

Day after day Wesley preached to immense audiences in Bristol and Bath and suburbs of those cities. He then went to other places, preaching with the same unction and power, and many Methodist societies sprang up as a result of his and Whitefield's preaching. Many found fault with the outcries of those brought under conviction of sin.

Describing one meeting, Wesley says : "My voice could scarce be heard amidst the groanings of some, and the cries of others, calling aloud to 'Him that is mighty to save.'" He says, "A Quaker who stood by, was not a little displeased at the dissimulation of these creatures, and was biting his lips and knitting his brows, when he dropped down as thunder-struck." Next day, in a little prayer-meeting, "Just as we rose from giving thanks," says Wesley, "another person reeled four or five steps, and then dropped down." A certain J H , a zealous Episcopalian, opposed the Methodists in every way possible, and went to his acquaintances persuading them that people falling in the meetings and crying out in agony was "a delusion of the Devil." While sitting at the table one day, "he changed color, fell off his chair, and began screaming terribly, and beating himself against the ground."

Almost everywhere that Wesley went people were stricken down in his meetings in the manner already described, but these cases were the exception, and they usually found peace in Christ when prayed for. Most of the people had never heard such pointed and powerful preaching as Wesley's and the suddenness with which they were brought face to face with their sinful and lost condition probably had much to do with the fact that many of them swooned away or cried out in agony. People who had en-tertained false hopes of salvation had the masks torn away by the plain preaching of Wesley, and were stricken with great agony until they found peace with God. In one place where he was preaching, the Lord began to make bare His arm, and, "One and another, and another was struck to the earth; exceedingly trembling at the presence of His power. Others cried with a loud and bitter cry, 'What must we do to be saved ?'" The same evening, while Wesley was preaching, a man cried out in agony of soul. Soon after, "Another person dropped down close to one who was a strong asserter of the contrary doctrine. While he stood astonished at the sight, a little boy near him was seized in the same manner. A young man, who stood up behind, fixed his eyes on him, and sunk down himself as one dead."

The plain and fearless preaching of Wesley caused much opposition, and he was often mobbed and came near losing his life. But in the meetings, "The power of God came with His word; so that none scoffed, or interrupted, or opened his mouth." The scoffing and persecution came from those who had never been in the meetings or heard Wesley preach.

I found such light and strength as I never remember to have had before. I had often wondered at myself, that ten thousand cares of various kinds were no more weight to my mind than ten thousand hairs were to my head.

Return to London

On his return to London, Wesley preached at Wapping, and twenty-six people were stricken down under conviction of sin. "Some sunk down and there remained no strength in them," says he, "others exceedingly trembled and quaked ; some were torn with a kind of convulsive motion in every part of their bodies." Wesley had seen many hysterical and many epileptic fits, " but none of them were like these in many respects," says he. "I immediately prayed, ' That God would not suffer those who were weak to be offended.' But one woman was offended greatly; being sure, ' they might help it if they would ; no one should persuade her to the contrary;' and was got three or four yards, when she also dropped down, in as violent an agony as the rest."

In London Wesley preached in the open air to vast audiences of many thousands of people, as Whitefield and he had done in Bristol; and he afterwards held similar great out-door meetings all over Britain. Even when rain was falling or biting frost was on the ground, he sometimes preached to many thousands in the open air, and sometimes the sermons were two or three hours long. When the doors of his home church at Epworth were closed against him, he preached standing on his father's tombstone in the church-yard with an immense crowd around him. He often spoke with great liberty and power when preaching in these open-air meetings. On December 23, 1744, while preaching at Snow-Fields, "I found," says he, "Such light and strength as I never remember to have had before. I had often wondered at myself (and sometimes mentioned it to others), that ten thousand cares of various kinds were no more weight to my mind than ten thousand hairs were to my head." When worn out with overwork he often found new strength in answer to prayer. Writing concerning one of these occasions he says, "I then thought, 'Cannot God heal either man or beast by any means, or without any.' Immediately my weariness and head-ache ceased, and my horses' lameness in the same instant" (Journal, March 17, 1740).

Wesley was a great organizer and a strict disciplinarian. He expelled from the Methodist Societies everyone who was frivolous or trifling. He expelled them by the scores. He insisted upon modesty in dress, in abstinence from worldly amusements, and on daily holy living.

Christian Perfection

In his Journal, May 14, 1765, Wesley explains how he came to believe in the doctrine of "Christian Perfection," and what he believed the experience to be. He says : "But how came this opinion into my mind? I will tell you with all simplicity. In 1725 I met with Bishop Taylor's ' Rules of Holy Living and Dying.' I was struck particularly with the chapter on intention, and felt a fixed intention to give myself up to God. In this I was much confirmed soon after by the Christian Pattern, and longed to give God all my heart. This is just what I mean by Perfection now. I sought after it from that hour." In 1727 I read Mr. Law's 'Christian Perfection' and 'Serious Call,' and more explicitly resolved to be all devoted to God, in body, soul, and spirit. In 1730, I began to be homo unius libri; to study (comparatively) no book but the Bible. I then saw in a stronger light than ever before, that only one thing is needful, even faith that worketh by the love of God and man, all inward and outward holiness, and I groaned to love God with all my heart, and to serve Him with all my strength.

January I, 1733, I preached the sermon on the circumcision of the heart; which contains all that I now teach concerning salvation from all sin, and loving God with an undivided heart. In the same year I printed, (the first time I ventured to print anything), for the use of my pupils, 'A Collection of Forms of Prayer;' and in this I spoke explicitly of giving 'the whole heart and the whole life to God.' This was then as it is now, my idea of Perfection, though I should have started at the word. In 1735, I preached my Farewell Sermon, at Epworth, in Lincolnshire. In this likewise I spoke with the utmost clearness of having one design, one desire, one love, and of pursuing the one end of our life in all our words and actions. In January, 1738, I expressed my desires in these words:

O grant that nothing in my soul,  
  
May dwell but Thy pure love alone ;  
  
O may Thy love possess me whole,  
  
My joy, my treasure and my crown  
  
Strange flames far from my heart remove ;  
  
My every act, word, thought be love.

A statue of John Wesley at Wesley's Chapel in City Road, London where he is said to be buried.I am still persuaded that this is what the Lord Jesus hath bought me with His blood. Wesley was almost constantly traveling and preaching. "The world is my parish" was his famous motto. In 1774 he wrote that he never travelled less than 4,500 miles a year. For many a year his annual record was 8,000 miles, and during this period he seldom preached less than 5,000 times a year. He traveled as an itinerant preacher, after he was 36 years of age, 225,000 miles, and preached more than 40,000 sermons, some of them to congregations of above 20,000 people. He rose at four o'clock in the morning and preached at five nearly every day.

In 1789 Wesley's sight and strength were pretty well exhausted and he felt that he was "an old man;" but he continued to preach and write until within a few days of his death. With the power of God manifestly present, he expired triumphantly on March 2, 1791, his dying testimony being: ***"Best of all, God is with us."***

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Charles Spurgeon

June 19, 1834 to January 31, 1892 (58), Preacher

Charles Spurgeon is highly influential among Christians of different denominations, among whom he is still known as the "Prince of Preachers".

## Relationships

* http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/dwightmoody_main.mini.jpg[Dwight Moody](http://www.christians.com/dwightmoody/main) met Charles Spurgeon during his first visit to Great Britain in 1867.
* http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/hudsontaylor_main.mini.jpgSpurgeon supported [Hudson Taylor](http://www.christians.com/hudsontaylor/main) and his mission to China both financially and by sending missionaries his way.
* http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/George_Muller.mini.jpgGeorge Muller inspired Spurgeon to establish the Stockwell Orphanage which is known today as Spurgeon's Child Care.

# Charles Haddon Spurgeon

* [At A Glance](http://www.christians.com/charlesspurgeon/main)
* [**Testimony**](http://www.christians.com/charlesspurgeon/main)
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Historical Timeline

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1790

**http://simile.mit.edu/timeline/api/images/progress-running.gifLoading...**



Spurgeon's conversion to Christianity came on January 6, 1850 at the age of fifteen. On his way to a scheduled appointment, a snow storm forced him to cut short his intended journey and to turn into a Primitive Methodist chapel in Colchester where, in his own words: "God opened his heart to the salvation message."



On October 19, 1856 as Spurgeon was preaching at the Surrey Gardens Music Hall (artist rendering) for the first time. Someone in the crowd yelled, "Fire!" and there was a panic and a stampede that left several dead. Spurgeon was emotionally devastated by the event and it had a sobering influence on his life. He struggled against clinical depression for many years and spoke of being moved to tears for no reason known to himself.



The Metropolitan Tabernacle (image) was the largest church edifice of its day and can be considered a precursor to the modern "megachurch." It was at the Tabernacle that Spurgeon would continue to preach several times per week until his death 31 years later.



Besides sermons, Spurgeon also wrote several hymns and published a new collection of worship songs in 1866 called "Our Own Hymn Book". What is remarkable compared to most modern practices, is that the congregation is led in the singing without any amplification of sound that exists today.

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Spurgeon's Personal Account of His Salvation

Let our lips crowd sonnets within the compass of a word; let our voice distil hours of melody into a single syllable; let our tongue utter in one letter the essence of the harmony of ages; for we write of an hour which as far excelleth all other days of our life as gold exceedeth dross. As the night of Israel's passover was a night to be remembered, a theme for bards, and an incessant fountain of grateful song, even so is the time of which we now tell, the never-to-be-forgotten hour of our emancipation from guilt, and our justification in Jesus. Other days have mingled with their fellows till, like coins worn in circulation, their image and superscription are entirely obliterated, but this day remaineth new, fresh, bright, as distinct in all its parts as if it were but yesterday struck from the mint of time. Memory shall drop from the palsied hand full many a memento which now she cherishes, but she shall never, even when she tottereth to the grave, unbind from her heart the token of the thrice-happy hour of the redemption of our spirit. The emancipated galley-slave may forget the day which heard his broken fetters rattle on the ground; the pardoned traitor may fail to remember the moment when the axe of the headsman was averted by a pardon; and the long-despairing mariner may not recollect the moment when a friendly hand snatched him from the hungry deep; but O hour of forgiven sin, moment of perfect pardon, our soul shall never forget thee while within her life and being find an immortality! Each day of our life hath had its attendant angel, but on this day, like Jacob at Mahanaim, hosts of angels met us. The sun hath risen every morning, but on that eventful morn he had the light of seven days. As the days of Heaven upon earth, as the years of immortality, as the ages of glory, as the bliss of Heaven, so were the hours of that thrice-happy day. Rapture divine, and ecstasy inexpressible, filled our soul. Fear, distress, and grief, with all their train of woes, fled hastily away; and in their place joys came without number.

When I was in the hand of the Holy Spirit, under conviction of sin, I had a clear and sharp sense of the justice of God. Sin, whatever it might be to other people, became to me an intolerable burden. It was not so much that I feared hell, as that I feared sin; and all the while, I had upon my mind a deep concern for the honour of God's name, and the integrity of His moral government. I felt that it would not satisfy my conscience if I could be forgiven unjustly. But then there came the question--"How could God be just, and yet justify me who had been so guilty?" I was worried and wearied with this question; neither could I see any answer to it. Certainly, I could never have invented an answer which would have satisfied my conscience. The doctrine of the atonement is to my mind one of the surest proofs of the Divine inspiration of Holy Scripture. Who would or could have thought of the just Ruler dying for the unjust rebel? This is no teaching of human mythology, or dream of poetical imagination. This method of expiation is only known among men because it is a fact: fiction could not have devised it. God Himself ordained it; it is not a matter which could have been imagined.

I had heard of the plan of salvation by the sacrifice of Jesus from my youth up; but I did not know any more about it in my innermost soul than if I had been born and bred a Hottentot. The light was there, but I was blind: it was of necessity that the Lord Himself should make the matter plain to me. It came to me as a new revelation, as fresh as if I had never read in Scripture that Jesus was declared to be the propitiation for sins that God might be just. I believe it will have to come as a revelation to every new-born child of God whenever he sees it; I mean that glorious doctrine of the substitution of the Lord Jesus. I came to understand that salvation was possible through vicarious sacrifice; and that provision had been made in the first constitution and arrangement of things for such a substitution. I was made to see that He who is the Son of God, co-equal, and co-eternal with the Father, had of old been made the covenant Head of a chosen people, that He might in that capacity suffer for them and save them. Inasmuch as our fall was not at the first a personal one, for we fell in our federal representative, the first Adam, it became possible for us to be recovered by a second Representative, even by Him who has undertaken to be the covenant Head of His people, so as to be their second Adam. I saw that, ere I actually sinned, I had fallen by my first father's sin, and I rejoiced that, therefore, it became possible in point of law for me to rise by a second Head and Representative. The fall by Adam left a loophole of escape; another Adam could undo the ruin wrought by the first.

Spurgeon at 19 was called to the pastorate of London's famed New Park Street ChapelWhen I was anxious about the possibility of a just God pardoning me, I understood and saw by faith that He who is the Son of God became man, and in His own blessed person bore my sin in His own body on the tree. I saw that the chastisement of my peace was laid on Him, and that with His stripes I was healed. It was because the Son of God, supremely glorious in His matchless person, undertook to vindicate the law by bearing the sentence due to me, that therefore God was able to pass by my sin. My sole hope for Heaven lies in the full atonement made upon Calvary's cross for the ungodly. On that I firmly rely. I have not the shadow of a hope anywhere else. Personally, I could never have overcome my own sinfulness. I tried and failed. My evil propensities were too many for me, till, in the belief that Christ died for me, I cast my guilty soul on Him, and then I received a conquering principle by which I overcame my sinful self. The doctrine of the cross can be used to slay sin, even as the old warriors used their huge two-handed swords, and mowed down their foes at every stroke. There is nothing like faith in the sinners' Friend: it overcomes all evil. If Christ has died for me, ungodly as I am, without strength as I am, then I cannot live in sin any longer, but must arouse myself to love and serve Him who hath redeemed me. I cannot trifle with the evil which slew my best Friend. I must be holy for His sake. How can I live in sin when He has died to save me from it?

There was a day, as I took my walks abroad, when I came hard by a spot for ever engraven upon my memory, for there I saw this Friend, my best, my only Friend, murdered. I stooped down in sad affright, and looked at Him. I saw that His hands had been pierced with rough iron nails, and His feet had been rent in the same way. There was misery in His dead countenance so terrible that I scarcely dared to look upon it. His body was emaciated with hunger, His back was red with bloody scourges, and His brow had a circle of wounds about it: clearly could one see that these had been pierced by thorns. I shuddered, for I had known this Friend full well. He never had a fault; He was the purest of the pure, the holiest of the holy. Who could have injured Him? For He never injured any man: all His life long He "went about doing good;" He had healed the sick, He had fed the hungry, He had raised the dead: for which of these works did they kill Him? He had never breathed out anything else but love; and as I looked into the poor sorrowful face, so full of agony, and yet so full of love, I wondered who could have been a wretch so vile as to pierce hands like His. I said within myself, "Where can these traitors live? Who are these that could have smitten such an One as this?" Had they murdered an oppressor, we might have forgiven them; had they slain one who had indulged in vice or villainy, it might have been his desert; had it been a murderer and a rebel, or one who had committed sedition, we would have said, "Bury his corpse: justice has at last given him his due." But when Thou wast slain, my best, my only-beloved, where lodged the traitors? Let me seize them, and they shall be put to death. If there be torments that I can devise, surely they shall endure them all. Oh! what jealousy, what revenge I felt! If I might but find these murderers, what would I not do with them! And as I looked upon that corpse, I heard a footstep, and wondered where it was. I listened, and I clearly perceived that the murderer was close at hand. It was dark, and I groped about to find him. I found that, somehow or other, wherever I put out my hand, I could not meet with him, for he was nearer to me than my hand would go. At last I put my hand upon my breast. "I have thee now," said I; for lo! he was in my own heart; the murderer was hiding within my own bosom, dwelling in the recesses of my inmost soul. Ah! then I wept indeed, that I, in the very presence of my murdered Master, should be harbouring the murderer, and I felt myself most guilty while I bowed over His corpse, and sang that plaintive hymn--

Twas you, my sins, my cruel sins, His chief tormentors were; Each of my crimes became a nail, And unbelief the spear.

Amid the rabble rout which hounded the Redeemer to His doom, there were some gracious souls whose bitter anguish sought vent in wailing and lamentations--fit music to accompany that march of woe. When my soul can, in imagination, see the Saviour bearing His cross to Calvary, she joins the godly women, and weeps with them; for, indeed, there is true cause for grief--cause lying deeper than those mourning women thought. They bewailed innocence maltreated, goodness persecuted, love bleeding, meekness about to die; but my heart has a deeper and more bitter cause to mourn. My sins were the scourges which lacerated those blessed shoulders, and crowned with thorns these bleeding brows: my sins cried, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" and laid the cross upon His gracious shoulders. His being led forth to die is sorrow enough for one eternity; but my having been His murderer, is more, infinitely more grief than one poor fountain of tears can express.

Why those women loved and wept, it were not hard to guess; but they could not have had greater reasons for love and grief than my heart has. Nain's widow saw her son restored; but I myself have been raised to newness of life. Peter's wife's mother was cured of the fever; but I of the greater plague of sin. Out of Magdalene seven devils were cast; but a whole legion out of me. Mary and Martha were favoured with visits from Him; but He dwells with me. His mother bare His body; but He is formed in me, "the hope of glory." In nothing behind the holy women in debt, let me not be behind them in gratitude or sorrow.

Love and grief my heart dividing, With my tears His feet I'll lave, Constant still in heart abiding, Weep for Him who died to save.

William Huntington says, in his autobiography, that one of the sharpest sensations of pain that he felt, after he had been quickened by Divine grace, was this, "He felt such pity for God." I do not know that I ever met with the expression elsewhere, but it is a very striking one, although I might prefer to say that I have sympathy with God, and grief that He should be treated so ill. Ah, there are many men that are forgotten, that are despised, and that are trampled on by their fellows, but there never was a man who was so despised as the ever-lasting God has been! Many a man has been slandered and abused, but never was man abused as God has been. Many have been treated cruelly and ungratefully, but never was one treated as our God has been. I, too, once despised Him. He knocked at the door of my heart, and I refused to open it. He came to me, times without number, morning by morning, and night by night; He checked me in my conscience, and spoke to me by His Spirit, and when, at last, the thunders of the law prevailed in my conscience, I thought that Christ was cruel and unkind, Oh, I can never forgive myself that I should have thought so ill of Him! But what a loving reception did I have when I went to Him! I thought He would smite me, but His hand was not clenched in anger, but opened wide in mercy. I thought full sure that His eyes would dart lightning-flashes of wrath upon me; but, instead thereof, they were full of tears. He fell upon my neck, and kissed me; He took off my rags, and did clothe me with His righteousness, and caused my soul to sing aloud for joy; while in the house of my heart, and in the house of His Church, there was music and dancing, because His son that He had lost was found, and he that had been dead was made alive again.

There is a power in God's gospel beyond all description. Once I, like Mazeppa, lashed to the wild horse of my lust, bound hand and foot, incapable of resistance, was galloping on with hell's wolves behind me, howling for my body and my soul as their just and lawful prey. There came a mighty hand which stopped that wild horse, cut my bands, set me down, and brought me into liberty. Is there power in the gospel? Ay, there is, and he who has felt it must acknowledge it. There was a time when I lived in the strong old castle of my sins, and rested in my own works. There came a trumpeter to the door, and bade me open it. I with anger chid him from the porch, and said he ne'er should enter. Then there came a goodly Personage, with loving countenance; His hands were marked with scars where nails had been driven, and His feet had nail-prints, too. He lifted up His cross, using it as a hammer; at the first blow, the gate of my prejudice shook; at the second, it trembled more; at the third, down it fell, and in He came; and He said, "Arise, and stand upon thy feet, for I have loved thee with an everlasting love." The gospel a thing of power! Ah! that it is. It always wears the dew of its youth; it glitters with morning's freshness, its strength and its glory abide for ever. I have felt its power in my own heart; I have the witness of the Spirit within my spirit, and I know it is a thing of might, because it has conquered me, and bowed me down.

His free grace alone, from the first to the last, Hath won my affections, and bound my soul fast.

In my conversion, the very point lay in making the discovery that I had nothing to do but to look to Christ, and I should be saved. I believe that I had been a very good, attentive hearer; my own impression about myself was that nobody ever listened much better than I did. For years, as a child, I tried to learn the way of salvation, and either I did not hear it set forth, which I think cannot quite have been the case, or else I was spiritually blind and deaf, and could not see it and could not hear it; but the good news that I was, as a sinner, to look away from myself to Christ, as much startled me, and came as fresh to me, as any news I ever heard in my life. Had I never read my Bible? Yes, and read it earnestly. Had I never been taught by Christian people? Yes, I had, by mother, and father, and others. Had I not heard the gospel! Yes, I think I had; and yet, somehow, it was like a new revelation to me that I was to "believe and live." I confess to have been tutored in piety, put into my cradle by prayerful hands, and lulled to sleep by songs concerning Jesus, but after having heard the gospel continually, with line upon line, precept upon precept, here much and there much, yet, when the Word of the Lord came to me with power, it was as new as if I had lived among the unvisited tribes of Central Africa, and had never heard the tidings of the cleansing fountain filled with blood, drawn from the Saviour's veins.

When, for the first time, I received the gospel to my soul's salvation, I thought that I had never really heard it before, and I began to think that the preachers to whom I had listened had not truly preached it. But, on looking back, I am inclined to believe that I had heard the gospel fully preached many hundreds of times before, and that this was the difference--that I then heard it as though I heard it not; and when I did hear it, the message may not have been any more dear in itself than it had been at former times, but the power of the Holy Spirit was present to open my ear, and to guide the message to my heart. I have no doubt that I heard, scores of times, such texts as these--"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;" "Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth;" "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" yet I had no intelligent idea of what faith meant. When I first discovered what faith really was, and exercised it--for with me these two things came together, I believed as soon as ever I knew what believing meant--then I thought I had never before heard that truth preached. But, now, I am persuaded that the light often shone on my eyes, but I was blind, and therefore I thought that the light had never come there. The light was shining all the while, but there was no power to receive it; the eyeball of the soul was not sensitive to the Divine beams.

Although Spurgeon never attended theological school, by the age of twenty-one he was the most popular preacher in London.I could not believe that it was possible that my sins could be forgiven. I do not know why, but I seemed to be the odd person in the world. When the catalogue was made out, it appeared to me that, for some reason, I must have been left out. If God had saved me, and not the world, I should have wondered indeed; but if He had saved all the world except me, that would have seemed to me to be but right. And now, being saved by grace, I cannot help saying, "I am indeed a brand plucked out of the fire!" I believe that some of us who were kept by God a long while before we found Him, love Him better perhaps than we should have done if we had received Him directly; and we can preach better to others, we can speak more of His loving-kindness and tender mercy. John Bunyan could not have written as he did if he had not been dragged about by the devil for many years. I love that picture of dear old Christian. I know, when I first read The Pilgrim's Progress, and saw in it the woodcut of Christian carrying the burden on his back, I felt so interested in the poor fellow, that I thought I should jump with joy when, after he had carried his heavy load so long, he at last got rid of it; and that was how I felt when the burden of guilt, which I had borne so long, was for ever rolled away from my shoulders and my heart.

Once, God preached to me by a similitude in the depth of winter. The earth had been black, and there was scarcely a green thing or a flower to be seen. As I looked across the fields, there was nothing but barrenness--bare hedges and leafless trees, and black, black earth, wherever I gazed. On a sudden, God spake, and unlocked the treasures of the snow, and white flakes descended until there was no blackness to be seen, and all was one sheet of dazzling whiteness. It was at the time that I was seeking the Saviour, and not long before I found him, and I remember well that sermon which I saw before me in the snow: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

New Park Street Chapel after Spurgeon's expansionPersonally, I have to bless God for many good books; I thank Him for Dr. Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul; for Baxter's Call to the Unconverted; for Alleine's Alarm to Unconverted Sinners; and for James' Anxious Enquirer, but my gratitude most of all is due to God, not for books, but for the preached Word--and that too addressed to me by a poor, uneducated man, a man who had never received any training for the ministry, and probably will never be heard of in this life, a man engaged in business, no doubt of a humble kind, during the week, but who had just enough of grace to say on the Sabbath, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." The books were good, but the man was better. The revealed Word awakened me, but it was the preached Word that saved me; and I must ever attach peculiar value to the hearing of the truth, for by it I received the joy and peace in which my soul delights. While under concern of soul, I resolved that I would attend all the places of worship in the town where I lived, in order that I might find out the way of salvation. I was willing to do anything, and be anything, if God would only forgive my sin. I set off, determined to go round to all the chapels, and I did go to every place of worship; but for a long time I went in vain. I do not, however, blame the ministers. One man preached Divine Sovereignty; I could hear him with pleasure, but what was that sublime truth to a poor sinner who wished to know what he must do to be saved? There was another admirable man who always preached about the law, but what was the use of ploughing up ground that needed to be sown? Another was a practical preacher. I heard him, but it was very much like a commanding officer teaching the manœuvres of war to a set of men without feet. What could I do? All his exhortations were lost on me. I knew it was said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," but I did not know what it was to believe on Christ. These good men all preached truths suited to many in their congregations who were spiritually-minded people, but what I wanted to know was, "How can I get my sins forgiven?"--and they never told me that. I desired to hear how a poor sinner, under a sense of sin, might find peace with God, and when I went, I heard a sermon on, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked," which cut me up still worse, but did not bring me into rest. I went again, another day, and the text was something about the glories of the righteous; nothing for poor me! I was like a dog under the table, not allowed to eat of the children's food. I went time after time, and I can honestly say that I do not know that I ever went without prayer to God, and I am sure there was not a more attentive hearer than myself in all the place, for I panted and longed to understand how I might be saved.

I sometimes think I might have been in darkness and despair until now had it not been for the goodness of God in sending a snowstorm, one Sunday morning, while I was going to a certain place of worship. When I could go no further, I turned down a side street, and came to a little Primitive Methodist Chapel. In that chapel there may have been a dozen or fifteen people. I had heard of the Primitive Methodists, how they sang so loudly that they made people's heads ache; but that did not matter to me. I wanted to know how I might be saved, and if they could tell me that, I did not care how much they made my head ache. The minister did not come that morning; he was snowed up, I suppose. At last, a very thin-looking man, a shoemaker, or tailor, or something of that sort, went up into the pulpit to preach. Now, it is well that preachers should be instructed, but this man was really stupid. He was obliged to stick to his text, for the simple reason that he had little else to say. The text was--

LOOK UNTO ME, AND BE YE SAVED, ALL THE ENDS OF THE EARTH."

He did not even pronounce the words rightly, but that did not matter. There was, I thought, a glimpse of hope for me in that text. The preacher began thus: "My dear friends, this is a very simple text indeed. It says, ‘Look.' Now lookin' don't take a deal of pain. It ain't liftin' your foot or your finger; it is just, 'Look.' Well, a man needn't go to college to learn to look. You may be the biggest fool, and yet you can look. A man needn’t be worth a thousand a year to be able to look. Anyone can look; even a child can look. But then the text says, 'Look unto Me.' Ay!" said he, in broad Essex, "many on ye are lookin' to yourselves, but it's no use lookin' there. You'll never find any comfort in yourselves. Some look to God the Father. No, look to Him by-and-by. Jesus Christ says, 'Look unto Me. Some of ye say, 'We must wait for the Spirit's workin'.' You have no business with that just now. Look to Christ the text says, 'Look unto Me.'"

Then the good man followed up his text in this way: "Look unto Me; I am sweatin' great drops of blood. Look unto Me; I am hangin' on the cross. Look unto Me; I am dead and buried. Look unto Me; I rise again. Look unto Me; I ascend to Heaven. Look unto Me; I am sittin' at the Father's right hand. O poor sinner, look unto Me!"

When he had gone to about that length, and managed to spin out ten minutes or so, he was at the end of his tether. Then he looked at me under the gallery, and I daresay, with so few present, he knew me to be a stranger, just fixing his eyes on me, as if he knew all my heart, he said, "Young man, you look very miserable." Well, I did, but I had not been accustomed to have remarks made from the pulpit on my personal appearance before. However, it was a good blow, struck right home. He continued, "and you always will be miserable--miserable in life, and miserable in death--if you don't obey my text; but if you obey now, this moment, you will be saved." Then, lifting up his hands, he shouted, as only a Primitive Methodist could do, "Young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look! Look! You have nothin' to do but to look and live." I saw at once the way of salvation. I know not what else he said--I did not take much notice of it--I was so possessed with that one thought. Like as when the brazen serpent was lifted up, the people only looked and were healed, so it was with me. I had been waiting to do fifty things, but when I heard that word, "Look!" what a charming word it seemed to me! Oh! I looked until I could almost have looked my eyes away. There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun; and I could have risen that instant, and sung with the most enthusiastic of them, of the precious blood of Christ, and the simple faith which looks alone to Him. Oh, that somebody had told me this before, "Trust Christ, and you shall be saved." Yet it was, no doubt, all wisely ordered, and now I can say--

E'er since by faith I saw the stream, Thy flowing wounds supply, Redeeming love has been my theme, And shall be till I die.

I do from my soul confess that I never was satisfied till I came to Christ; when I was yet a child, I had far more wretchedness than ever I have now; I will even add, more weariness, more care, more heartache than I know at this day. I may be singular in this confession, but I make it, and know it to be the truth. Since that dear hour when my soul cast itself on Jesus, I have found solid joy and peace; but before that, all those supposed gaieties of early youth, all the imagined ease and joy of boyhood, were but vanity and vexation of spirit to me. That happy day, when I found the Saviour, and learned to cling to His dear feet, was a day never to be forgotten by me. An obscure child, unknown, unheard of, I listened to the Word of God; and that precious text led me to the cross of Christ. I can testify that the joy of that day was utterly indescribable. I could have leaped, I could have danced; there was no expression, however fanatical, which would have been out of keeping with the joy of my spirit at that hour. Many days of Christian experience have passed since then, but there has never been one which has had the full exhilaration, the sparkling delight which that first day had. I thought I could have sprung from the seat on which I sat, and have called out with the wildest of those Methodist brethren who were present, "I am forgiven! I am forgiven! A monument of grace! A sinner saved by blood!" My spirit saw its chains broken to pieces, I felt that I was an emancipated soul, an heir of heaven, a forgiven one, accepted in Christ Jesus, plucked out of the miry clay and out of the horrible pit, with my feet set upon a rock, and my goings established. I thought I could dance all the way home. I could understand what John Bunyan meant, when he declared he wanted to tell the crows on the ploughed land all about his conversion. He was too full to hold, he felt he must tell somebody.

It is not everyone who can remember the very day and hour of his deliverance; but, as Richard Knill said, "At such a time of the day, clang went every harp in heaven, for Richard Knill was born again," it was e'en so with me. The clock of mercy struck in heaven the hour and moment of my emancipation, for the time had come. Between half-past ten o'clock, when I entered that chapel, and half-past twelve o'clock, when I was back again at home, what a change had taken place in me! I had passed from darkness into marvellous light, from death to life. Simply by looking to Jesus, I had been delivered from despair, and I was brought into such a joyous state of mind that, when they saw me at home, they said to me, "Something wonderful has happened to you," and I was eager to tell them all about it. Oh! There was joy in the household that day when all heard that the eldest son had found the Saviour, and knew himself to be forgiven--bliss compared with which all earth’s joys are less than nothing, and vanity. Yes, I had looked to Jesus as I was, and found in Him my Saviour. Thus had the eternal purpose of Jehovah decreed it; and as, the moment before, there was none more wretched than I was, so, within that second, there was none more joyous. It took no longer time than does the lightning-flash; it was done, and never has it been undone. I looked, and lived and leaped in joyful liberty as I beheld my sin punished upon the great Substitute, and put away for ever. I looked unto Him, as He bled upon that tree; His eyes darted a glance of love unutterable into my spirit, and in a moment, I was saved. Looking unto Him, the bruises that my soul had suffered were healed, the gaping wounds were cured, the broken bones rejoiced, the rags that had covered me were all removed, my spirit was white as the spotless snows of the far-off North; I had melody within my Spirit, for I was saved, washed, cleansed, forgiven, through Him that did hang upon the tree. My Master, I cannot understand how Thou couldst stoop Thine awful head to such a death as the death of the cross--how Thou couldst take from Thy brow the coronet of stars which from old eternity had shone resplendent there; but how Thou shouldst permit the thorn-crown to gird Thy temples, astonishes me far more. That Thou shouldst cast away the mantle of Thy glory, the azure of Thine everlasting empire, I cannot comprehend: but how Thou shouldst have become veiled in the ignominious purple for a while, and then be mocked by impious men, who bowed to Thee as a pretended king; and how Thou shouldst be stripped naked to Thy shame, without a single covering, and die a felon's death--this is still more incomprehensible. But the marvel is that Thou shouldst have suffered all this for me! Truly, Thy love to me is wonderful, passing the love of women! Was ever grief like Thine? Was ever love like Thine, that could open the flood-gates of such grief? Was ever love so mighty as to become the fount from which such an ocean of grief could come rolling down?

There was never anything so true to me as those bleeding hands, and that thorn-crowned head. Home, friends, health, wealth, comforts--all lost their lustre that day when He appeared, just as stars are hidden by the light of the sun. He was the only Lord and Giver of life’s best bliss, the one well of living water springing up unto ever-lasting life. As I saw Jesus on His cross before me, and as I mused upon His sufferings and death, methought I saw Him cast a look of love upon me; and then I looked at Him, and cried--

Jesus, lover of my soul, Let me to Thy bosom fly.

He said, "Come," and I flew to Him, and clasped Him; and when He let me go again, I wondered where my burden was. It was gone! There, in the sepulchre, it lay, and I felt light as air; like a winged sylph, I could fly over mountains of trouble and despair, and oh! what liberty and joy I had! I could leap with ecstasy, for I had much forgiven, and I was freed from sin. With the spouse in the Canticles, I could say, "I found Him;" I, a lad, found the Lord of glory; I, a slave to sin, found the great Deliverer I , the child of darkness, found the Light of life; I, the uttermost of the lost, found my Saviour and my God; I, widowed and desolate, found my Friend, my Beloved, my Husband. Oh, how I wondered that I should be pardoned! It was not the pardon that I wondered at so much; the wonder was that it should come to me. I marvelled that He should be able to pardon such sins, as mine, such crimes, so numerous and so black, and that, after such an accusing conscience, He should have power to still every wave within my spirit, and make my soul like the surface of a river, undisturbed, quiet, and at ease. It mattered not to me whether the day itself was gloomy or bright, I had found Christ; that was enough for me. He was my Saviour, He was my all; and I can heartily say, that one day of pardoned sin was a sufficient recompense for the whole five years of conviction. I have to bless God for every terror that ever scared me by night; and for every foreboding that alarmed me by day. It has made me happier ever since, for now, if there be a trouble weighing upon my soul, I thank God it is not such a burden as that which bowed me to the very earth, and made me creep upon the ground like a beast, by reason of heavy distress and affliction. I know I never can again suffer what I have suffered; I never can, except I be sent to hell, know more of agony than I have known; and now, that ease, that joy and peace in believing, that "no condemnation" which belongs to me as a child of God, is made doubly sweet and inexpressibly precious, by the recollection of my past days of sorrow and grief. Blessed be Thou, O God, for ever, who by those black days, like a dreary winter, hast made these summer days all the fairer and the sweeter! I need not walk through the earth fearful of every shadow, and afraid of every man I meet, for sin is washed away; my spirit is no more guilty; it is pure; it is holy. The frown of God no longer resteth upon me; but my Father smiles, I see His eyes--they are glancing love; I hear His voice--it is full of sweetness. I am forgiven, I am forgiven, I am forgiven!

When I look back upon it, I can see one reason why the Word was blessed to me as I heard it preached in that Primitive Methodist Chapel at Colchester; I had been up betimes crying to God for the blessing. As a lad, when I was seeking the Saviour, I used to rise with the sun, that I might get time to read gracious books, and to seek the Lord. I can recall the kind of pleas I used when I took my arguments, and came before the throne of grace: "Lord, save me; it will glorify Thy grace to save such a sinner as I am! Lord, save me, else I am lost to all eternity; do not let me perish, Lord! Save me, O Lord, for Jesus died! By His agony and bloody sweat, by His cross and passion, save me!" I often proved that the early morning was the best part of the day; I liked those prayers of which the psalmist said, "In the morning shall my prayer prevent Thee."

The Holy Spirit, who enabled me to believe, gave me peace through believing. I felt as sure that I was forgiven as before I felt sure of condemnation. I had been certain of my condemnation because the Word of God declared it, and my conscience bore witness to it, but when the Lord justified me, I was made equally certain by the same witnesses. The Word of the Lord in the Scripture saith, "He that believeth on Him is not condemned," and my conscience bore witness that I believed, and that God in pardoning me was just. Thus I had the witness of the Holy Spirit and also of my own conscience, and these two agreed in one. That great and excellent man, Dr. Johnson, used to hold the opinion that no man ever could know that he was pardoned--that there was no such thing as assurance of faith. Perhaps, if Dr. Johnson had studied his Bible a little more, and had had a little more of the enlightenment of the Spirit, he, too, might have come to know his own pardon. Certainly, he was no very reliable judge of theology, any more than he was of porcelain, which he once attempted to make, and never succeeded. I think both in theology and porcelain his opinion is of very little value.

How can a man know that he is pardoned? There is a text which says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." I believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; is it irrational to believe that I am saved? "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life," saith Christ, in John's Gospel. I believe on Christ; am I absurd in believing that I have eternal life! I find the apostle Paul speaking by the Holy Ghost, and saying, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." If I know that my trust is fixed on Jesus only, and that I have faith in Him, were it not ten thousand times more absurd for me not to be at peace, than for me to be filled with joy unspeakable? It is but taking God at His Word, when the soul knows, as a necessary consequence of its faith, that it is saved. I took Jesus as my Saviour, and I was saved; and I can tell the reason why I took Him for my Saviour. To my own humiliation, I must confess that I did it because I could not help it; I was shut up to it. That stern law-work had hammered me into such a condition that, if there had been fifty other saviours, I could not have thought of them--I was driven to this One. I wanted a Divine Saviour, I wanted One who was made a curse for me, to expiate my guilt. I wanted One who had died, for I deserved to die. I wanted One who had risen again, who was able by His life to make me live. I wanted the exact Saviour that stood before me in the Word, revealed to my heart; and I could not help having Him. I could realize then the language of Rutherford when, being full of love to Christ, once upon a time, in the dungeon of Aberdeen, he said, "O my Lord, if there were a broad hell betwixt me and Thee, if I could not get at Thee except by wading through it, I would not think twice, but I would go through it all, if I might but embrace Thee, and call Thee mine!" Oh, how I loved Him! Passing all loves except His own, was that love which I felt for Him then. If, beside the door of the place in which I met with Him, there had been a stake of blazing faggots, I would have stood upon them without chains, glad to give my flesh, and blood, and bones, to be ashes that should testify my love to Him. Had He asked me then to give all my substance to the poor, I would have given all, and thought myself to be amazingly rich in having beggared myself for His name's sake. Had He commanded me then to preach in the midst of all His foes, I could have said-

There's not a lamb in all Thy flock, I would disdain to feed, There's not a foe, before whose face I'd fear Thy cause to plead.

Has Jesus saved me? I dare not speak with any hesitation here; I know He has. His Word is true, therefore I am saved. My evidence that I am saved does not lie in the fact that I preach, or that I do this or that. All my hope lies in this, that Jesus Christ came to save sinners. I am a sinner, I trust Him, then He came to save me, and I am saved; I live habitually in the enjoyment of this blessed fact, and it is long since I have doubted the truth of it, for I have His own Word to sustain my faith. It is a very surprising thing--a thing to be marvelled at most of all by those who enjoy it. I know that it is to me even to this day the greatest wonder that I ever heard of, that God should ever justify me. I feel myself to be a lump of unworthiness, a mass of corruption, and a heap of sin, apart from His almighty love; yet I know, by a full assurance, that I am justified by faith which is in Christ Jesus, and treated as if I had been perfectly just, and made an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ; though by nature I must take my place among the most sinful. I, who am altogether undeserving, am treated as if I had been deserving. I am loved with as much love as if I had always been godly, whereas aforetime I was ungodly.

I have always considered, with Luther and Calvin, that the sum and substance of the gospel lies in that word Substitution--Christ standing in the stead of man. If I understand the gospel, it is this: I deserve to be lost for ever; the only reason why I should not be damned is, that Christ was punished in my stead, and there is no need to execute a sentence twice for sin. On the other hand, I know I cannot enter Heaven unless I have a perfect righteousness; I am absolutely certain I shall never have one of my own, for I find I sin every day, but then Christ had a perfect righteousness, and He said, "There, poor sinner, take My garment, and put it on; you shall stand before God as if you were Christ, and I will stand before God as if I had been the sinner; I will suffer in the sinner's stead, and you shall be rewarded for works which you did not do, but which I did for you." I find it very convenient every day to come to Christ as a sinner, as I came at the first. "You are no saint," says the devil. Well, if I am not, I am a sinner, and Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Sink or swim, I go to Him; other hope I have none. By looking to Him, I received all the faith which inspired me with confidence in His grace; and the word that first drew my soul--"look unto Me"--still rings its clarion note in my ears. There I once found conversion, and there I shall ever find refreshing and renewal.

Let me bear my personal testimony of what I have seen, what my own ears have heard, and my own heart has tasted. First, Christ is the only-begotten of the Father. He is Divine to me, if He be human to all the world besides. He has done that for me which none but a God could do. He has subdued my stubborn will, melted a heart of adamant, broken a chain of steel, opened the gates of brass, and snapped the bars of iron. He hath turned for me my mourning into laughter, and my desolation into joy; He hath led my captivity captive, and made my heart rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. Let others think as they will of Him, to me He must ever be the only-begotten of the Father: blessed be His holy name!

Oh, that I could now adore Him, Like the Heavenly host above, Who forever bow before Him, And unceasing sing His love! Happy songsters! When shall I your chorus join?

Again, I bear my testimony that He is full of grace. Ah, had He not been, I should never have beheld His glory. I was full of sin to over-flowing. I was condemned already, because I believed not upon Him. He drew me when I wanted not to come, and though I struggled hard, He continued still to draw; and when at last I came to His mercy-seat, all trembling like a condemned culprit, He said, "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee: be of good cheer." Let others despise Him; but I bear witness that He is full of grace.

Finally, I bear my witness that He is full of truth. True have His promises been; not one has failed. I have often doubted Him, for that I blush; He has never failed me, in this I must rejoice. His promises have been yea and Amen. I do but speak the testimony of every believer in Christ, though I put it thus personally to make it the more forcible. I bear witness that never servant had such a Master as I have; never brother had such a Kinsman as He has been to me; never spouse had such a Husband as Christ has been to my soul; never sinner a better Saviour; never soldier a better Captain; never mourner a better Comforter than Christ hath been to my spirit. I want none beside Him. In life, He is my life; and in death, He shall be the death of death; in poverty, Christ is my riches; in sickness, He makes my bed; in darkness, He is my Star; and in brightness, He is my Sun. By faith I understand that the blessed Son of God redeemed my soul with His own heart's blood; and by sweet experience I know that He raised me up from the pit of dark despair, and set my feet on the rock. He died for me. This is the root of every satisfaction I have. He put all my transgressions away. He cleansed me with His precious blood; He covered me with His perfect righteousness; He wrapped me up in His own virtues. He has promised to keep me, while I abide in this world, from its temptations and snares; and when I depart from this world, He has already prepared for me a mansion in the Heaven of unfading bliss, and a crown of everlasting joy that shall never, never fade away. To me, then, the days or years of my mortal sojourn on this earth are of little moment. Nor is the manner of my decease of much consequence. Should foemen sentence me to martyrdom, or physicians declare that I must soon depart this life, it is all alike--

A few more rolling suns at most, Shall land me on fair Canaan's coast.

What more can I wish than that, while my brief term on earth shall last, I should be the servant of Him who became the Servant of servants for me? I can say, concerning Christ's religion, if I had to die like a dog, and had no hope whatever of immortality, if I wanted to lead a happy life, let me serve my God with all my heart; let me be follower of Jesus, and walk in His footsteps. If there were no hereafter, I would still prefer to be a Christian, and the humblest Christian minister, to being a king or an emperor, for I am persuaded there are more delights in Christ, yea, more joy in one glimpse of His face than is to be found in all the praises of this harlot-world, and in all the delights which it can yield to us in its sunniest and brightest days. And I am persuaded that what He has been till now, He will be to the end, and where He hath begun a good work, He will carry it on. In the religion of Jesus Christ, there are clusters even on earth too heavy for one man to carry; there are fruits that have been found so rich that even angel lips have never been sweetened with more luscious wine; there are joys to be had here so fair that even cates ambrosial and the nectared wine of Paradise can scarcely excel the sweets of satisfaction that are to be found in the earthly banquets of the Lord. I have seen hundreds and thousands who have given their hearts to Jesus, but I never did see one who said he was disappointed with Him, I never met with one who said Jesus Christ was less than He was declared to be. When first my eyes beheld Him, when the burden slipped from off my heavy-laden shoulders, and I was free from condemnation, I thought that all the preachers I had ever heard had not half preached, they had not told half the beauty of my Lord and Master. So good! so generous! so gracious! so willing to forgive! It seemed to me as if they had almost slandered Him; they painted His likeness, doubtless, as well as they could, but it was a mere smudge compared with the matchless beauties of His face. All who have ever seen Him will say the same. I go back to my home, many a time, mourning that I cannot preach my Master even as I myself know Him, and what I know of Him is very little compared with the matchlessness of His grace. Would that I knew more of Him, and that I could tell it out better!

Family Background

Charles Spurgeon was raised in a godly home in England. Both his father and grandfather were ministers of the gospel. At the age of ten, he began to seek God regarding his own salvation. After a period of about five years, he happened to attend a Primitive Methodist meeting in which the passage, “Look unto Me, and be ye saved,” was being preached. That day Spurgeon found Christ.

Soon Spurgeon himself began to preach. He was so effective that by the age of nineteen this “boy-preacher” was attracting large crowds in London to hear the gospel of Christ. He continued preaching in that city, primarily at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, for thirty-eight years until his death in 1892. The following, taken from his book, Conversion: the Great Change, gives an account of the day he found Christ.

A Personal Account

I SOMETIMES THINK I might have been in darkness and despair until now had it not been for the goodness of God in sending a snowstorm, one Sunday morning, while I was going to a certain place of worship. When I could go no further, I turned down a side street, and came to a little Primitive Methodist Chapel. In that chapel there may have been a dozen or fifteen people. I had heard of the Primitive Methodists, how they sang so loudly that they made people’s heads ache; but that did not matter to me. I wanted to know how I might be saved, and if they could tell me that, I did not care how much they made my head ache. The minister did not come that morning; he was snowed up, I suppose. At last, a very thin-looking man, a shoemaker, or tailor, or something of that sort, went up into the pulpit to preach. Now, it is well that preachers should be instructed; but this man was really stupid. He was obliged to stick to his text, for the simple reason that he had little else to say. The text was -*Look Unto Me, And Be Ye Saved, All The Ends Of The Earth!*

He did not even pronounce the words rightly, but that did not matter. There was, I thought, a glimpse of hope for me in that text. The preacher began thus: “My dear friends, this is a very simple text indeed. It says, ‘Look.’ Now lookin’ don’t take a deal of pains. It ain’t liftin’ your foot or your finger; it is just, ‘Look.’ Well, a man needn’t go to college to learn to look. You may be the biggest fool, and yet you can look. A man needn’t be worth a thousand a year to be able to look. Anyone can look; even a child can look. But then the text says, ‘Look unto Me.’ Ay!” said he, in broad Essex, “many on ye are lookin’ to yourselves, but it’s no use lookin’ there. You’ll never find any comfort in yourselves. Some look to God the Father. No, look to Him by-and-by. Jesus Christ says, ‘Look unto Me.’ Some on ye say, ‘We must wait for the Spirit’s workin’.’ You have no business with that just now. Look to Christ. The text says, ‘Look unto Me.’ ” Then the good man followed up his text in this way: “Look unto Me; I am sweatin’ great drops of blood. Look unto Me; I am hangin’ on the cross. Look unto Me; I am dead and buried. Look unto Me; I rise again. Look unto Me; I ascend to heaven. Look unto Me; I am sittin’ at the Father’s right hand. O poor sinner, look unto Me! look unto Me!”

There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun . . .

When he had gone to about that length, and managed to spin out ten minutes or so, he was at the end of his tether. Then he looked at me under the gallery, and I daresay, with so few present, he knew me to be a stranger. Just fixing his eyes on me, as if he knew all my heart, he said, “Young man, you look very miserable.” Well, I did; but I had not been accustomed to have remarks made from the pulpit on my personal appearance before. However, it was a good blow, struck right home. He continued, “and you always will be miserable —miserable in life, and miserable in death — if you don’t obey my text; but if you obey now, this moment, you will be saved.” Then, lifting up his hands, he shouted, as only a Primitive Methodist could do, “Young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look! Look! You have nothin’ to do but to look and live.” I saw at once the way of salvation. I know not what else he said— I did not take much notice of it— I was so possessed with that one thought. Like as when the brazen serpent was lifted up, the people only looked and were healed, so it was with me. I had been waiting to do fifty things, but when I heard that word, “Look!” what a charming word it seemed to me! Oh! I looked until I could almost have looked my eyes away. There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun; and I could have risen that instant, and sung with the most enthusiastic of them, of the precious blood of Christ, and the simple faith which looks alone to Him. Oh, that somebody had told me this before, “Trust Christ and you shall be saved.” Yet it was, no doubt, all wisely ordered, and now I can say—

“E’er since by faith I saw the stream, Thy flowing wounds supply, Redeeming love has been my theme, and shall be till I die.”

I do from my soul confess that I never was satisfied till I came to Christ; when I was yet a child, I had far more wretchedness than ever I have now; I will even add, more weariness, more care, more heartache than I know at this day. I may be singular in this confession, but I make it, and know it to be the truth. Since that dear hour when my soul cast itself on Jesus, I have found solid joy and peace; but before that, all those supposed gaieties of early youth, all the imagined ease and joy of boyhood, were but vanity and vexation of spirit to me. That happy day, when I found the Savior, and learned to cling to His dear feet, was a day never to be forgotten by me. An obscure child, unknown, unheard of, I listened to the Word of God; and that precious text led me to the cross of Christ. I can testify that the joy of that day was utterly indescribable. I could have leaped, I could have danced; there was no expression, however fanatical, which would have been out of keeping with the joy of my spirit at that hour. Many days of Christian experience have passed since then, but there has never been one which has had the full exhilaration, the sparkling delight which that first day had. I thought I could have sprung from the seat on which I sat, and have called out with the wildest of those Methodist brethren who were present, “I am forgiven! I am forgiven! A monument of grace! A sinner saved by blood!” My spirit saw its chains broken to pieces. I felt that I was an emancipated soul, an heir of heaven, a forgiven one, accepted in Christ Jesus, plucked out of the miry clay and out of the horrible pit, with my feet set upon a rock, and my goings established. I thought I could dance all the way home. I could understand what John Bunyan meant, when he declared he wanted to tell the crows on the ploughed land all about his conversion.

He was too full to hold, he felt he must tell somebody. It is not everyone who can remember the very day and hour of his deliverance; but, as Richard Knill said, “At such a time of the day, clang went every harp in heaven, for Richard Knill was born again,” it was e’en so with me. The clock of mercy struck in heaven the hour and moment of my emancipation, for the time had come. Between half-past ten o’clock, when I entered that chapel, and half-past twelve o’clock, when I was back again at home, what a change had taken place in me! I had passed from darkness into marvelous light, from death to life.

Simply by looking to Jesus, I had been delivered from despair, and I was brought into such a joyous state of mind that, when they saw me at home, they said to me, “Something wonderful has happened to you”; and I was eager to tell them all about it. Oh! there was joy in the household that day, when all heard that the eldest son had found the Savior, and knew himself to be forgiven - bliss compared with which all earth’s joys are less than nothing and vanity.

Yes, I had looked to Jesus as I was, and found in Him my Savior. Thus had the eternal purpose of Jehovah decreed it; and as, the moment before, there was none more wretched than I was, so, within that second, there was none more joyous. It took no longer time than does the lightning flash; it was done, and never has it been undone. I looked, and lived, and leaped in joyful liberty as I beheld my sin punished upon the great Substitute, and put away forever. I looked unto Him, as He bled upon that tree; His eyes darted a glance of love unutterable into my spirit, and in a moment, I was saved.

Looking unto Him, the bruises that my soul had suffered were healed, the gaping wounds were cured, the broken bones rejoiced, the rags that had covered me were all removed, my spirit was white as the spotless snows of the far-off North; I had melody within my spirit, for I was saved, washed, cleansed, forgiven, through Him that did hang upon the tree. Like Charles Spurgeon, when a person has a seeking heart and wants to know how to be saved, any instrument or way God wants to use to point him to Christ is acceptable. Some people want to find Christ on their own terms and in their own way, but if your heart is seeking, you will find Christ on whatever terms and in whatever way God chooses to use.

Romans 8:28 says, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”

Right now all things in your life are working together for “good,” and that good, according to God’s Word, is that you would receive Jesus Christ into your life. Jesus said,

“For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?” Matt. 16:26

What are you seeking? Nothing will satisfy you ultimately. Even if you attained the highest human goal or could actually own the whole world, still, apart from Christ, you would be left with an emptiness inside. Your seeking needs to be focused, like Spurgeon’s, to look to Christ and be saved.

Isaiah 45:22 declares, “Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.”

You can turn your seeking of Christ into finding Him by following Paul’s specific answer to the Philippian jailor’s question, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” Paul said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:30-31). This is how to find Christ— believe on Him, not by merely giving mental assent but by making contact with Him in prayer, confessing Him as Lord. It works!

Romans 10:11-12 says, 11 “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame. 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.”

**Sermons**

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* [**Salvation by Works, A Criminal Doctrine**](http://www.christians.com/charlesspurgeon/sermons/salvation_by_works_a_criminal_doctrine)

I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. Galatians 2:21.

* [**Why Some Seekers Are Not Saved**](http://www.christians.com/charlesspurgeon/sermons/why_some_seekers_are_not_saved)

“Behold the Lord ‘s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.” - Isaiah 59:1, 2

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References:

1. Spurgeon's Autobiography by Charles Spurgeon
2. Pictures from Wikipedia.org
3. The Spurgeon Archive at Spurgeon.org

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Charles Spurgeon

June 19, 1834 to January 31, 1892 (58), Preacher

Charles Spurgeon is highly influential among Christians of different denominations, among whom he is still known as the "Prince of Preachers".

## Relationships

* http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/dwightmoody_main.mini.jpg[Dwight Moody](http://www.christians.com/dwightmoody/main) met Charles Spurgeon during his first visit to Great Britain in 1867.
* http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/hudsontaylor_main.mini.jpgSpurgeon supported [Hudson Taylor](http://www.christians.com/hudsontaylor/main) and his mission to China both financially and by sending missionaries his way.
* http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/George_Muller.mini.jpgGeorge Muller inspired Spurgeon to establish the Stockwell Orphanage which is known today as Spurgeon's Child Care.

# Charles Haddon Spurgeon

* [At A Glance](http://www.christians.com/charlesspurgeon/main)
* [Testimony](http://www.christians.com/charlesspurgeon/main)
* [**Biography**](http://www.christians.com/charlesspurgeon/main)
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Historical Timeline

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1790

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Spurgeon's conversion to Christianity came on January 6, 1850 at the age of fifteen. On his way to a scheduled appointment, a snow storm forced him to cut short his intended journey and to turn into a Primitive Methodist chapel in Colchester where, in his own words: "God opened his heart to the salvation message."



On October 19, 1856 as Spurgeon was preaching at the Surrey Gardens Music Hall (artist rendering) for the first time. Someone in the crowd yelled, "Fire!" and there was a panic and a stampede that left several dead. Spurgeon was emotionally devastated by the event and it had a sobering influence on his life. He struggled against clinical depression for many years and spoke of being moved to tears for no reason known to himself.



The Metropolitan Tabernacle (image) was the largest church edifice of its day and can be considered a precursor to the modern "megachurch." It was at the Tabernacle that Spurgeon would continue to preach several times per week until his death 31 years later.



Besides sermons, Spurgeon also wrote several hymns and published a new collection of worship songs in 1866 called "Our Own Hymn Book". What is remarkable compared to most modern practices, is that the congregation is led in the singing without any amplification of sound that exists today.

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Spurgeon's Personal Account of His Salvation

Let our lips crowd sonnets within the compass of a word; let our voice distil hours of melody into a single syllable; let our tongue utter in one letter the essence of the harmony of ages; for we write of an hour which as far excelleth all other days of our life as gold exceedeth dross. As the night of Israel's passover was a night to be remembered, a theme for bards, and an incessant fountain of grateful song, even so is the time of which we now tell, the never-to-be-forgotten hour of our emancipation from guilt, and our justification in Jesus. Other days have mingled with their fellows till, like coins worn in circulation, their image and superscription are entirely obliterated, but this day remaineth new, fresh, bright, as distinct in all its parts as if it were but yesterday struck from the mint of time. Memory shall drop from the palsied hand full many a memento which now she cherishes, but she shall never, even when she tottereth to the grave, unbind from her heart the token of the thrice-happy hour of the redemption of our spirit. The emancipated galley-slave may forget the day which heard his broken fetters rattle on the ground; the pardoned traitor may fail to remember the moment when the axe of the headsman was averted by a pardon; and the long-despairing mariner may not recollect the moment when a friendly hand snatched him from the hungry deep; but O hour of forgiven sin, moment of perfect pardon, our soul shall never forget thee while within her life and being find an immortality! Each day of our life hath had its attendant angel, but on this day, like Jacob at Mahanaim, hosts of angels met us. The sun hath risen every morning, but on that eventful morn he had the light of seven days. As the days of Heaven upon earth, as the years of immortality, as the ages of glory, as the bliss of Heaven, so were the hours of that thrice-happy day. Rapture divine, and ecstasy inexpressible, filled our soul. Fear, distress, and grief, with all their train of woes, fled hastily away; and in their place joys came without number.

When I was in the hand of the Holy Spirit, under conviction of sin, I had a clear and sharp sense of the justice of God. Sin, whatever it might be to other people, became to me an intolerable burden. It was not so much that I feared hell, as that I feared sin; and all the while, I had upon my mind a deep concern for the honour of God's name, and the integrity of His moral government. I felt that it would not satisfy my conscience if I could be forgiven unjustly. But then there came the question--"How could God be just, and yet justify me who had been so guilty?" I was worried and wearied with this question; neither could I see any answer to it. Certainly, I could never have invented an answer which would have satisfied my conscience. The doctrine of the atonement is to my mind one of the surest proofs of the Divine inspiration of Holy Scripture. Who would or could have thought of the just Ruler dying for the unjust rebel? This is no teaching of human mythology, or dream of poetical imagination. This method of expiation is only known among men because it is a fact: fiction could not have devised it. God Himself ordained it; it is not a matter which could have been imagined.

I had heard of the plan of salvation by the sacrifice of Jesus from my youth up; but I did not know any more about it in my innermost soul than if I had been born and bred a Hottentot. The light was there, but I was blind: it was of necessity that the Lord Himself should make the matter plain to me. It came to me as a new revelation, as fresh as if I had never read in Scripture that Jesus was declared to be the propitiation for sins that God might be just. I believe it will have to come as a revelation to every new-born child of God whenever he sees it; I mean that glorious doctrine of the substitution of the Lord Jesus. I came to understand that salvation was possible through vicarious sacrifice; and that provision had been made in the first constitution and arrangement of things for such a substitution. I was made to see that He who is the Son of God, co-equal, and co-eternal with the Father, had of old been made the covenant Head of a chosen people, that He might in that capacity suffer for them and save them. Inasmuch as our fall was not at the first a personal one, for we fell in our federal representative, the first Adam, it became possible for us to be recovered by a second Representative, even by Him who has undertaken to be the covenant Head of His people, so as to be their second Adam. I saw that, ere I actually sinned, I had fallen by my first father's sin, and I rejoiced that, therefore, it became possible in point of law for me to rise by a second Head and Representative. The fall by Adam left a loophole of escape; another Adam could undo the ruin wrought by the first.

Spurgeon at 19 was called to the pastorate of London's famed New Park Street ChapelWhen I was anxious about the possibility of a just God pardoning me, I understood and saw by faith that He who is the Son of God became man, and in His own blessed person bore my sin in His own body on the tree. I saw that the chastisement of my peace was laid on Him, and that with His stripes I was healed. It was because the Son of God, supremely glorious in His matchless person, undertook to vindicate the law by bearing the sentence due to me, that therefore God was able to pass by my sin. My sole hope for Heaven lies in the full atonement made upon Calvary's cross for the ungodly. On that I firmly rely. I have not the shadow of a hope anywhere else. Personally, I could never have overcome my own sinfulness. I tried and failed. My evil propensities were too many for me, till, in the belief that Christ died for me, I cast my guilty soul on Him, and then I received a conquering principle by which I overcame my sinful self. The doctrine of the cross can be used to slay sin, even as the old warriors used their huge two-handed swords, and mowed down their foes at every stroke. There is nothing like faith in the sinners' Friend: it overcomes all evil. If Christ has died for me, ungodly as I am, without strength as I am, then I cannot live in sin any longer, but must arouse myself to love and serve Him who hath redeemed me. I cannot trifle with the evil which slew my best Friend. I must be holy for His sake. How can I live in sin when He has died to save me from it?

There was a day, as I took my walks abroad, when I came hard by a spot for ever engraven upon my memory, for there I saw this Friend, my best, my only Friend, murdered. I stooped down in sad affright, and looked at Him. I saw that His hands had been pierced with rough iron nails, and His feet had been rent in the same way. There was misery in His dead countenance so terrible that I scarcely dared to look upon it. His body was emaciated with hunger, His back was red with bloody scourges, and His brow had a circle of wounds about it: clearly could one see that these had been pierced by thorns. I shuddered, for I had known this Friend full well. He never had a fault; He was the purest of the pure, the holiest of the holy. Who could have injured Him? For He never injured any man: all His life long He "went about doing good;" He had healed the sick, He had fed the hungry, He had raised the dead: for which of these works did they kill Him? He had never breathed out anything else but love; and as I looked into the poor sorrowful face, so full of agony, and yet so full of love, I wondered who could have been a wretch so vile as to pierce hands like His. I said within myself, "Where can these traitors live? Who are these that could have smitten such an One as this?" Had they murdered an oppressor, we might have forgiven them; had they slain one who had indulged in vice or villainy, it might have been his desert; had it been a murderer and a rebel, or one who had committed sedition, we would have said, "Bury his corpse: justice has at last given him his due." But when Thou wast slain, my best, my only-beloved, where lodged the traitors? Let me seize them, and they shall be put to death. If there be torments that I can devise, surely they shall endure them all. Oh! what jealousy, what revenge I felt! If I might but find these murderers, what would I not do with them! And as I looked upon that corpse, I heard a footstep, and wondered where it was. I listened, and I clearly perceived that the murderer was close at hand. It was dark, and I groped about to find him. I found that, somehow or other, wherever I put out my hand, I could not meet with him, for he was nearer to me than my hand would go. At last I put my hand upon my breast. "I have thee now," said I; for lo! he was in my own heart; the murderer was hiding within my own bosom, dwelling in the recesses of my inmost soul. Ah! then I wept indeed, that I, in the very presence of my murdered Master, should be harbouring the murderer, and I felt myself most guilty while I bowed over His corpse, and sang that plaintive hymn--

Twas you, my sins, my cruel sins, His chief tormentors were; Each of my crimes became a nail, And unbelief the spear.

Amid the rabble rout which hounded the Redeemer to His doom, there were some gracious souls whose bitter anguish sought vent in wailing and lamentations--fit music to accompany that march of woe. When my soul can, in imagination, see the Saviour bearing His cross to Calvary, she joins the godly women, and weeps with them; for, indeed, there is true cause for grief--cause lying deeper than those mourning women thought. They bewailed innocence maltreated, goodness persecuted, love bleeding, meekness about to die; but my heart has a deeper and more bitter cause to mourn. My sins were the scourges which lacerated those blessed shoulders, and crowned with thorns these bleeding brows: my sins cried, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" and laid the cross upon His gracious shoulders. His being led forth to die is sorrow enough for one eternity; but my having been His murderer, is more, infinitely more grief than one poor fountain of tears can express.

Why those women loved and wept, it were not hard to guess; but they could not have had greater reasons for love and grief than my heart has. Nain's widow saw her son restored; but I myself have been raised to newness of life. Peter's wife's mother was cured of the fever; but I of the greater plague of sin. Out of Magdalene seven devils were cast; but a whole legion out of me. Mary and Martha were favoured with visits from Him; but He dwells with me. His mother bare His body; but He is formed in me, "the hope of glory." In nothing behind the holy women in debt, let me not be behind them in gratitude or sorrow.

Love and grief my heart dividing, With my tears His feet I'll lave, Constant still in heart abiding, Weep for Him who died to save.

William Huntington says, in his autobiography, that one of the sharpest sensations of pain that he felt, after he had been quickened by Divine grace, was this, "He felt such pity for God." I do not know that I ever met with the expression elsewhere, but it is a very striking one, although I might prefer to say that I have sympathy with God, and grief that He should be treated so ill. Ah, there are many men that are forgotten, that are despised, and that are trampled on by their fellows, but there never was a man who was so despised as the ever-lasting God has been! Many a man has been slandered and abused, but never was man abused as God has been. Many have been treated cruelly and ungratefully, but never was one treated as our God has been. I, too, once despised Him. He knocked at the door of my heart, and I refused to open it. He came to me, times without number, morning by morning, and night by night; He checked me in my conscience, and spoke to me by His Spirit, and when, at last, the thunders of the law prevailed in my conscience, I thought that Christ was cruel and unkind, Oh, I can never forgive myself that I should have thought so ill of Him! But what a loving reception did I have when I went to Him! I thought He would smite me, but His hand was not clenched in anger, but opened wide in mercy. I thought full sure that His eyes would dart lightning-flashes of wrath upon me; but, instead thereof, they were full of tears. He fell upon my neck, and kissed me; He took off my rags, and did clothe me with His righteousness, and caused my soul to sing aloud for joy; while in the house of my heart, and in the house of His Church, there was music and dancing, because His son that He had lost was found, and he that had been dead was made alive again.

There is a power in God's gospel beyond all description. Once I, like Mazeppa, lashed to the wild horse of my lust, bound hand and foot, incapable of resistance, was galloping on with hell's wolves behind me, howling for my body and my soul as their just and lawful prey. There came a mighty hand which stopped that wild horse, cut my bands, set me down, and brought me into liberty. Is there power in the gospel? Ay, there is, and he who has felt it must acknowledge it. There was a time when I lived in the strong old castle of my sins, and rested in my own works. There came a trumpeter to the door, and bade me open it. I with anger chid him from the porch, and said he ne'er should enter. Then there came a goodly Personage, with loving countenance; His hands were marked with scars where nails had been driven, and His feet had nail-prints, too. He lifted up His cross, using it as a hammer; at the first blow, the gate of my prejudice shook; at the second, it trembled more; at the third, down it fell, and in He came; and He said, "Arise, and stand upon thy feet, for I have loved thee with an everlasting love." The gospel a thing of power! Ah! that it is. It always wears the dew of its youth; it glitters with morning's freshness, its strength and its glory abide for ever. I have felt its power in my own heart; I have the witness of the Spirit within my spirit, and I know it is a thing of might, because it has conquered me, and bowed me down.

His free grace alone, from the first to the last, Hath won my affections, and bound my soul fast.

In my conversion, the very point lay in making the discovery that I had nothing to do but to look to Christ, and I should be saved. I believe that I had been a very good, attentive hearer; my own impression about myself was that nobody ever listened much better than I did. For years, as a child, I tried to learn the way of salvation, and either I did not hear it set forth, which I think cannot quite have been the case, or else I was spiritually blind and deaf, and could not see it and could not hear it; but the good news that I was, as a sinner, to look away from myself to Christ, as much startled me, and came as fresh to me, as any news I ever heard in my life. Had I never read my Bible? Yes, and read it earnestly. Had I never been taught by Christian people? Yes, I had, by mother, and father, and others. Had I not heard the gospel! Yes, I think I had; and yet, somehow, it was like a new revelation to me that I was to "believe and live." I confess to have been tutored in piety, put into my cradle by prayerful hands, and lulled to sleep by songs concerning Jesus, but after having heard the gospel continually, with line upon line, precept upon precept, here much and there much, yet, when the Word of the Lord came to me with power, it was as new as if I had lived among the unvisited tribes of Central Africa, and had never heard the tidings of the cleansing fountain filled with blood, drawn from the Saviour's veins.

When, for the first time, I received the gospel to my soul's salvation, I thought that I had never really heard it before, and I began to think that the preachers to whom I had listened had not truly preached it. But, on looking back, I am inclined to believe that I had heard the gospel fully preached many hundreds of times before, and that this was the difference--that I then heard it as though I heard it not; and when I did hear it, the message may not have been any more dear in itself than it had been at former times, but the power of the Holy Spirit was present to open my ear, and to guide the message to my heart. I have no doubt that I heard, scores of times, such texts as these--"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;" "Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth;" "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" yet I had no intelligent idea of what faith meant. When I first discovered what faith really was, and exercised it--for with me these two things came together, I believed as soon as ever I knew what believing meant--then I thought I had never before heard that truth preached. But, now, I am persuaded that the light often shone on my eyes, but I was blind, and therefore I thought that the light had never come there. The light was shining all the while, but there was no power to receive it; the eyeball of the soul was not sensitive to the Divine beams.

Although Spurgeon never attended theological school, by the age of twenty-one he was the most popular preacher in London.I could not believe that it was possible that my sins could be forgiven. I do not know why, but I seemed to be the odd person in the world. When the catalogue was made out, it appeared to me that, for some reason, I must have been left out. If God had saved me, and not the world, I should have wondered indeed; but if He had saved all the world except me, that would have seemed to me to be but right. And now, being saved by grace, I cannot help saying, "I am indeed a brand plucked out of the fire!" I believe that some of us who were kept by God a long while before we found Him, love Him better perhaps than we should have done if we had received Him directly; and we can preach better to others, we can speak more of His loving-kindness and tender mercy. John Bunyan could not have written as he did if he had not been dragged about by the devil for many years. I love that picture of dear old Christian. I know, when I first read The Pilgrim's Progress, and saw in it the woodcut of Christian carrying the burden on his back, I felt so interested in the poor fellow, that I thought I should jump with joy when, after he had carried his heavy load so long, he at last got rid of it; and that was how I felt when the burden of guilt, which I had borne so long, was for ever rolled away from my shoulders and my heart.

Once, God preached to me by a similitude in the depth of winter. The earth had been black, and there was scarcely a green thing or a flower to be seen. As I looked across the fields, there was nothing but barrenness--bare hedges and leafless trees, and black, black earth, wherever I gazed. On a sudden, God spake, and unlocked the treasures of the snow, and white flakes descended until there was no blackness to be seen, and all was one sheet of dazzling whiteness. It was at the time that I was seeking the Saviour, and not long before I found him, and I remember well that sermon which I saw before me in the snow: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

New Park Street Chapel after Spurgeon's expansionPersonally, I have to bless God for many good books; I thank Him for Dr. Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul; for Baxter's Call to the Unconverted; for Alleine's Alarm to Unconverted Sinners; and for James' Anxious Enquirer, but my gratitude most of all is due to God, not for books, but for the preached Word--and that too addressed to me by a poor, uneducated man, a man who had never received any training for the ministry, and probably will never be heard of in this life, a man engaged in business, no doubt of a humble kind, during the week, but who had just enough of grace to say on the Sabbath, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." The books were good, but the man was better. The revealed Word awakened me, but it was the preached Word that saved me; and I must ever attach peculiar value to the hearing of the truth, for by it I received the joy and peace in which my soul delights. While under concern of soul, I resolved that I would attend all the places of worship in the town where I lived, in order that I might find out the way of salvation. I was willing to do anything, and be anything, if God would only forgive my sin. I set off, determined to go round to all the chapels, and I did go to every place of worship; but for a long time I went in vain. I do not, however, blame the ministers. One man preached Divine Sovereignty; I could hear him with pleasure, but what was that sublime truth to a poor sinner who wished to know what he must do to be saved? There was another admirable man who always preached about the law, but what was the use of ploughing up ground that needed to be sown? Another was a practical preacher. I heard him, but it was very much like a commanding officer teaching the manœuvres of war to a set of men without feet. What could I do? All his exhortations were lost on me. I knew it was said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," but I did not know what it was to believe on Christ. These good men all preached truths suited to many in their congregations who were spiritually-minded people, but what I wanted to know was, "How can I get my sins forgiven?"--and they never told me that. I desired to hear how a poor sinner, under a sense of sin, might find peace with God, and when I went, I heard a sermon on, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked," which cut me up still worse, but did not bring me into rest. I went again, another day, and the text was something about the glories of the righteous; nothing for poor me! I was like a dog under the table, not allowed to eat of the children's food. I went time after time, and I can honestly say that I do not know that I ever went without prayer to God, and I am sure there was not a more attentive hearer than myself in all the place, for I panted and longed to understand how I might be saved.

I sometimes think I might have been in darkness and despair until now had it not been for the goodness of God in sending a snowstorm, one Sunday morning, while I was going to a certain place of worship. When I could go no further, I turned down a side street, and came to a little Primitive Methodist Chapel. In that chapel there may have been a dozen or fifteen people. I had heard of the Primitive Methodists, how they sang so loudly that they made people's heads ache; but that did not matter to me. I wanted to know how I might be saved, and if they could tell me that, I did not care how much they made my head ache. The minister did not come that morning; he was snowed up, I suppose. At last, a very thin-looking man, a shoemaker, or tailor, or something of that sort, went up into the pulpit to preach. Now, it is well that preachers should be instructed, but this man was really stupid. He was obliged to stick to his text, for the simple reason that he had little else to say. The text was--

LOOK UNTO ME, AND BE YE SAVED, ALL THE ENDS OF THE EARTH."

He did not even pronounce the words rightly, but that did not matter. There was, I thought, a glimpse of hope for me in that text. The preacher began thus: "My dear friends, this is a very simple text indeed. It says, ‘Look.' Now lookin' don't take a deal of pain. It ain't liftin' your foot or your finger; it is just, 'Look.' Well, a man needn't go to college to learn to look. You may be the biggest fool, and yet you can look. A man needn’t be worth a thousand a year to be able to look. Anyone can look; even a child can look. But then the text says, 'Look unto Me.' Ay!" said he, in broad Essex, "many on ye are lookin' to yourselves, but it's no use lookin' there. You'll never find any comfort in yourselves. Some look to God the Father. No, look to Him by-and-by. Jesus Christ says, 'Look unto Me. Some of ye say, 'We must wait for the Spirit's workin'.' You have no business with that just now. Look to Christ the text says, 'Look unto Me.'"

Then the good man followed up his text in this way: "Look unto Me; I am sweatin' great drops of blood. Look unto Me; I am hangin' on the cross. Look unto Me; I am dead and buried. Look unto Me; I rise again. Look unto Me; I ascend to Heaven. Look unto Me; I am sittin' at the Father's right hand. O poor sinner, look unto Me!"

When he had gone to about that length, and managed to spin out ten minutes or so, he was at the end of his tether. Then he looked at me under the gallery, and I daresay, with so few present, he knew me to be a stranger, just fixing his eyes on me, as if he knew all my heart, he said, "Young man, you look very miserable." Well, I did, but I had not been accustomed to have remarks made from the pulpit on my personal appearance before. However, it was a good blow, struck right home. He continued, "and you always will be miserable--miserable in life, and miserable in death--if you don't obey my text; but if you obey now, this moment, you will be saved." Then, lifting up his hands, he shouted, as only a Primitive Methodist could do, "Young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look! Look! You have nothin' to do but to look and live." I saw at once the way of salvation. I know not what else he said--I did not take much notice of it--I was so possessed with that one thought. Like as when the brazen serpent was lifted up, the people only looked and were healed, so it was with me. I had been waiting to do fifty things, but when I heard that word, "Look!" what a charming word it seemed to me! Oh! I looked until I could almost have looked my eyes away. There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun; and I could have risen that instant, and sung with the most enthusiastic of them, of the precious blood of Christ, and the simple faith which looks alone to Him. Oh, that somebody had told me this before, "Trust Christ, and you shall be saved." Yet it was, no doubt, all wisely ordered, and now I can say--

E'er since by faith I saw the stream, Thy flowing wounds supply, Redeeming love has been my theme, And shall be till I die.

I do from my soul confess that I never was satisfied till I came to Christ; when I was yet a child, I had far more wretchedness than ever I have now; I will even add, more weariness, more care, more heartache than I know at this day. I may be singular in this confession, but I make it, and know it to be the truth. Since that dear hour when my soul cast itself on Jesus, I have found solid joy and peace; but before that, all those supposed gaieties of early youth, all the imagined ease and joy of boyhood, were but vanity and vexation of spirit to me. That happy day, when I found the Saviour, and learned to cling to His dear feet, was a day never to be forgotten by me. An obscure child, unknown, unheard of, I listened to the Word of God; and that precious text led me to the cross of Christ. I can testify that the joy of that day was utterly indescribable. I could have leaped, I could have danced; there was no expression, however fanatical, which would have been out of keeping with the joy of my spirit at that hour. Many days of Christian experience have passed since then, but there has never been one which has had the full exhilaration, the sparkling delight which that first day had. I thought I could have sprung from the seat on which I sat, and have called out with the wildest of those Methodist brethren who were present, "I am forgiven! I am forgiven! A monument of grace! A sinner saved by blood!" My spirit saw its chains broken to pieces, I felt that I was an emancipated soul, an heir of heaven, a forgiven one, accepted in Christ Jesus, plucked out of the miry clay and out of the horrible pit, with my feet set upon a rock, and my goings established. I thought I could dance all the way home. I could understand what John Bunyan meant, when he declared he wanted to tell the crows on the ploughed land all about his conversion. He was too full to hold, he felt he must tell somebody.

It is not everyone who can remember the very day and hour of his deliverance; but, as Richard Knill said, "At such a time of the day, clang went every harp in heaven, for Richard Knill was born again," it was e'en so with me. The clock of mercy struck in heaven the hour and moment of my emancipation, for the time had come. Between half-past ten o'clock, when I entered that chapel, and half-past twelve o'clock, when I was back again at home, what a change had taken place in me! I had passed from darkness into marvellous light, from death to life. Simply by looking to Jesus, I had been delivered from despair, and I was brought into such a joyous state of mind that, when they saw me at home, they said to me, "Something wonderful has happened to you," and I was eager to tell them all about it. Oh! There was joy in the household that day when all heard that the eldest son had found the Saviour, and knew himself to be forgiven--bliss compared with which all earth’s joys are less than nothing, and vanity. Yes, I had looked to Jesus as I was, and found in Him my Saviour. Thus had the eternal purpose of Jehovah decreed it; and as, the moment before, there was none more wretched than I was, so, within that second, there was none more joyous. It took no longer time than does the lightning-flash; it was done, and never has it been undone. I looked, and lived and leaped in joyful liberty as I beheld my sin punished upon the great Substitute, and put away for ever. I looked unto Him, as He bled upon that tree; His eyes darted a glance of love unutterable into my spirit, and in a moment, I was saved. Looking unto Him, the bruises that my soul had suffered were healed, the gaping wounds were cured, the broken bones rejoiced, the rags that had covered me were all removed, my spirit was white as the spotless snows of the far-off North; I had melody within my Spirit, for I was saved, washed, cleansed, forgiven, through Him that did hang upon the tree. My Master, I cannot understand how Thou couldst stoop Thine awful head to such a death as the death of the cross--how Thou couldst take from Thy brow the coronet of stars which from old eternity had shone resplendent there; but how Thou shouldst permit the thorn-crown to gird Thy temples, astonishes me far more. That Thou shouldst cast away the mantle of Thy glory, the azure of Thine everlasting empire, I cannot comprehend: but how Thou shouldst have become veiled in the ignominious purple for a while, and then be mocked by impious men, who bowed to Thee as a pretended king; and how Thou shouldst be stripped naked to Thy shame, without a single covering, and die a felon's death--this is still more incomprehensible. But the marvel is that Thou shouldst have suffered all this for me! Truly, Thy love to me is wonderful, passing the love of women! Was ever grief like Thine? Was ever love like Thine, that could open the flood-gates of such grief? Was ever love so mighty as to become the fount from which such an ocean of grief could come rolling down?

There was never anything so true to me as those bleeding hands, and that thorn-crowned head. Home, friends, health, wealth, comforts--all lost their lustre that day when He appeared, just as stars are hidden by the light of the sun. He was the only Lord and Giver of life’s best bliss, the one well of living water springing up unto ever-lasting life. As I saw Jesus on His cross before me, and as I mused upon His sufferings and death, methought I saw Him cast a look of love upon me; and then I looked at Him, and cried--

Jesus, lover of my soul, Let me to Thy bosom fly.

He said, "Come," and I flew to Him, and clasped Him; and when He let me go again, I wondered where my burden was. It was gone! There, in the sepulchre, it lay, and I felt light as air; like a winged sylph, I could fly over mountains of trouble and despair, and oh! what liberty and joy I had! I could leap with ecstasy, for I had much forgiven, and I was freed from sin. With the spouse in the Canticles, I could say, "I found Him;" I, a lad, found the Lord of glory; I, a slave to sin, found the great Deliverer I , the child of darkness, found the Light of life; I, the uttermost of the lost, found my Saviour and my God; I, widowed and desolate, found my Friend, my Beloved, my Husband. Oh, how I wondered that I should be pardoned! It was not the pardon that I wondered at so much; the wonder was that it should come to me. I marvelled that He should be able to pardon such sins, as mine, such crimes, so numerous and so black, and that, after such an accusing conscience, He should have power to still every wave within my spirit, and make my soul like the surface of a river, undisturbed, quiet, and at ease. It mattered not to me whether the day itself was gloomy or bright, I had found Christ; that was enough for me. He was my Saviour, He was my all; and I can heartily say, that one day of pardoned sin was a sufficient recompense for the whole five years of conviction. I have to bless God for every terror that ever scared me by night; and for every foreboding that alarmed me by day. It has made me happier ever since, for now, if there be a trouble weighing upon my soul, I thank God it is not such a burden as that which bowed me to the very earth, and made me creep upon the ground like a beast, by reason of heavy distress and affliction. I know I never can again suffer what I have suffered; I never can, except I be sent to hell, know more of agony than I have known; and now, that ease, that joy and peace in believing, that "no condemnation" which belongs to me as a child of God, is made doubly sweet and inexpressibly precious, by the recollection of my past days of sorrow and grief. Blessed be Thou, O God, for ever, who by those black days, like a dreary winter, hast made these summer days all the fairer and the sweeter! I need not walk through the earth fearful of every shadow, and afraid of every man I meet, for sin is washed away; my spirit is no more guilty; it is pure; it is holy. The frown of God no longer resteth upon me; but my Father smiles, I see His eyes--they are glancing love; I hear His voice--it is full of sweetness. I am forgiven, I am forgiven, I am forgiven!

When I look back upon it, I can see one reason why the Word was blessed to me as I heard it preached in that Primitive Methodist Chapel at Colchester; I had been up betimes crying to God for the blessing. As a lad, when I was seeking the Saviour, I used to rise with the sun, that I might get time to read gracious books, and to seek the Lord. I can recall the kind of pleas I used when I took my arguments, and came before the throne of grace: "Lord, save me; it will glorify Thy grace to save such a sinner as I am! Lord, save me, else I am lost to all eternity; do not let me perish, Lord! Save me, O Lord, for Jesus died! By His agony and bloody sweat, by His cross and passion, save me!" I often proved that the early morning was the best part of the day; I liked those prayers of which the psalmist said, "In the morning shall my prayer prevent Thee."

The Holy Spirit, who enabled me to believe, gave me peace through believing. I felt as sure that I was forgiven as before I felt sure of condemnation. I had been certain of my condemnation because the Word of God declared it, and my conscience bore witness to it, but when the Lord justified me, I was made equally certain by the same witnesses. The Word of the Lord in the Scripture saith, "He that believeth on Him is not condemned," and my conscience bore witness that I believed, and that God in pardoning me was just. Thus I had the witness of the Holy Spirit and also of my own conscience, and these two agreed in one. That great and excellent man, Dr. Johnson, used to hold the opinion that no man ever could know that he was pardoned--that there was no such thing as assurance of faith. Perhaps, if Dr. Johnson had studied his Bible a little more, and had had a little more of the enlightenment of the Spirit, he, too, might have come to know his own pardon. Certainly, he was no very reliable judge of theology, any more than he was of porcelain, which he once attempted to make, and never succeeded. I think both in theology and porcelain his opinion is of very little value.

How can a man know that he is pardoned? There is a text which says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." I believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; is it irrational to believe that I am saved? "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life," saith Christ, in John's Gospel. I believe on Christ; am I absurd in believing that I have eternal life! I find the apostle Paul speaking by the Holy Ghost, and saying, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." If I know that my trust is fixed on Jesus only, and that I have faith in Him, were it not ten thousand times more absurd for me not to be at peace, than for me to be filled with joy unspeakable? It is but taking God at His Word, when the soul knows, as a necessary consequence of its faith, that it is saved. I took Jesus as my Saviour, and I was saved; and I can tell the reason why I took Him for my Saviour. To my own humiliation, I must confess that I did it because I could not help it; I was shut up to it. That stern law-work had hammered me into such a condition that, if there had been fifty other saviours, I could not have thought of them--I was driven to this One. I wanted a Divine Saviour, I wanted One who was made a curse for me, to expiate my guilt. I wanted One who had died, for I deserved to die. I wanted One who had risen again, who was able by His life to make me live. I wanted the exact Saviour that stood before me in the Word, revealed to my heart; and I could not help having Him. I could realize then the language of Rutherford when, being full of love to Christ, once upon a time, in the dungeon of Aberdeen, he said, "O my Lord, if there were a broad hell betwixt me and Thee, if I could not get at Thee except by wading through it, I would not think twice, but I would go through it all, if I might but embrace Thee, and call Thee mine!" Oh, how I loved Him! Passing all loves except His own, was that love which I felt for Him then. If, beside the door of the place in which I met with Him, there had been a stake of blazing faggots, I would have stood upon them without chains, glad to give my flesh, and blood, and bones, to be ashes that should testify my love to Him. Had He asked me then to give all my substance to the poor, I would have given all, and thought myself to be amazingly rich in having beggared myself for His name's sake. Had He commanded me then to preach in the midst of all His foes, I could have said-

There's not a lamb in all Thy flock, I would disdain to feed, There's not a foe, before whose face I'd fear Thy cause to plead.

Has Jesus saved me? I dare not speak with any hesitation here; I know He has. His Word is true, therefore I am saved. My evidence that I am saved does not lie in the fact that I preach, or that I do this or that. All my hope lies in this, that Jesus Christ came to save sinners. I am a sinner, I trust Him, then He came to save me, and I am saved; I live habitually in the enjoyment of this blessed fact, and it is long since I have doubted the truth of it, for I have His own Word to sustain my faith. It is a very surprising thing--a thing to be marvelled at most of all by those who enjoy it. I know that it is to me even to this day the greatest wonder that I ever heard of, that God should ever justify me. I feel myself to be a lump of unworthiness, a mass of corruption, and a heap of sin, apart from His almighty love; yet I know, by a full assurance, that I am justified by faith which is in Christ Jesus, and treated as if I had been perfectly just, and made an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ; though by nature I must take my place among the most sinful. I, who am altogether undeserving, am treated as if I had been deserving. I am loved with as much love as if I had always been godly, whereas aforetime I was ungodly.

I have always considered, with Luther and Calvin, that the sum and substance of the gospel lies in that word Substitution--Christ standing in the stead of man. If I understand the gospel, it is this: I deserve to be lost for ever; the only reason why I should not be damned is, that Christ was punished in my stead, and there is no need to execute a sentence twice for sin. On the other hand, I know I cannot enter Heaven unless I have a perfect righteousness; I am absolutely certain I shall never have one of my own, for I find I sin every day, but then Christ had a perfect righteousness, and He said, "There, poor sinner, take My garment, and put it on; you shall stand before God as if you were Christ, and I will stand before God as if I had been the sinner; I will suffer in the sinner's stead, and you shall be rewarded for works which you did not do, but which I did for you." I find it very convenient every day to come to Christ as a sinner, as I came at the first. "You are no saint," says the devil. Well, if I am not, I am a sinner, and Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Sink or swim, I go to Him; other hope I have none. By looking to Him, I received all the faith which inspired me with confidence in His grace; and the word that first drew my soul--"look unto Me"--still rings its clarion note in my ears. There I once found conversion, and there I shall ever find refreshing and renewal.

Let me bear my personal testimony of what I have seen, what my own ears have heard, and my own heart has tasted. First, Christ is the only-begotten of the Father. He is Divine to me, if He be human to all the world besides. He has done that for me which none but a God could do. He has subdued my stubborn will, melted a heart of adamant, broken a chain of steel, opened the gates of brass, and snapped the bars of iron. He hath turned for me my mourning into laughter, and my desolation into joy; He hath led my captivity captive, and made my heart rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. Let others think as they will of Him, to me He must ever be the only-begotten of the Father: blessed be His holy name!

Oh, that I could now adore Him, Like the Heavenly host above, Who forever bow before Him, And unceasing sing His love! Happy songsters! When shall I your chorus join?

Again, I bear my testimony that He is full of grace. Ah, had He not been, I should never have beheld His glory. I was full of sin to over-flowing. I was condemned already, because I believed not upon Him. He drew me when I wanted not to come, and though I struggled hard, He continued still to draw; and when at last I came to His mercy-seat, all trembling like a condemned culprit, He said, "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee: be of good cheer." Let others despise Him; but I bear witness that He is full of grace.

Finally, I bear my witness that He is full of truth. True have His promises been; not one has failed. I have often doubted Him, for that I blush; He has never failed me, in this I must rejoice. His promises have been yea and Amen. I do but speak the testimony of every believer in Christ, though I put it thus personally to make it the more forcible. I bear witness that never servant had such a Master as I have; never brother had such a Kinsman as He has been to me; never spouse had such a Husband as Christ has been to my soul; never sinner a better Saviour; never soldier a better Captain; never mourner a better Comforter than Christ hath been to my spirit. I want none beside Him. In life, He is my life; and in death, He shall be the death of death; in poverty, Christ is my riches; in sickness, He makes my bed; in darkness, He is my Star; and in brightness, He is my Sun. By faith I understand that the blessed Son of God redeemed my soul with His own heart's blood; and by sweet experience I know that He raised me up from the pit of dark despair, and set my feet on the rock. He died for me. This is the root of every satisfaction I have. He put all my transgressions away. He cleansed me with His precious blood; He covered me with His perfect righteousness; He wrapped me up in His own virtues. He has promised to keep me, while I abide in this world, from its temptations and snares; and when I depart from this world, He has already prepared for me a mansion in the Heaven of unfading bliss, and a crown of everlasting joy that shall never, never fade away. To me, then, the days or years of my mortal sojourn on this earth are of little moment. Nor is the manner of my decease of much consequence. Should foemen sentence me to martyrdom, or physicians declare that I must soon depart this life, it is all alike--

A few more rolling suns at most, Shall land me on fair Canaan's coast.

What more can I wish than that, while my brief term on earth shall last, I should be the servant of Him who became the Servant of servants for me? I can say, concerning Christ's religion, if I had to die like a dog, and had no hope whatever of immortality, if I wanted to lead a happy life, let me serve my God with all my heart; let me be follower of Jesus, and walk in His footsteps. If there were no hereafter, I would still prefer to be a Christian, and the humblest Christian minister, to being a king or an emperor, for I am persuaded there are more delights in Christ, yea, more joy in one glimpse of His face than is to be found in all the praises of this harlot-world, and in all the delights which it can yield to us in its sunniest and brightest days. And I am persuaded that what He has been till now, He will be to the end, and where He hath begun a good work, He will carry it on. In the religion of Jesus Christ, there are clusters even on earth too heavy for one man to carry; there are fruits that have been found so rich that even angel lips have never been sweetened with more luscious wine; there are joys to be had here so fair that even cates ambrosial and the nectared wine of Paradise can scarcely excel the sweets of satisfaction that are to be found in the earthly banquets of the Lord. I have seen hundreds and thousands who have given their hearts to Jesus, but I never did see one who said he was disappointed with Him, I never met with one who said Jesus Christ was less than He was declared to be. When first my eyes beheld Him, when the burden slipped from off my heavy-laden shoulders, and I was free from condemnation, I thought that all the preachers I had ever heard had not half preached, they had not told half the beauty of my Lord and Master. So good! so generous! so gracious! so willing to forgive! It seemed to me as if they had almost slandered Him; they painted His likeness, doubtless, as well as they could, but it was a mere smudge compared with the matchless beauties of His face. All who have ever seen Him will say the same. I go back to my home, many a time, mourning that I cannot preach my Master even as I myself know Him, and what I know of Him is very little compared with the matchlessness of His grace. Would that I knew more of Him, and that I could tell it out better!

Family Background

Charles Spurgeon was raised in a godly home in England. Both his father and grandfather were ministers of the gospel. At the age of ten, he began to seek God regarding his own salvation. After a period of about five years, he happened to attend a Primitive Methodist meeting in which the passage, “Look unto Me, and be ye saved,” was being preached. That day Spurgeon found Christ.

Soon Spurgeon himself began to preach. He was so effective that by the age of nineteen this “boy-preacher” was attracting large crowds in London to hear the gospel of Christ. He continued preaching in that city, primarily at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, for thirty-eight years until his death in 1892. The following, taken from his book, Conversion: the Great Change, gives an account of the day he found Christ.

A Personal Account

I SOMETIMES THINK I might have been in darkness and despair until now had it not been for the goodness of God in sending a snowstorm, one Sunday morning, while I was going to a certain place of worship. When I could go no further, I turned down a side street, and came to a little Primitive Methodist Chapel. In that chapel there may have been a dozen or fifteen people. I had heard of the Primitive Methodists, how they sang so loudly that they made people’s heads ache; but that did not matter to me. I wanted to know how I might be saved, and if they could tell me that, I did not care how much they made my head ache. The minister did not come that morning; he was snowed up, I suppose. At last, a very thin-looking man, a shoemaker, or tailor, or something of that sort, went up into the pulpit to preach. Now, it is well that preachers should be instructed; but this man was really stupid. He was obliged to stick to his text, for the simple reason that he had little else to say. The text was -*Look Unto Me, And Be Ye Saved, All The Ends Of The Earth!*

He did not even pronounce the words rightly, but that did not matter. There was, I thought, a glimpse of hope for me in that text. The preacher began thus: “My dear friends, this is a very simple text indeed. It says, ‘Look.’ Now lookin’ don’t take a deal of pains. It ain’t liftin’ your foot or your finger; it is just, ‘Look.’ Well, a man needn’t go to college to learn to look. You may be the biggest fool, and yet you can look. A man needn’t be worth a thousand a year to be able to look. Anyone can look; even a child can look. But then the text says, ‘Look unto Me.’ Ay!” said he, in broad Essex, “many on ye are lookin’ to yourselves, but it’s no use lookin’ there. You’ll never find any comfort in yourselves. Some look to God the Father. No, look to Him by-and-by. Jesus Christ says, ‘Look unto Me.’ Some on ye say, ‘We must wait for the Spirit’s workin’.’ You have no business with that just now. Look to Christ. The text says, ‘Look unto Me.’ ” Then the good man followed up his text in this way: “Look unto Me; I am sweatin’ great drops of blood. Look unto Me; I am hangin’ on the cross. Look unto Me; I am dead and buried. Look unto Me; I rise again. Look unto Me; I ascend to heaven. Look unto Me; I am sittin’ at the Father’s right hand. O poor sinner, look unto Me! look unto Me!”

There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun . . .

When he had gone to about that length, and managed to spin out ten minutes or so, he was at the end of his tether. Then he looked at me under the gallery, and I daresay, with so few present, he knew me to be a stranger. Just fixing his eyes on me, as if he knew all my heart, he said, “Young man, you look very miserable.” Well, I did; but I had not been accustomed to have remarks made from the pulpit on my personal appearance before. However, it was a good blow, struck right home. He continued, “and you always will be miserable —miserable in life, and miserable in death — if you don’t obey my text; but if you obey now, this moment, you will be saved.” Then, lifting up his hands, he shouted, as only a Primitive Methodist could do, “Young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look! Look! You have nothin’ to do but to look and live.” I saw at once the way of salvation. I know not what else he said— I did not take much notice of it— I was so possessed with that one thought. Like as when the brazen serpent was lifted up, the people only looked and were healed, so it was with me. I had been waiting to do fifty things, but when I heard that word, “Look!” what a charming word it seemed to me! Oh! I looked until I could almost have looked my eyes away. There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun; and I could have risen that instant, and sung with the most enthusiastic of them, of the precious blood of Christ, and the simple faith which looks alone to Him. Oh, that somebody had told me this before, “Trust Christ and you shall be saved.” Yet it was, no doubt, all wisely ordered, and now I can say—

“E’er since by faith I saw the stream, Thy flowing wounds supply, Redeeming love has been my theme, and shall be till I die.”

I do from my soul confess that I never was satisfied till I came to Christ; when I was yet a child, I had far more wretchedness than ever I have now; I will even add, more weariness, more care, more heartache than I know at this day. I may be singular in this confession, but I make it, and know it to be the truth. Since that dear hour when my soul cast itself on Jesus, I have found solid joy and peace; but before that, all those supposed gaieties of early youth, all the imagined ease and joy of boyhood, were but vanity and vexation of spirit to me. That happy day, when I found the Savior, and learned to cling to His dear feet, was a day never to be forgotten by me. An obscure child, unknown, unheard of, I listened to the Word of God; and that precious text led me to the cross of Christ. I can testify that the joy of that day was utterly indescribable. I could have leaped, I could have danced; there was no expression, however fanatical, which would have been out of keeping with the joy of my spirit at that hour. Many days of Christian experience have passed since then, but there has never been one which has had the full exhilaration, the sparkling delight which that first day had. I thought I could have sprung from the seat on which I sat, and have called out with the wildest of those Methodist brethren who were present, “I am forgiven! I am forgiven! A monument of grace! A sinner saved by blood!” My spirit saw its chains broken to pieces. I felt that I was an emancipated soul, an heir of heaven, a forgiven one, accepted in Christ Jesus, plucked out of the miry clay and out of the horrible pit, with my feet set upon a rock, and my goings established. I thought I could dance all the way home. I could understand what John Bunyan meant, when he declared he wanted to tell the crows on the ploughed land all about his conversion.

He was too full to hold, he felt he must tell somebody. It is not everyone who can remember the very day and hour of his deliverance; but, as Richard Knill said, “At such a time of the day, clang went every harp in heaven, for Richard Knill was born again,” it was e’en so with me. The clock of mercy struck in heaven the hour and moment of my emancipation, for the time had come. Between half-past ten o’clock, when I entered that chapel, and half-past twelve o’clock, when I was back again at home, what a change had taken place in me! I had passed from darkness into marvelous light, from death to life.

Simply by looking to Jesus, I had been delivered from despair, and I was brought into such a joyous state of mind that, when they saw me at home, they said to me, “Something wonderful has happened to you”; and I was eager to tell them all about it. Oh! there was joy in the household that day, when all heard that the eldest son had found the Savior, and knew himself to be forgiven - bliss compared with which all earth’s joys are less than nothing and vanity.

Yes, I had looked to Jesus as I was, and found in Him my Savior. Thus had the eternal purpose of Jehovah decreed it; and as, the moment before, there was none more wretched than I was, so, within that second, there was none more joyous. It took no longer time than does the lightning flash; it was done, and never has it been undone. I looked, and lived, and leaped in joyful liberty as I beheld my sin punished upon the great Substitute, and put away forever. I looked unto Him, as He bled upon that tree; His eyes darted a glance of love unutterable into my spirit, and in a moment, I was saved.

Looking unto Him, the bruises that my soul had suffered were healed, the gaping wounds were cured, the broken bones rejoiced, the rags that had covered me were all removed, my spirit was white as the spotless snows of the far-off North; I had melody within my spirit, for I was saved, washed, cleansed, forgiven, through Him that did hang upon the tree. Like Charles Spurgeon, when a person has a seeking heart and wants to know how to be saved, any instrument or way God wants to use to point him to Christ is acceptable. Some people want to find Christ on their own terms and in their own way, but if your heart is seeking, you will find Christ on whatever terms and in whatever way God chooses to use.

Romans 8:28 says, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”

Right now all things in your life are working together for “good,” and that good, according to God’s Word, is that you would receive Jesus Christ into your life. Jesus said,

“For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?” Matt. 16:26

What are you seeking? Nothing will satisfy you ultimately. Even if you attained the highest human goal or could actually own the whole world, still, apart from Christ, you would be left with an emptiness inside. Your seeking needs to be focused, like Spurgeon’s, to look to Christ and be saved.

Isaiah 45:22 declares, “Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.”

You can turn your seeking of Christ into finding Him by following Paul’s specific answer to the Philippian jailor’s question, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” Paul said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:30-31). This is how to find Christ— believe on Him, not by merely giving mental assent but by making contact with Him in prayer, confessing Him as Lord. It works!

Romans 10:11-12 says, 11 “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame. 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.”

**Sermons**

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* [**Salvation by Works, A Criminal Doctrine**](http://www.christians.com/charlesspurgeon/sermons/salvation_by_works_a_criminal_doctrine)

I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. Galatians 2:21.

* [**Why Some Seekers Are Not Saved**](http://www.christians.com/charlesspurgeon/sermons/why_some_seekers_are_not_saved)

“Behold the Lord ‘s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.” - Isaiah 59:1, 2

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References:

1. Spurgeon's Autobiography by Charles Spurgeon
2. Pictures from Wikipedia.org
3. The Spurgeon Archive at Spurgeon.org

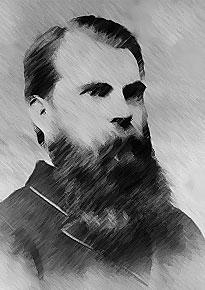
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Dwight Moody

February 5, 1837 to December 22, 1899 (62), Preacher

D. L. Moody was an American evangelist who founded the Northfield Schools in Massachusetts, Moody Church and Moody Bible Institute in Chicago.

## Relationships

* http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/charlesspurgeon_main.mini.jpg[Charles Spurgeon](http://www.christians.com/charlesspurgeon/main) invited Moody to speak during his visit to England.
* http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/hudsontaylor_main.mini.jpg[Hudson Taylor](http://www.christians.com/hudsontaylor/main) inspired Moody to actively support the China Inland Mission and encouraged many of his congregation to volunteer for service.
* http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/irasankey_main.mini.jpg[Ira Sankey](http://www.christians.com/irasankey/main), a gospel singer accompanied Moody on his evangelistic missions.
* http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/georgemuller_main.mini.jpg[George Muller](http://www.christians.com/georgemuller/main) was one person Dwight Moody was anxious to meet when he visited England.

# Dwight Lyman Moody

* [At A Glance](http://www.christians.com/dwightmoody/main)
* [**Testimony**](http://www.christians.com/dwightmoody/main)
* [Biography](http://www.christians.com/dwightmoody/main)
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Dwight Moody was born in Northfield, Massachusetts to a large family. His father, a small farmer and stone mason, was an alcoholic and died at the age of 41 when Dwight was only four years old. He had five older brothers and a younger sister, with an additional twin brother and sister born one month after his father's death.



Dwight Moody was brought up on a farm until he was sixteen years of age, when he left home and went to Boston, where he was employed in a store for several years. Here he became a professor of religion under the preaching of Dr. Kirk, and shortly after went into business as a clerk in a large wholesale shoe store in Chicago, and soon became one of the most successful salesmen in the place.



The Moody Bible Institute located in downtown Chicago offers undergraduate, graduate and distance learning education that trains students for full-time ministry.



The Moody Church (sometimes also referred to as Moody Memorial Church) is a historic non-denominational Protestant brick-facade church on the near-north side of Chicago, Illinois.

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Introduction

Dwight Lyman Moody (aka D.L. Moody) was undoubtedly one of the greatest evangelists of all time. The meetings held by Moody and Sankey were among the greatest the world has ever known. They were the means under God of arousing the church to new life and activity, and were the means of sweeping tens of thousands of persons into the kingdom of God.

Mr. Moody was one of the weak instruments which God has chosen to confound the mighty. Like Christmas Evans, he had very little education before his conversion to Christ. At seventeen years of age he could scarcely read or write, and in a Bible class he could not turn to the book of John but searched for it in the Old Testament. After his conversion he became a proficient scholar. Few men have learned so much in the school of observation.

Humble Beginning

Dwight Moody was of old New England Puritan stock. For seven generations, or two hundred years, his ancestors lived the quiet lives of farmers in the Connecticut Valley. Moody inherited the vigorous constitution and hardy common sense of the typical New Englander. He was the sixth child in a family of nine children, and was born February 5, 1837, in the town of Northfield, Massachusetts, where he afterwards founded his famous Bible schools. His home town was always very dear to him, and it was one of the greatest pleasures of his life to return to it after a long and arduous evangelistic campaign.

It was in Northfield, MA (his birthplace) where Moody founded three schools which later merged into today's Northfield Mount Hermon School.Moody's father died at the early age of forty-one, and left his widow in poverty with a mortgage on the home and seven children to support. The creditors seized everything they could, even to the firewood, and the children had to stay in bed until schooltime to keep warm. A brother of the widowed mother then came to their rescue and helped to relieve their immediate needs. In their extremity Rev. Mr. Everett, the Unitarian minister, was very kind to them, and all the Moody children became members of his Sunday School, and were enlisted as workers to bring in other children. It was here, therefore, that young Moody began his successful career as a Sunday School worker. Moody's mother had sought to bring up her children as a Christian mother should and Dwight never wandered into gross sins as so many young men have done. Lying, complaining, breaking of promises, or talking evil about others, was never allowed in the home. One evening when the children had but little to eat, they divided their scant supply with a beggar. When Dwight was eight years of age, he and an elder brother were crossing the river in a skiff with a boatman who was too drunk to row the boat, and who would not let them touch the oars. They were drifting with the current, but Dwight urged his brother to trust in the Lord, and they came safely to land. Dwight was mischievous but not wicked as a boy.

The Moody family were so poor that the boys would carry their shoes and stockings in their hands on their way to church, to save them from wear, and when in sight of the church would put them on.

Dwight thought it hard, after working all week, to have to go to church and listen to a sermon he did not understand. Once the preacher had to send someone to the gallery to awaken him. But he got in such a habit of going that he could not stay away, and he afterwards said that he thanked his mother for making him go when he did not feel like going.

At ten years of age Dwight left home in company with another brother to work at a place about thirteen miles away. This nearly broke his mother's heart, as she had striven so hard to keep the family together. He was fondly attached to his mother and sorrowed over leaving her. When he arrived at the new place an aged man gave him a penny and bade him trust the Lord. "That old man's blessing has followed me for fifty years," said Mr. Moody.

Moody's Conversion

At seventeen years of age, Moody, tired of farm life and ambitious to work his way upward in the world, decided to go to Boston. He arrived there without any money, and tried in vain to find work until he was almost in despair. He then found employment with an uncle who was in the shoe business. He succeeded well as a salesman, and became a regular attendant at the Mount Vernon Congregational Sunday School. Having but little schooling, he took but little part in the discussions in the class in Sunday School, but gradually became deeply interested in the study of the Bible, and finally took part in the discussions in the class. His teacher, Mr. Kimball, took great interest in him, and gradually led him to see the plan of salvation until all that was necessary was a personal interview to lead him to Christ. Mr. Kimball prayerfully sought for a proper time for this interview.

"I determined to speak to him about Christ and about his soul," says Mr. Kimball, "and started down to Holton's shoe store. When I was nearly there I began to wonder whether I ought to go in just then during business hours. I thought that possibly my call might embarass the boy, and that when I went away the other clerks would ask who I was, and taunt him with my efforts in trying to make him a good boy. In the meantime I had passed the store, and discovering this, I determined to make a dash for it and have it over at once. I found Moody in the back part of the building wrapping up shoes. I went up to him at once, and putting my hand on his shoulder, I made what I afterward thought was a very weak plea for Christ. I don't know just what words I used, nor could Mr. Moody tell. I simply told him of Christ's love for him and the love Christ wanted in return. That was all there was. It seemed the young man was just ready for the light that then broke upon him, and there, in the back of the store in Boston, he gave himself and his life to Christ."

Moody's whole life was now changed, and became one of joyful Christian service. "Before my conversion," says he, "I worked towards the Cross, but since then I have worked from the Cross; then I worked to be saved, now I work because I am saved." Again, he says: "I remember the morning on which I came out of my room after I first trusted Christ. I think the sun shone a good deal brighter than it ever had before — I thought that it was just smiling upon me; and as I walked out on Boston Common and heard the birds singing in the trees, I thought they were all singing a song to me."

Moody was now running over with zeal and love for the Master, but he does not seem to have received much help and encouragement from the conservative deacons and church members in the church which he was attending. Next year after his conversion he was denied church membership, because he was "not sufficiently instructed in Christian doctrine." Three of the committee who examined him were appointed to instruct him in the way of God more perfectly.

In 1856, the second year after his conversion, Moody went to Chicago, where he united with the Plymouth Congregational Church and became a very active Christian worker, putting his soul and energy into the work of winning men to Christ. He rented a pew in the church, and filled it with young men every Sunday. Then he rented another and another until he had rented and filled four pews. The great revival awakened by Finney spread to Chicago, and Moody was in his element. Meanwhile he was prospering in his business, and was so good a salesman of shoes that his employer sent him out as a commercial traveler.

Starting A Church

Ira D. Sankey known as The Sweet Singer of Methodism was an American gospel singer and composer.He found a little mission Sunday School in Chicago where they had sixteen teachers and only twelve scholars. Here he applied to become a teacher. They consented on condition that he would find his own scholars. This just suited his taste and next Sunday he arrived with eighteen little hoodlums which he had gathered from the streets. He soon had the building crowded. In the fall of 1858 he began another mission school on a larger scale in another part of the city. The large hall was soon overcrowded. He then procured a larger hall, which afterward developed into one of the leading churches of Chicago. This big hall he soon had filled with street "gamins." The children loved him and crowded in by the hundreds and sung the hymns with great enjoyment. Moody also enticed them in with prizes, free pony rides, picnics, candies, and other things dear to the hearts of children. Scholars were allowed to transfer to any class they desired by simply notifying the superintendent; and this plan resulted in the survival of the fittest teachers. The school soon numbered 1,500. Moody decided to build a church and issued certificates on the "North Market Sabbath School Association; capital $10,000; 40,000 shares at 25 cents each." The Sunday School grew to such proportions that parents were drawn in, and then meetings were held almost every night in the week. Many prominent men assisted Moody in the Sunday School and in the meetings, but so much devolved on him that he had sometimes to be both janitor and superintendent. This practical training contributed much to his success as a preacher. Doubtless he needed such training, as at first he seems to have spoken very awkwardly in public. When he first arose to speak in a prayer-meeting one of the deacons assured him that, in his opinion, he would serve God best by keeping still. Another critic, who praised Moody for his zeal in filling the pews at Plymouth Church, said that he should realize his limitations and not attempt to speak in public. "You make too many mistakes in grammar," said he. "I know I make mistakes," was the reply, "and I lack many things, but I'm doing the best I can with what I've got." He then paused, and looking at the man searchingly, inquired, in his own inimitable way, "Look, here, friend, you've got grammar enough — what are you doing with it for the Master?

Mr. Moody's great Sunday School work was accomplished before he was more than twenty-three years of age. With all his work for Christ he had no thought of entering the ministry until he found that souls were being led to Christ through his efforts. He then decided to give up the business in which he had been engaged, and in which he had already made over $7,000, and to devote all his time to Christian work.

During the Civil War Moody became a prominent member of the Christian Commission, and did a great work holding meetings and distributing gospels and tracts among the soldiers and prisoners of war quartered in Chicago and on many leading battle-fields of the Southern States. After the war he returned to Chicago and again devoted himself to Sunday School and Young Men's Christian Association work. His Sunday School was so great a success that it made him famous all over the country. Inquiries concerning his methods of work came from all directions, and people traveled thousands of miles to learn them. He was called to many places to address Sunday School conventions and to help organize Sunday School work. Through his efforts many Sunday Schools were led to agree to use the same lessons each Sunday, and thus the International Sunday School lessons were started.

Moody became one of the most prominent Young Men's Christian Association workers in America, and it was at a Y.M.C.A. convention in Indianapolis, Indiana, in 1870, that he first met Ira David Sankey, who was destined to become his great singing partner. Moody was so impressed with his singing that he asked him to come with him and sing for him, and in Indianapolis they held their first meeting together, in the open air. Some months afterward Sankey gave up his business and joined Mr. Moody in his work.

Spiritual Hunger

In 1867 Mr. Moody made up his mind to go to Great Britain and study the methods of Christian work employed in that country. He did so, accompanied by Mrs. Moody, who was suffering from asthma. He was particularly anxious to hear Spurgeon, the great English preacher, and George Muller, who had the large orphanages at Bristol. Moody was then unknown in England except to a few prominent Sunday School leaders, but he spoke a number of times in London and Bristol with good results.

It was during this first visit to Britain that Moody heard the words which set him hungering and thirsting after a deeper Christian experience and which marked a new era in his life. The words were spoken to him by Mr. Henry Varley, the well known evangelist, as they sat together on a seat in a public park in Dublin. The words were these: "The world has yet to see what God will do with and for and through and in and by the man who is fully consecrated to Him." "He said 'a man'" thought Moody, "he did not say, a great man, nor a learned man, nor a 'smart' man, but simply 'a man.' I am a man, and it lies with the man himself whether he will or will not make that entire and full consecration. I will try my utmost to be that man." The words kept ringing in his mind, and burning their way into his soul until finally he was led into the deeper, richer, fuller experience for which his soul yearned. The impression the words made was deepened soon afterward by words spoken by Mr. Bewley, of Dublin, Ireland, to whom he was introduced by a friend. "Is this young man all O and O?" asked Mr. Bewley. "What do you mean by 'O and O'?" said the friend. "Is he out and out for Christ?" was the reply. From that time forward Moody's desire to be "O and O" for Christ was supreme.

Moody's hunger for a deeper spiritual experience was deepened by the preaching of Henry Moorehouse, the famous English boy preacher, who visited Moody's church in Chicago soon after Mr. Moody returned to America. For seven nights Moorehouse preached from the text, John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Every night he rose to a higher and higher plain of thought, beginning at Genesis and going through the Bible to Revelation, showing how much God loved the world. He pointed out how God loved the world so much that He sent patriarchs and prophets, and other holy men to plead with the people, and then He sent His only Son, and when they had killed Him, He sent the Holy Ghost. In closing the seventh sermon from the text, he said: "My friends, for a whole week I have been trying to tell you how much God loves you, but I cannot do it with this poor stammering tongue. If I could borrow Jacob's ladder and climb up into heaven and ask Gabriel, who stands in the presence of the Almighty, to tell me how much love the Father has for the world, all he could say would be, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'

Moody's heart was melted within him as he listened to the young preacher describing the love of God for lost mankind. It gave him such a vision of the love of God as he had never seen before, and from that time forward Moody's preaching was of a more deeply spiritual character.

Moody continued to hunger for a deepening of his own spiritual life and experience. He had been greatly used of God, but felt that there were much greater things in store for him. The year 1871 was a critical one with him. He realized more and more how little he was fitted by personal acquirements for his work, and how much he needed to be qualified for service by the Holy Spirit's power. This realization was deepened by conversations he had with two ladies who sat on the front pew in his church. He could see by the expression of their faces that they were praying. At the close of the service they would say to him, "We have been praying for you." "Why don't you pray for the people?" Mr. Moody would ask. "Because you need the power of the Spirit," was the reply. "I need the power! Why," said he, in relating the incident afterwards, "I thought I had power. I had the largest congregation in Chicago, and there were many conversions. I was in a sense satisfied. But right along those two godly women kept praying for me, and their earnest talk about anointing for special service set me thinking. I asked them to come and talk with me, and they poured out their hearts in prayer that I might receive the filling of the Holy Spirit. There came a great hunger into my soul. I did not know what it was. I began to cry out as I never did before. I really felt that I did not want to live if I could not have this power for service."

The Great Fire

"While Mr. Moody was in this mental and spiritual condition," says his son, "Chicago was laid in ashes. The great fire swept out of existence both Farwell Hall and Illinois Street Church. On Sunday night after the meeting, as Mr. Moody went homeward, he saw the glare of flames, and knew it meant ruin to Chicago. About one o'clock Farwell Hall was burned; and soon his church went down. Everything was scattered."

In October the Great Chicago Fire destroyed his church, his home, and the dwellings of most of his members. His family had to flee for their lives, and, as Mr. Moody said, he saved nothing but his reputation and his Bible. Mr. Moody went East to New York City to collect funds for the sufferers from the Chicago fire, but his heart and soul were crying out for the power from on high. "My heart was not in the work of begging," says he. "I could not appeal. I was crying all the time that God would fill me with His Spirit. Well, one day, in the city of New York — oh, what a day! — I cannot describe it, I seldom refer to it; it is almost too sacred an experience to name. Paul had an experience of which he never spoke for fourteen years. I can only say that God revealed Himself to me, and I had such an experience of His love that I had to ask Him to stay His hand. I went to preaching again. The sermons were not different; I did not present any new truths; and yet hundreds were converted. I would not now be placed back where I was before that blessed experience if you should give me all the world — it would be as the small dust of the balance." His soul was set on fire in such a way that his work would soon became a world-wide one.

Moody's church was soon rebuilt in Chicago, thousands of Sunday School scholars contributing five cents each to place a brick in the new edifice. Desiring to learn more of the Scriptures from English Bible students, he visited England again in 1872. He did not expect to hold any meetings during this visit, but he accepted an invitation to preach at the Sunday morning and evening service at Arundel Square Congregational Church in the North part of London. In the evening the power of the Spirit seemed to fall upon the congregation, and the inquiry room was crowded with persons seeking salvation. Next day he went to Dublin, Ireland, but an urgent telegram called him back to continue his meetings at the North London Church. He continued there for ten days and four hundred persons were added to the church. He was invited to Dublin and Newcastle but decided not to go at that time, and he returned to America.

A New Beginning

Next year, at the invitation of two English friends, he started for England, accompanied by Mr. Sankey. His English friends had promised funds for the visit, but the money did not come and Mr. Moody borrowed enough to enable him to go to England. On arriving there he learned that both of his friends had died. No door seemed open for him. But before leaving America he had received a letter from the Secretary of the Y.M.C.A. at York, England, inviting him to address the young men there if he ever came to England. He and Mr. Sankey went to York, and began a series of meetings there which lasted for five weeks. Interest gradually increased until the meeting places were crowded half an hour before the time of service, and many souls decided for Christ.

The evangelists went from York to Sunderland, where they had still greater meetings than in York. The largest halls in the city had to be secured for the services. Their next series of meetings was in Newcastle. Here the meetings were gigantic, special trains bringing people from surrounding cities and towns. Here the evangelists published their first hymn-book, which soon became popular all over Britain. On their return to America, in 1875, they published a similar hymn-book entitled "Gospel Hymns, No. 1," which was followed by Numbers 2,3,4,5, and 6. These books have been a means of blessing to multitudes throughout the world. They marked a new era in the history of the Christian church. The royalties on them were at first devoted to a number of benevolent purposes, but afterwards to the founding and carrying on of Mr. Moody's great Bible schools at Northfield.

From the North of England the evangelists went to Scotland, and began a series of meetings in Edinburgh. Here they had one of the greatest series of meetings ever known in the world's history. No building was large enough to accommodate the immense throngs which flocked to their meetings. "Never, probably," says Professor Blaikie, "was Scotland so stirred; never was there so much expectation."

In Glasgow, Scotland, the evangelists had similar meetings to those at Edinburgh. At the closing service at the Crystal Palace, in the Botanic Gardens, the building was packed so tightly with people Moody could not enter, and there were still twenty or thirty thousand persons on the outside. Moody spoke to the great throng from the seat of a cab, and the choir led the singing from the roof of a nearby shed. When the Crystal Palace was filled with inquirers seeking salvation, there were still about 2,000 inquirers on the outside of the building. Moody probably addressed as many as thirty thousand persons at one time in Edinburgh and as many as forty thousand in Glasgow.

Other great meetings were held in Liverpool and many other British cities, and finally in London. When the evangelists left Britain in 1875, after a campaign of two years and one week, the whole country had been stirred religiously as it had not been stirred since the days of Wesley and Whitefield. About 14,000 children attended the children's meeting in Liverpool. Over 600 ministers attended the closing services in London. Moody said that he had such a consciousness of the presence of God in the London meetings that "the people seemed as grasshoppers." Professor Henry Drummond said that Moody spoke to exactly "an acre of people" every meeting during his campaign in the East End of London.

The Moody Church in ChicagoOn their return to America, Moody and Sankey held great meetings in Brooklyn, Philadelphia, New York, Boston, Chicago, and in many other cities of the United States. In 1881 they again visited Great Britain, and conducted another gigantic evangelistic campaign. After this Moody made repeated trips to Britain, and once he visited the Holy Land. He devoted much time to building up his great Bible schools at Northfield and in Chicago. During the World's Fair in Chicago, in 1893, he conducted great meetings in the largest halls in the city and in Forepaugh's Circus tent, with the assistance of famous preachers from all over the world. Millions heard the gospel preached during this campaign.

Moody continued his evangelistic campaigns until his death in 1899. His last great series of meetings was in a gigantic hall in Kansas City. While there he was seized with heart trouble and hastened home to die. Among his last words were, "This is my triumph; this is my coronation day! I have been looking forward to it for years." This old world had lost its charms for him and for a long time he had been "home-sick for heaven." His earthly remains were laid to rest on "Round Top," at his beloved Northfield. By his special request there were no emblems of mourning at his funeral services. It is estimated that no less than a hundred million people heard the gospel from his lips, and his schools are training many others to carry the Glad Tidings throughout the world.

From Shoe Salesman to Evangelist

Usually when a man comes to a shoe store, he is looking to buy something. One of the greatest transactions that was ever made in a shoe store occurred on day when a man came to make sure the clerk had the opportunity to receive a gift. Edward Kimball was a faithful Sunday School teacher who was somewhat timid. For a year a young man had attended his class each Sunday morning. Most of the class members were students at Harvard, but this boy was fresh off the farm and was not an accomplished student. Now at the age of eighteen, Dwight was beginning to get interested in the Bible.

Mr. Kimball felt that God wanted him to present the gospel to Dwight, but as he approached the store, he decided to wait for another opportunity. He was halfway down the block before he was able to build up his courage to go back to the shoe store and talk to the young star-salesman. As he found him in the back, wrapping shoes, Mr. Kimball said: *"I want to tell you how much Christ loved you."* Unbeknownst to Mr. Kimball, Dwight had recently become earnest in a desire to improve himself, even signing this resolution in blood. Thus, God brought the Sunday School teacher to talk to him at just the right time. God used the testimony of the gospel contained in His Holy Word. Dwight listened to the good news of God's love that was so great that Jesus, the God-man, died on the cross to pay for Dwight's sins, and then rose again from the dead to offer him the gift of eternal life. Dwight bowed his head and said yes to God. He later told of his feelings that day: *"I was in a new world. The birds sang sweeter. The sun shone brighter. I'd never known such peace."*

Later, after moving to Chicago to be a salesman, young Dwight became a Sunday School teacher himself. He organized a Sunday School, recruiting both the students and the teachers. God so blessed his efforts that Dwight Moody left the business world to work full time for the Lord. By the time his life work was over, he had made such an impact on both America and England that he was described as: ***"the greatest evangelist of the nineteenth century."*** All this because God chose to reach a shoe salesman through the witness of a timid Sunday School teacher, Edward Kimball.

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1. Deeper Experiences of Famous Christians by J. Gilchrist Lawson
2. pictures from Wikipedia.org

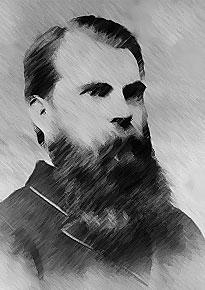
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Dwight Moody

February 5, 1837 to December 22, 1899 (62), Preacher

D. L. Moody was an American evangelist who founded the Northfield Schools in Massachusetts, Moody Church and Moody Bible Institute in Chicago.

## Relationships

* http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/charlesspurgeon_main.mini.jpg[Charles Spurgeon](http://www.christians.com/charlesspurgeon/main) invited Moody to speak during his visit to England.
* http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/hudsontaylor_main.mini.jpg[Hudson Taylor](http://www.christians.com/hudsontaylor/main) inspired Moody to actively support the China Inland Mission and encouraged many of his congregation to volunteer for service.
* http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/irasankey_main.mini.jpg[Ira Sankey](http://www.christians.com/irasankey/main), a gospel singer accompanied Moody on his evangelistic missions.
* http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/georgemuller_main.mini.jpg[George Muller](http://www.christians.com/georgemuller/main) was one person Dwight Moody was anxious to meet when he visited England.

# Dwight Lyman Moody

* [At A Glance](http://www.christians.com/dwightmoody/main)
* [Testimony](http://www.christians.com/dwightmoody/main)
* [**Biography**](http://www.christians.com/dwightmoody/main)
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Dwight Moody was born in Northfield, Massachusetts to a large family. His father, a small farmer and stone mason, was an alcoholic and died at the age of 41 when Dwight was only four years old. He had five older brothers and a younger sister, with an additional twin brother and sister born one month after his father's death.



Dwight Moody was brought up on a farm until he was sixteen years of age, when he left home and went to Boston, where he was employed in a store for several years. Here he became a professor of religion under the preaching of Dr. Kirk, and shortly after went into business as a clerk in a large wholesale shoe store in Chicago, and soon became one of the most successful salesmen in the place.



The Moody Bible Institute located in downtown Chicago offers undergraduate, graduate and distance learning education that trains students for full-time ministry.



The Moody Church (sometimes also referred to as Moody Memorial Church) is a historic non-denominational Protestant brick-facade church on the near-north side of Chicago, Illinois.

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Introduction

Dwight Lyman Moody (aka D.L. Moody) was undoubtedly one of the greatest evangelists of all time. The meetings held by Moody and Sankey were among the greatest the world has ever known. They were the means under God of arousing the church to new life and activity, and were the means of sweeping tens of thousands of persons into the kingdom of God.

Mr. Moody was one of the weak instruments which God has chosen to confound the mighty. Like Christmas Evans, he had very little education before his conversion to Christ. At seventeen years of age he could scarcely read or write, and in a Bible class he could not turn to the book of John but searched for it in the Old Testament. After his conversion he became a proficient scholar. Few men have learned so much in the school of observation.

Humble Beginning

Dwight Moody was of old New England Puritan stock. For seven generations, or two hundred years, his ancestors lived the quiet lives of farmers in the Connecticut Valley. Moody inherited the vigorous constitution and hardy common sense of the typical New Englander. He was the sixth child in a family of nine children, and was born February 5, 1837, in the town of Northfield, Massachusetts, where he afterwards founded his famous Bible schools. His home town was always very dear to him, and it was one of the greatest pleasures of his life to return to it after a long and arduous evangelistic campaign.

It was in Northfield, MA (his birthplace) where Moody founded three schools which later merged into today's Northfield Mount Hermon School.Moody's father died at the early age of forty-one, and left his widow in poverty with a mortgage on the home and seven children to support. The creditors seized everything they could, even to the firewood, and the children had to stay in bed until schooltime to keep warm. A brother of the widowed mother then came to their rescue and helped to relieve their immediate needs. In their extremity Rev. Mr. Everett, the Unitarian minister, was very kind to them, and all the Moody children became members of his Sunday School, and were enlisted as workers to bring in other children. It was here, therefore, that young Moody began his successful career as a Sunday School worker. Moody's mother had sought to bring up her children as a Christian mother should and Dwight never wandered into gross sins as so many young men have done. Lying, complaining, breaking of promises, or talking evil about others, was never allowed in the home. One evening when the children had but little to eat, they divided their scant supply with a beggar. When Dwight was eight years of age, he and an elder brother were crossing the river in a skiff with a boatman who was too drunk to row the boat, and who would not let them touch the oars. They were drifting with the current, but Dwight urged his brother to trust in the Lord, and they came safely to land. Dwight was mischievous but not wicked as a boy.

The Moody family were so poor that the boys would carry their shoes and stockings in their hands on their way to church, to save them from wear, and when in sight of the church would put them on.

Dwight thought it hard, after working all week, to have to go to church and listen to a sermon he did not understand. Once the preacher had to send someone to the gallery to awaken him. But he got in such a habit of going that he could not stay away, and he afterwards said that he thanked his mother for making him go when he did not feel like going.

At ten years of age Dwight left home in company with another brother to work at a place about thirteen miles away. This nearly broke his mother's heart, as she had striven so hard to keep the family together. He was fondly attached to his mother and sorrowed over leaving her. When he arrived at the new place an aged man gave him a penny and bade him trust the Lord. "That old man's blessing has followed me for fifty years," said Mr. Moody.

Moody's Conversion

At seventeen years of age, Moody, tired of farm life and ambitious to work his way upward in the world, decided to go to Boston. He arrived there without any money, and tried in vain to find work until he was almost in despair. He then found employment with an uncle who was in the shoe business. He succeeded well as a salesman, and became a regular attendant at the Mount Vernon Congregational Sunday School. Having but little schooling, he took but little part in the discussions in the class in Sunday School, but gradually became deeply interested in the study of the Bible, and finally took part in the discussions in the class. His teacher, Mr. Kimball, took great interest in him, and gradually led him to see the plan of salvation until all that was necessary was a personal interview to lead him to Christ. Mr. Kimball prayerfully sought for a proper time for this interview.

"I determined to speak to him about Christ and about his soul," says Mr. Kimball, "and started down to Holton's shoe store. When I was nearly there I began to wonder whether I ought to go in just then during business hours. I thought that possibly my call might embarass the boy, and that when I went away the other clerks would ask who I was, and taunt him with my efforts in trying to make him a good boy. In the meantime I had passed the store, and discovering this, I determined to make a dash for it and have it over at once. I found Moody in the back part of the building wrapping up shoes. I went up to him at once, and putting my hand on his shoulder, I made what I afterward thought was a very weak plea for Christ. I don't know just what words I used, nor could Mr. Moody tell. I simply told him of Christ's love for him and the love Christ wanted in return. That was all there was. It seemed the young man was just ready for the light that then broke upon him, and there, in the back of the store in Boston, he gave himself and his life to Christ."

Moody's whole life was now changed, and became one of joyful Christian service. "Before my conversion," says he, "I worked towards the Cross, but since then I have worked from the Cross; then I worked to be saved, now I work because I am saved." Again, he says: "I remember the morning on which I came out of my room after I first trusted Christ. I think the sun shone a good deal brighter than it ever had before — I thought that it was just smiling upon me; and as I walked out on Boston Common and heard the birds singing in the trees, I thought they were all singing a song to me."

Moody was now running over with zeal and love for the Master, but he does not seem to have received much help and encouragement from the conservative deacons and church members in the church which he was attending. Next year after his conversion he was denied church membership, because he was "not sufficiently instructed in Christian doctrine." Three of the committee who examined him were appointed to instruct him in the way of God more perfectly.

In 1856, the second year after his conversion, Moody went to Chicago, where he united with the Plymouth Congregational Church and became a very active Christian worker, putting his soul and energy into the work of winning men to Christ. He rented a pew in the church, and filled it with young men every Sunday. Then he rented another and another until he had rented and filled four pews. The great revival awakened by Finney spread to Chicago, and Moody was in his element. Meanwhile he was prospering in his business, and was so good a salesman of shoes that his employer sent him out as a commercial traveler.

Starting A Church

Ira D. Sankey known as The Sweet Singer of Methodism was an American gospel singer and composer.He found a little mission Sunday School in Chicago where they had sixteen teachers and only twelve scholars. Here he applied to become a teacher. They consented on condition that he would find his own scholars. This just suited his taste and next Sunday he arrived with eighteen little hoodlums which he had gathered from the streets. He soon had the building crowded. In the fall of 1858 he began another mission school on a larger scale in another part of the city. The large hall was soon overcrowded. He then procured a larger hall, which afterward developed into one of the leading churches of Chicago. This big hall he soon had filled with street "gamins." The children loved him and crowded in by the hundreds and sung the hymns with great enjoyment. Moody also enticed them in with prizes, free pony rides, picnics, candies, and other things dear to the hearts of children. Scholars were allowed to transfer to any class they desired by simply notifying the superintendent; and this plan resulted in the survival of the fittest teachers. The school soon numbered 1,500. Moody decided to build a church and issued certificates on the "North Market Sabbath School Association; capital $10,000; 40,000 shares at 25 cents each." The Sunday School grew to such proportions that parents were drawn in, and then meetings were held almost every night in the week. Many prominent men assisted Moody in the Sunday School and in the meetings, but so much devolved on him that he had sometimes to be both janitor and superintendent. This practical training contributed much to his success as a preacher. Doubtless he needed such training, as at first he seems to have spoken very awkwardly in public. When he first arose to speak in a prayer-meeting one of the deacons assured him that, in his opinion, he would serve God best by keeping still. Another critic, who praised Moody for his zeal in filling the pews at Plymouth Church, said that he should realize his limitations and not attempt to speak in public. "You make too many mistakes in grammar," said he. "I know I make mistakes," was the reply, "and I lack many things, but I'm doing the best I can with what I've got." He then paused, and looking at the man searchingly, inquired, in his own inimitable way, "Look, here, friend, you've got grammar enough — what are you doing with it for the Master?

Mr. Moody's great Sunday School work was accomplished before he was more than twenty-three years of age. With all his work for Christ he had no thought of entering the ministry until he found that souls were being led to Christ through his efforts. He then decided to give up the business in which he had been engaged, and in which he had already made over $7,000, and to devote all his time to Christian work.

During the Civil War Moody became a prominent member of the Christian Commission, and did a great work holding meetings and distributing gospels and tracts among the soldiers and prisoners of war quartered in Chicago and on many leading battle-fields of the Southern States. After the war he returned to Chicago and again devoted himself to Sunday School and Young Men's Christian Association work. His Sunday School was so great a success that it made him famous all over the country. Inquiries concerning his methods of work came from all directions, and people traveled thousands of miles to learn them. He was called to many places to address Sunday School conventions and to help organize Sunday School work. Through his efforts many Sunday Schools were led to agree to use the same lessons each Sunday, and thus the International Sunday School lessons were started.

Moody became one of the most prominent Young Men's Christian Association workers in America, and it was at a Y.M.C.A. convention in Indianapolis, Indiana, in 1870, that he first met Ira David Sankey, who was destined to become his great singing partner. Moody was so impressed with his singing that he asked him to come with him and sing for him, and in Indianapolis they held their first meeting together, in the open air. Some months afterward Sankey gave up his business and joined Mr. Moody in his work.

Spiritual Hunger

In 1867 Mr. Moody made up his mind to go to Great Britain and study the methods of Christian work employed in that country. He did so, accompanied by Mrs. Moody, who was suffering from asthma. He was particularly anxious to hear Spurgeon, the great English preacher, and George Muller, who had the large orphanages at Bristol. Moody was then unknown in England except to a few prominent Sunday School leaders, but he spoke a number of times in London and Bristol with good results.

It was during this first visit to Britain that Moody heard the words which set him hungering and thirsting after a deeper Christian experience and which marked a new era in his life. The words were spoken to him by Mr. Henry Varley, the well known evangelist, as they sat together on a seat in a public park in Dublin. The words were these: "The world has yet to see what God will do with and for and through and in and by the man who is fully consecrated to Him." "He said 'a man'" thought Moody, "he did not say, a great man, nor a learned man, nor a 'smart' man, but simply 'a man.' I am a man, and it lies with the man himself whether he will or will not make that entire and full consecration. I will try my utmost to be that man." The words kept ringing in his mind, and burning their way into his soul until finally he was led into the deeper, richer, fuller experience for which his soul yearned. The impression the words made was deepened soon afterward by words spoken by Mr. Bewley, of Dublin, Ireland, to whom he was introduced by a friend. "Is this young man all O and O?" asked Mr. Bewley. "What do you mean by 'O and O'?" said the friend. "Is he out and out for Christ?" was the reply. From that time forward Moody's desire to be "O and O" for Christ was supreme.

Moody's hunger for a deeper spiritual experience was deepened by the preaching of Henry Moorehouse, the famous English boy preacher, who visited Moody's church in Chicago soon after Mr. Moody returned to America. For seven nights Moorehouse preached from the text, John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Every night he rose to a higher and higher plain of thought, beginning at Genesis and going through the Bible to Revelation, showing how much God loved the world. He pointed out how God loved the world so much that He sent patriarchs and prophets, and other holy men to plead with the people, and then He sent His only Son, and when they had killed Him, He sent the Holy Ghost. In closing the seventh sermon from the text, he said: "My friends, for a whole week I have been trying to tell you how much God loves you, but I cannot do it with this poor stammering tongue. If I could borrow Jacob's ladder and climb up into heaven and ask Gabriel, who stands in the presence of the Almighty, to tell me how much love the Father has for the world, all he could say would be, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'

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Moody continued to hunger for a deepening of his own spiritual life and experience. He had been greatly used of God, but felt that there were much greater things in store for him. The year 1871 was a critical one with him. He realized more and more how little he was fitted by personal acquirements for his work, and how much he needed to be qualified for service by the Holy Spirit's power. This realization was deepened by conversations he had with two ladies who sat on the front pew in his church. He could see by the expression of their faces that they were praying. At the close of the service they would say to him, "We have been praying for you." "Why don't you pray for the people?" Mr. Moody would ask. "Because you need the power of the Spirit," was the reply. "I need the power! Why," said he, in relating the incident afterwards, "I thought I had power. I had the largest congregation in Chicago, and there were many conversions. I was in a sense satisfied. But right along those two godly women kept praying for me, and their earnest talk about anointing for special service set me thinking. I asked them to come and talk with me, and they poured out their hearts in prayer that I might receive the filling of the Holy Spirit. There came a great hunger into my soul. I did not know what it was. I began to cry out as I never did before. I really felt that I did not want to live if I could not have this power for service."

The Great Fire

"While Mr. Moody was in this mental and spiritual condition," says his son, "Chicago was laid in ashes. The great fire swept out of existence both Farwell Hall and Illinois Street Church. On Sunday night after the meeting, as Mr. Moody went homeward, he saw the glare of flames, and knew it meant ruin to Chicago. About one o'clock Farwell Hall was burned; and soon his church went down. Everything was scattered."

In October the Great Chicago Fire destroyed his church, his home, and the dwellings of most of his members. His family had to flee for their lives, and, as Mr. Moody said, he saved nothing but his reputation and his Bible. Mr. Moody went East to New York City to collect funds for the sufferers from the Chicago fire, but his heart and soul were crying out for the power from on high. "My heart was not in the work of begging," says he. "I could not appeal. I was crying all the time that God would fill me with His Spirit. Well, one day, in the city of New York — oh, what a day! — I cannot describe it, I seldom refer to it; it is almost too sacred an experience to name. Paul had an experience of which he never spoke for fourteen years. I can only say that God revealed Himself to me, and I had such an experience of His love that I had to ask Him to stay His hand. I went to preaching again. The sermons were not different; I did not present any new truths; and yet hundreds were converted. I would not now be placed back where I was before that blessed experience if you should give me all the world — it would be as the small dust of the balance." His soul was set on fire in such a way that his work would soon became a world-wide one.

Moody's church was soon rebuilt in Chicago, thousands of Sunday School scholars contributing five cents each to place a brick in the new edifice. Desiring to learn more of the Scriptures from English Bible students, he visited England again in 1872. He did not expect to hold any meetings during this visit, but he accepted an invitation to preach at the Sunday morning and evening service at Arundel Square Congregational Church in the North part of London. In the evening the power of the Spirit seemed to fall upon the congregation, and the inquiry room was crowded with persons seeking salvation. Next day he went to Dublin, Ireland, but an urgent telegram called him back to continue his meetings at the North London Church. He continued there for ten days and four hundred persons were added to the church. He was invited to Dublin and Newcastle but decided not to go at that time, and he returned to America.

A New Beginning

Next year, at the invitation of two English friends, he started for England, accompanied by Mr. Sankey. His English friends had promised funds for the visit, but the money did not come and Mr. Moody borrowed enough to enable him to go to England. On arriving there he learned that both of his friends had died. No door seemed open for him. But before leaving America he had received a letter from the Secretary of the Y.M.C.A. at York, England, inviting him to address the young men there if he ever came to England. He and Mr. Sankey went to York, and began a series of meetings there which lasted for five weeks. Interest gradually increased until the meeting places were crowded half an hour before the time of service, and many souls decided for Christ.

The evangelists went from York to Sunderland, where they had still greater meetings than in York. The largest halls in the city had to be secured for the services. Their next series of meetings was in Newcastle. Here the meetings were gigantic, special trains bringing people from surrounding cities and towns. Here the evangelists published their first hymn-book, which soon became popular all over Britain. On their return to America, in 1875, they published a similar hymn-book entitled "Gospel Hymns, No. 1," which was followed by Numbers 2,3,4,5, and 6. These books have been a means of blessing to multitudes throughout the world. They marked a new era in the history of the Christian church. The royalties on them were at first devoted to a number of benevolent purposes, but afterwards to the founding and carrying on of Mr. Moody's great Bible schools at Northfield.

From the North of England the evangelists went to Scotland, and began a series of meetings in Edinburgh. Here they had one of the greatest series of meetings ever known in the world's history. No building was large enough to accommodate the immense throngs which flocked to their meetings. "Never, probably," says Professor Blaikie, "was Scotland so stirred; never was there so much expectation."

In Glasgow, Scotland, the evangelists had similar meetings to those at Edinburgh. At the closing service at the Crystal Palace, in the Botanic Gardens, the building was packed so tightly with people Moody could not enter, and there were still twenty or thirty thousand persons on the outside. Moody spoke to the great throng from the seat of a cab, and the choir led the singing from the roof of a nearby shed. When the Crystal Palace was filled with inquirers seeking salvation, there were still about 2,000 inquirers on the outside of the building. Moody probably addressed as many as thirty thousand persons at one time in Edinburgh and as many as forty thousand in Glasgow.

Other great meetings were held in Liverpool and many other British cities, and finally in London. When the evangelists left Britain in 1875, after a campaign of two years and one week, the whole country had been stirred religiously as it had not been stirred since the days of Wesley and Whitefield. About 14,000 children attended the children's meeting in Liverpool. Over 600 ministers attended the closing services in London. Moody said that he had such a consciousness of the presence of God in the London meetings that "the people seemed as grasshoppers." Professor Henry Drummond said that Moody spoke to exactly "an acre of people" every meeting during his campaign in the East End of London.

The Moody Church in ChicagoOn their return to America, Moody and Sankey held great meetings in Brooklyn, Philadelphia, New York, Boston, Chicago, and in many other cities of the United States. In 1881 they again visited Great Britain, and conducted another gigantic evangelistic campaign. After this Moody made repeated trips to Britain, and once he visited the Holy Land. He devoted much time to building up his great Bible schools at Northfield and in Chicago. During the World's Fair in Chicago, in 1893, he conducted great meetings in the largest halls in the city and in Forepaugh's Circus tent, with the assistance of famous preachers from all over the world. Millions heard the gospel preached during this campaign.

Moody continued his evangelistic campaigns until his death in 1899. His last great series of meetings was in a gigantic hall in Kansas City. While there he was seized with heart trouble and hastened home to die. Among his last words were, "This is my triumph; this is my coronation day! I have been looking forward to it for years." This old world had lost its charms for him and for a long time he had been "home-sick for heaven." His earthly remains were laid to rest on "Round Top," at his beloved Northfield. By his special request there were no emblems of mourning at his funeral services. It is estimated that no less than a hundred million people heard the gospel from his lips, and his schools are training many others to carry the Glad Tidings throughout the world.

From Shoe Salesman to Evangelist

Usually when a man comes to a shoe store, he is looking to buy something. One of the greatest transactions that was ever made in a shoe store occurred on day when a man came to make sure the clerk had the opportunity to receive a gift. Edward Kimball was a faithful Sunday School teacher who was somewhat timid. For a year a young man had attended his class each Sunday morning. Most of the class members were students at Harvard, but this boy was fresh off the farm and was not an accomplished student. Now at the age of eighteen, Dwight was beginning to get interested in the Bible.

Mr. Kimball felt that God wanted him to present the gospel to Dwight, but as he approached the store, he decided to wait for another opportunity. He was halfway down the block before he was able to build up his courage to go back to the shoe store and talk to the young star-salesman. As he found him in the back, wrapping shoes, Mr. Kimball said: *"I want to tell you how much Christ loved you."* Unbeknownst to Mr. Kimball, Dwight had recently become earnest in a desire to improve himself, even signing this resolution in blood. Thus, God brought the Sunday School teacher to talk to him at just the right time. God used the testimony of the gospel contained in His Holy Word. Dwight listened to the good news of God's love that was so great that Jesus, the God-man, died on the cross to pay for Dwight's sins, and then rose again from the dead to offer him the gift of eternal life. Dwight bowed his head and said yes to God. He later told of his feelings that day: *"I was in a new world. The birds sang sweeter. The sun shone brighter. I'd never known such peace."*

Later, after moving to Chicago to be a salesman, young Dwight became a Sunday School teacher himself. He organized a Sunday School, recruiting both the students and the teachers. God so blessed his efforts that Dwight Moody left the business world to work full time for the Lord. By the time his life work was over, he had made such an impact on both America and England that he was described as: ***"the greatest evangelist of the nineteenth century."*** All this because God chose to reach a shoe salesman through the witness of a timid Sunday School teacher, Edward Kimball.

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1. Deeper Experiences of Famous Christians by J. Gilchrist Lawson
2. pictures from Wikipedia.org

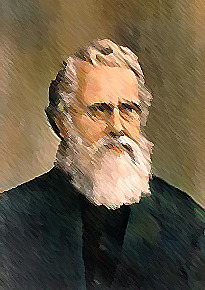
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Hudson Taylor

May 21, 1832 to June 3, 1905 (73), Missionary

Hudson Taylor was a British Protestant Christian missionary to China, and founder of the China Inland Mission (CIM) (now OMF International).

## Relationships

* http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/charlesspurgeon_main.mini.jpg[Charles Spurgeon](http://www.christians.com/charlesspurgeon/main) was moved by Hudson Taylor's zeal that he supported his mission financially and encouraged missionaries to do the same.
* http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/dwightmoody_main.mini.jpg[Dwight Moody](http://www.christians.com/dwightmoody/main) was instrumental in converting a few of the Cambridge students (Cambridge Seven) who later became missionaries for Hudson Taylor.
* http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/georgemuller_main.mini.jpgGeorge Muller was one of the primary supporters of Hudson Taylor and what was then known as the China Inland Mission.

# Hudson Taylor

* [At A Glance](http://www.christians.com/hudsontaylor/main)
* [**Testimony**](http://www.christians.com/hudsontaylor/main)
* [Biography](http://www.christians.com/hudsontaylor/main)
* [Works](http://www.christians.com/hudsontaylor/main)

Historical Timeline

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1790

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Taylor was known for his sensitivity to Chinese culture and zeal for evangelism. He adopted wearing native Chinese clothing even though this was rare among missionaries of that time. Under his leadership, the CIM was singularly non-denominational in practice and accepted members from all Protestant groups, including individuals from the working class and single women as well as multinational recruits. Primarily because of the CIM's campaign against the Opium trade, Taylor has been referred to as one of the most significant Europeans to visit China in the 19th Century.



In 1851, he moved to a poor neighborhood in Kingston upon Hull to be a medical assistant with Dr. William Hardey, and began preparing himself for a life of faith and service, devoting himself to the poor and exercising faith that God would provide for his needs. He practiced distributing gospel tracts and open-air preaching among the poor. Again Taylor was in contact with Andrew Jukes, a notable Brethren teacher in Hull.



Hudson Taylor left England on September 19, 1853 before completing his medical studies, arriving in Shanghai, China, on March 1, 1854. The nearly disastrous voyage aboard the clipper Dumfries through an Easterly passage near Pulau Buru lasted about five months. In China, he was immediately faced with civil war, throwing his first year there into turmoil.  
  
Taylor made 18 preaching tours in the vicinity of Shanghai starting in 1855, and was often poorly received by the people, even though he brought with him medical supplies and skills.



In 1858, Taylor married Maria Jane Dyer, the orphaned daughter of the Rev. Samuel Dyer of the London Missionary Society, who had been a pioneer missionary to the Chinese in Penang, Malaysia[5]. Hudson met Maria in Ningbo where she lived and worked at a school for girls which was run by one of the first female missionaries to the Chinese, Mary Ann Aldersey.



Because of health problems, in 1860 Taylor decided to return to England for a furlough with his family. The Taylors sailed back to England aboard the tea clipper Jubliee along with their daughter, Grace and a young man,Wang Laijun, from the Bridge Street church in Ningbo, who would help with the Bible translation work that would continue in England.

[«](http://www.christians.com/hudsontaylor/main#prev) [1](http://www.christians.com/hudsontaylor/main#1) [2](http://www.christians.com/hudsontaylor/main#2) [3](http://www.christians.com/hudsontaylor/main#3) [4](http://www.christians.com/hudsontaylor/main#4) [5](http://www.christians.com/hudsontaylor/main#5) [»](http://www.christians.com/hudsontaylor/main#next)

Hudson Taylor's Conversion

My mother being absent from home, I had a holiday, and in the afternoon looked through my father's library to find some book with which to while away the unoccupied hours. Nothing attracting me, I turned over a basket of pamphlets and selected from amongst them a Gospel tract that looked interesting, saying to myself, "There will be a story at the commencement and a sermon or moral at the close. I will take the former and leave the latter for those who like it."

I sat down to read the book in an utterly unconcerned state of mind, believing indeed at the time that if there were any salvation it was not for me, and with a distinct intention to put away the tract as soon as it should seem prosy.

Little did I know at the time what was going on in the heart of my mother, seventy or eighty miles away. She rose from the dinner table that afternoon with an intense yearning for the conversion of her boy; and feeling that, absent from home and having more leisure than she could otherwise secure, a special opportunity was afforded her of pleading with God on my behalf. She went to her room and turned the key in the door, resolved not to leave the spot until her prayers were answered. Hour after hour that dear mother pleaded, until at length she could pray no longer, but was constrained to praise God for that which His Spirit taught her had already been accomplished, the conversion of her only son.

I in the meantime had been led in the way I have mentioned to take up this little tract, and while reading it was struck with the phrase: "The finished work of Christ."

"Why does the author use this expression?" I questioned. "Why not say the atoning or propitiatory work of Christ?"

Immediately the words "It is finished" suggested themselves to my mind.

"What was finished?"

And I at once replied, "A full and perfect atonement and satisfaction for sin. The debt was paid for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

Then came the further thought, "If the whole work was finished and the whole debt paid, what is there left for me to do?"

And with this dawned the joyful conviction, as light was flashed into my soul by the Holy Spirit, that there was nothing in the world to be done but to fall down on one's knees and, accepting this Saviour and His salvation, praise Him forevermore.

Thus while my mother was praising God on her knees in her chamber, I was praising Him in the old warehouse to which I had gone alone to read at my leisure this little book.

Several days elapsed before I ventured to make even my sister the confidante of my joy, and then only after she had promised not to tell anyone. When Mother returned a fortnight later I was the first to meet her at the door and to tell her I had such glad news to give. I can almost feel that dear mother's arms round my neck as she said,

"I know, my boy."

"Why," I asked in surprise, "has Amelia broken her promise? She said she would tell no one."

My mother assured me that it was not from any human source she had learned the tidings, and went on to tell the incident mentioned above. You will agree with me that it would be strange indeed if I were not a believer in the power of prayer.

Nor was this all. Some time after, I picked up a pocket-book exactly like my own and, thinking it was mine, opened it. The lines that caught my eye were an entry in the little diary belonging to my sister, to the effect that she would give herself daily to prayer until God should answer in the conversion of her brother. One month later the Lord was pleased to turn me from darkness to light.

Brought up in such a circle and saved in such circumstances, it was perhaps natural that from the commencement of my Christian life I was led to feel that the promises were very real, and that prayer was in sober matter of fact transacting business with God, whether on one's own behalf or on the behalf of those for whom one sought His blessing.

"When I am a man, I mean to be a missionary and go to China," said a little boy many, many years ago. And that is exactly what came to pass.

Family Background

This little boy was James Hudson Taylor, who was born in Barnsley, England, May 1, 1832. His father, James Taylor, was the son and the grandson of preachers, and was a local preacher himself. He loved God and served Him so faithfully that every one knew he was a Christian. And his wife, Amelia Hudson Taylor, was as good and as true to God as he was. No boy could have had better parents than little Hudson had.

As a baby, he was sweet and bright, but not very strong, and it would have been easy to spoil him. But his father and mother knew he must be taught obedience and self-control, and they agreed to teach him these lessons, even though he was a frail child.

When he was just a little fellow of two or three, he went with his father and mother to church. If he was good all through the long service, after the benediction was pronounced, they would hand him back to his grandfather, who sat in the pew behind them. This was something he remembered all through his life.

One of the things he enjoyed as a little boy was playing meeting with his little brother. When his little sister Amelia was big enough to walk, it was Hudson who taught her how to take the first little steps. When his two little brothers died, Hudson learned that sorrow, as well as joy, is a part of this life.

One day there was a fair in town, and the one great attraction for Hudson was a collection of stuffed birds and animals, for he loved the things of nature. To his dismay, he found that they were enclosed within a high board fence. In his hand was a hard-earned penny which he offered to the man at the entrance, only to be told that the admittance fee was "tuppence" [twopence]. "But I haven't got another penny, and don't you see that it would be better to have one penny than none at all?" he reasoned. The argument was logical, but the gate-keeper remained firm, and little Hudson went away to tell his troubles to his mother. She explained that it was the man's duty to charge two pennies for admission, and then she found a very satisfactory way of solving the problem. She said that he had been so good and worked so well in the past days that she would give him another penny for his work, and off he ran with a glad heart.

The Taylor children were taught that it was just as important to keep themselves neat, with hands and faces clean, shoes polished, and nails well kept, when at home as when in company.

Punctuality was another valuable lesson they learned. Each child was expected to be on time at meals and for every other appointment. Mr. Taylor said,

If there are five people, and they are kept waiting one minute, do you not see that five minutes are lost, which can never be found again?

He had not much to give his children in the way of wealth or worldly advantage, but he bequeathed to them something far better -- a simple strong faith in God and reverence for His Word.

Not being strong enough to go to school when he was small, Hudson's education was mostly gained at home; and from his sensible and wise parents he learned more valuable lessons than he would have learned at school.

Mr. Taylor was interested in foreign missionary work, and especially in China. The children shared his interest, and a little book: Peter Parley was read and reread. Both Hudson and his sister Amelia declared that they intended to go to that country some day.

School and Work

Hudson's schooldays began when he was eleven. It was a help to him to be in the company of other boys, yet these were not especially happy days for him. He lost the simple faith of his younger days, and it was a number of years before he yielded himself fully to God.

At the age of fifteen he began working as a clerk in a bank. His old-fashioned ideas were laughed at by an older clerk, and when he returned home after nine months, he was further away from God than ever before.

Mother and father were burdened for the salvation of their boy. His sister Amelia made up her mind that she would go alone three times a day to pray for him, and it was not long before those prayers were answered.

The Conversion

One day when he had nothing in particular to do, his eyes fell on a tract. "There will be a story at the beginning and a sermon or moral at the close," he said to himself; "I will take the former and leave the latter for those who like it." But as he read, conviction seized him and he gave himself to God. Amelia was the first to hear the joyful news, as his mother was away from home. Upon her return he greeted her gladly, eager to tell her about his conversion. "I know, my boy," she said, "I have been rejoicing a fortnight in the glad tidings you have to tell."

"Why, has Amelia broken her promise?" he asked. "She said she would tell no one."

"Ah, my son," was the answer, "no one has told me. But my heart became so burdened for you a fortnight ago that I determined not to arise from prayer until the assurance of your salvation came. So clearly did it come that I have been praising God ever since.

The Calling

There was peace and joy in Hudson's heart, and in his gratitude he offered himself to God, to work wherever He might call him. "Then go for Me to China," God said. The call seemed as clear as if God had spoken in an audible voice, and the young man did not hesitate.

He told his Sunday-school teacher of his call, and was encouraged and given a copy of the gospel of Luke in a Chinese dialect. He tried to prepare himself in every possible way for the life of a missionary. He gave up his feather bed and other things he had enjoyed, so that he would be used to a rugged life. Plenty of outdoor exercise made him stronger in body and Christian work strengthened his soul. He felt that if he wanted to win souls in China he must begin at home, so he distributed tracts, taught a Sunday-school class, called on the sick and the poor, and did everything he could find to do for God.

Then he began studying the meaning of the Chinese letters in the little book his Sunday-school superintendent had given him. He knew that it would not be an easy task to learn the Chinese language and he wanted to begin as soon as possible. Some one had said that those who learned it needed "bodies of iron, lungs of brass, heads of oak, hands of spring steel, eyes of eagles, hearts of apostles, memories of angels, and lives of Methuselah." Though far from possessing all these qualifications Hudson went at it courageously and made good progress.

The next definite step in his preparation was to become the assistant of Doctor Hardey. He knew that if he could become skilful in caring for sick bodies, it would give him a good chance to help souls. At first he lived in Doctor Hardey's home, which was very comfortable and pleasant, but not the best preparation for a missionary's life. The next move was to his aunt's home, which was less luxurious than the doctor's. Still he felt there was much more chance for self-denial, and it was not long until he found just the kind of place he felt he needed.

About this time Hudson met a German missionary who had come back from China. When this man noticed the light hair and eyes of the younger one he said, "Why, you would never do for China. They call me 'red-haired devil,' and they would run from you in terror! You could never get them to listen at all." This might have discouraged some, but Hudson only replied quietly, "And yet it is God who has called me and He knows all about the color of my hair and eyes."

Living in Poverty

Hudson Taylor's next abode -- and the one where he felt that he could get real training for China -- was in a very undesirable portion of the city of Hull. Two rows of poor little cottages faced each other, and between them was a ditch where rubbish was thrown. The neighborhood was called "Drainside." When the tide rose high enough the rubbish was carried away. Unattractive as this was, Hudson Taylor selected one of these cottages as his dwelling-place. A room less than twelve feet square was his, while his landlady, Mrs. Finch, with her children, occupied the upstairs room and the kitchen. Mr. Finch was away at sea most of the time, and his wife was glad of the three shillings a week paid her by Hudson Taylor.

Hudson Taylor worked at Dr. Hardey's residence in Hull and lived in the near poverty of Drainside He boarded himself and lived mostly on oatmeal, rice, and brown bread, finding it a pleasure to deny himself in order that he might have money with which to help others. At the close of his day's work he would take his lonely walk to his comfortless room, and on Sundays he visited the sick and helped the poor. It was not the kind of life one would be apt to choose, but God's blessing was upon him, and that is more than all the world has to offer.

There was one lesson that young Mr. Taylor knew he must learn, if he wanted to be a successful missionary in China, and that was the lesson of faith. He knew there would be many times in that far-away country when he would have no one to depend upon but God, and he must know how to get his prayers through and receive an answer. He wanted to know how to "move man, through God, by prayer alone."

Dr. Hardey had told Hudson Taylor to remind him when it was time for his salary to be paid, as he was a very busy man, and probably rather forgetful, but Hudson made up his mind that he would do nothing except to pray about it. He felt that God could remind Dr. Hardey in answer to his prayers, and this would strengthen his faith.

One time the day drew near, and passed by, and the salary was not paid. At the end of the week, he found he had just a half-crown left. Still he said nothing, except to God. Sunday night, after a meeting with the poor people to whom he often preached, a man asked him to come and pray for his wife, who seemed to be dying. He had asked the priest to come, but he was too poor to pay the eighteen pence which the priest asked. His family was starving and the poor man was discouraged.

Taylor knew they needed food and he thought, "Ah, if I only had two shillings and sixpence instead of this half-crown, how gladly would I give these poor people a shilling." He had something at home for supper that night and for breakfast the next morning, but nothing more than that. Could he give up all he had and trust God to supply his need?

Through a dark court they went, then up some rickety stairs, and reached the poor room where the man's wife lay, with a baby thirty-six hours old, moaning at her side. Four or five hungry children stood about the room. When Taylor saw this scene of poverty, he thought he would like to give them a shilling and a half, but had not made up his mind to give up the whole coin. He tried to tell them of a loving heavenly Father who would care for them, but he could not say very much. Then he knelt to pray, but his conscience troubled him. How could he pray when he was not willing to give to these poor people who needed help so desperately? "You see what a terrible state we are in, sir; if you can help us, for God's sake do!" the poor man said. Taylor remembered that Jesus said, "Give to him that asketh thee," and he obeyed the command. He gave up his all, and in doing that he not only helped the poor people in their distress, but he won a victory and was happy.

"Give, and it shall be given unto you," the Bible says, "good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over." Early the next morning the mailman left an envelop containing no letter, nor even the name of the sender, but a pair of new kid gloves and a half-sovereign coin. This was five times as much as he had given away, and he felt that God had paid him good interest.

Two weeks more passed by and still the salary was unpaid. His room rent would be due on Saturday night and his landlady really needed the money. But he had made up his mind not to say anything to the doctor about it, and he adhered to his purpose.

Late Saturday afternoon Dr. Hardey suddenly asked, "By the by, Taylor, is not your salary due?" Quietly the young man replied, "It is overdue some little time."

"Oh, I am sorry you didn't remind me," the doctor said. "You know how busy I am. Wish I had thought a little sooner, for only this afternoon I sent all the money I had to the bank. Otherwise I would pay you at once."

This was a test of the young man's faith, indeed, but as soon as he could, he found a quiet place to pray, and God assured him that everything would work out all right. That evening he prepared for Sunday's meetings among the poor people, and was just ready to go home, when the doctor appeared on the scene, laughing. "Such a funny thing has just happened," he said. "One of my wealthiest patients has just come at this late hour to pay his doctor bill. Look up the ledger, Taylor, and see how much it is. Strange, isn't it, that he should come at this hour of the night, when he could write a check any day?" The bill was paid and the money turned over to Taylor. He was very happy, for several reasons. His needs were supplied, and more than that his landlady could be paid. But the greatest reason of all for his happiness was that prayer was answered. Dr. Hardey had been "moved, through God, by prayer alone." It was a big step in his preparation for a missionary's life.

It was not long after this that he went to London for further preparation. He had very little money, and met with some difficulties, but in due time he found a hospital where he could continue his studies. His lodging-place was a long distance from the hospital, and he could not afford to ride on the omnibus, so he had plenty of exercise going back and forth. He also had chances to exercise his faith.

As an act of kindness to Mrs. Finch, who had rented him his room at "Drainside," Taylor went to the shipping company for which Mr. Finch worked, and obtained his wages, which he sent to Mrs. Finch, saving her the cost of the commission which would have been charged if the money had been forwarded by the company.

Being especially in need of money at one time, she asked him to send the monthly salary as early as possible. Taylor was very busy at the time, and rather than spend a day in going to the city he sent money of his own, expecting to replace it when he should draw his pay. When he went to the company and asked for the money, the clerk said, "In looking this matter up, I find that the officer whose pay you wish to draw has run away from the ship and gone to the gold-diggings. Therefore, we have no money of his to be drawn."

"Well, that is very inconvenient for me, as I have already advanced the money and I know his wife will have no means of repaying it." The clerk could do nothing for him, and it was indeed a test, but he placed his trust in God.

A Test of Faith

It was not long until there was another faith test. He pricked his finger one day while sewing some sheets of paper together for a note book to use in the lecture room. The next day he helped dissect the body of some one who had died with a very dangerous fever. He had forgotten all about the finger-prick until he felt himself becoming tired and sick. The poison from the dead body had entered his system through that tiny needle-prick and the surgeon said, "Go home and arrange your affairs as quickly as possible, for you are a dead man."

Hudson Taylor told the surgeon that the thought of being with his Lord very soon filled him with joy, "but," he added, "I do not think I shall die, for unless I am much mistaken I have work to do in China; and if so, however severe the struggle, I must be brought through."

"That is all very well," said the surgeon, who did not believe in God, "but get a carriage and drive home as soon as possible. You have no time to lose, for you will soon be incapable of winding up your affairs."

When he reached his room he bathed his hand in hot water, and while doing this, talked to the servant about salvation. He was "instant in season, out of season," always watching for an opportunity to say something for Jesus. The doctor who was called to see him told him there was a chance of his pulling through if he had been living simply. "But," he said, "if you have been going in for beer and that kind of thing, there is no manner of chance for you." For some time his meals consisted of brown bread and water, which was about as simple as the diet of the Hebrew children in Babylon, and the plain food worked well in both cases.

When the worst of the disease was over and he was slowly recovering, he was told of the death of two fellow-students who had worked with him in the dissecting room that day. God had work for Hudson Taylor to do and had spared his life. He was advised to take a trip to the country, but had not the necessary money. As usual, he took the matter to the Lord in prayer and God answered in an unexpected way.

One day while he was still very weak he thought of going to the office of the shipping company to inquire about Mr. Finch's wages. It seemed unlikely that it would do any good, and the two-mile walk looked like an impossibility. But as he prayed about it God made it very plain that He wanted him to go, and he started out, trusting Him for strength. As soon as he entered the office the clerk said, "Oh, I am so glad you have come, for it turns out that it was an able seaman by the same name that ran away. The mate is still on board." He gladly paid the money, which Taylor received with joy. Though severely tested, his faith had been rewarded.

The next day he saw the doctor who had attended him during his sickness, and told him all about his answers to prayer. When he mentioned the long walk he had taken to get the money, the doctor said, "Impossible! Why I left you lying there more like a ghost than a man." When he was convinced that the walk had actually been taken and that the money received was just enough to take him to the country, after making all necessary payments, his eyes filled with tears and he said, "I would give all the world for a faith like yours."

Going to China

Over three years had gone by since Hudson Taylor heard the voice of God say, "Go for Me to China," and he was becoming anxious to go. His medical course was not finished, but he felt inclined to give it up, and go as soon as the way should open. Very earnestly he prayed for guidance, and the more he prayed, the more he felt that it would be God's plan for him to go at once.

China seemed to be opening her doors for missionary work and the Missionary Society decided to send their young candidate without delay to that distant land.

Hudson Taylor traveled by boat around the canals and waterways of China, preaching and distributing BiblesAn ocean voyage in those days was a very different matter from one today, and Hudson Taylor spent five months and a half on the sailing vessel Dumfries, which took him from Liverpool to Shanghai. September 19, 1853, he left his native land. His mother and one or two friends boarded the boat with him and in his cabin they prayed and sang and read a Psalm, before the boat started. "Dear Mother," he said, "do not weep. It is but for a little while and we shall meet again. Think of the glorious object I have in leaving you! It is not for wealth or fame, but to try to bring the poor Chinese to the knowledge of Jesus." When the others had gone ashore, he wrote on a piece of paper, "The love of God which passeth knowledge. J.H.T." This little parting word was tossed across to his mother as she stood on the pier. As the ship sailed away, he climbed a mast that he might have a longer view of the friends on the shore. There he waved his hat, while they waved their handkerchiefs until the boat was out of sight. Hudson Taylor was actually on his way to China!

The next twelve days were stormy ones. The captain said, "Unless God helps us, there is no hope." And God did help them. The young missionary remembered the promise "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me," and calmly looked to God.

At last the storm was over. Around the Cape of Good Hope, past Australia, and into the Pacific ocean, then through the China Sea they sailed, reaching their destination March 1, 1854. During that time Taylor had not been idle, but had held meetings for the ship's crew, assisted by another Christian young man who was on the ship.

Can you imagine how a missionary feels as he nears the shores of the country where he has chosen to spend his life? Hudson Taylor felt when he had his first glimpse of China's shores, that the prayers of years were answered, and when he saw a group of natives, and heard them chatter in their strange tongue, he longed to be able to tell them the glad tidings of salvation. "My feelings on stepping ashore," he wrote, "I cannot describe. My heart felt as though it had not room and must burst its bonds, while tears of gratitude and thankfulness fell from my eyes."

Mr. Taylor had been given three letters of introduction, and started out to look up the people to whom they were addressed. The first one, he found, had died a month before, and the second one had left for America. Then he found his way to the London Mission Compound, and the missionaries there, though strangers, made him welcome and gave him a place to stay. Eager to prepare for real work, he began studying the language the next morning.

After much searching he found at last a house which he could rent. It was dilapidated and very dirty but he was glad to have a place for himself, as he disliked to be dependent upon others. People found out that he was a doctor, and many sick came to him. As he ministered to the needs of their bodies, he told them of the cure for sin-sick souls. A school for boys and girls was started and Mr. Taylor was happy. There were difficulties too, but Taylor had fitted himself for hard things by the rugged life he had lived before leaving England.

Busy months and years followed, filled with joys and disappointments. He took a number of journeys in a houseboat, preaching the Gospel in villages and cities where the name of Jesus had never been heard. Hardships were many and sometimes his life was in danger, but he did not turn back.

For some time he considered the question of adopting Chinese dress, and finally decided to do so, believing he could accomplish more for the Lord in that way. He had his head shaved, leaving a little hair which would grow into a Chinese cue [hair tied at the back of the head in a braid], and with baggy trousers, white calico socks, satin shoes, and to complete the costume, a loose silk gown with wide sleeves, he attracted less attention, and won the hearts of the natives as he could not do when in English dress.

It would take too long to tell of all Hudson Taylor's strange experiences in that strange land. Once he started to go from Shanghai to Ningpo. The first part of the trip was made by boat, then he proceeded on foot, with coolies to carry his luggage. Stopping at an inn, the only supper he could obtain was one of cold rice and snakes fried in lamp oil. It was not very appetizing, but he tried to eat, fearing he would be recognized as a foreigner if he refused. His room was shared with ten or eleven other men, and a board laid across two stools, with his umbrella and shoes for a pillow, formed his bed.

In the morning he began looking for the bed and box which had been carried by coolies, and was greatly disappointed upon finding no trace of them. Search as he would, they were not to be found. The next night he tried in vain to find a place to lodge, and at last lay down on the steps of the temple, with his money under his head.

It was not long until he heard footsteps approaching, and soon stealthy hands were feeling about him. "What do you want?" he asked quietly, and the man disappeared, returning later with a companion.

"What do you want?" Taylor asked.

"We are passing the night outside the temple as you are," they answered.

He then suggested that as there was plenty of room on the other side, they'd better leave that side for him, but his advice didn't seem to be appreciated, so he decided he would sit up, to watch them more closely.

"You had better lie down and sleep, or you will not be able to work tomorrow," they said. "Don't be afraid, we shall not leave you, and shall see that no one does you harm."

Taylor knew better than to believe them and said, "Listen to me. I do not want your protection. I am not a Chinese and I do not worship your vain idols. I worship God. He is my Father and I trust in Him. I know well what you are, and what you wish to do, and shall keep my eye on you and shall not sleep." One of the men disappeared, only to return with another man. They watched for some time, hoping he would go to sleep, but he began to repeat verses of Scripture and sing hymns. They did not appreciate this, and finally went away.

Since Taylor's luggage was not to be found, he was obliged to return to Shanghai instead of going on to Ningpo. Later on it fell to his lot to nurse a man who was sick with smallpox, and when it was all over, he was obliged to burn the clothing he had used in the sick room. He had given his money away freely and was unable to buy a new supply. Then, just at the right time, the box lost on the way to Ningpo, turned up unexpectedly, and his needs were supplied.

This was only one of the almost numberless incidents which fulfilled the promise--"The LORD will provide" [Jehovah-jireh, Genesis 22:14]. This verse and "Hitherto hath the LORD helped us," were Taylor's favorite mottoes.

Hudson Taylor's Legacy

In the course of his work, Mr. Taylor became acquainted with Miss Maria Dyer, an English girl whose father had been a missionary in China. Her uncle in England, who acted as her guardian, gave his consent to her marriage, and in January, 1858, there was a wedding in one of the missions. In a humble little place in Ningpo they began their work together and were very happy as they told the beautiful old story of Jesus and His love.

It was well for Hudson Taylor that he learned before leaving England, "to move man, through God, by prayer alone," for he had many and many an opportunity to put the lesson into practice. At one time he was in charge of a hospital, and the workers were trusting God to supply the needs. One day the cook told him that their rice was almost gone -- the last bag had been opened. And this was his answer -- "Then the Lord's time for helping us must be close at hand." And sure enough, before the rice was gone, $250 came from England. Great was the joy of the workers, and patients in the hospital, listening to the songs and shouts of praise, said, "Where is the idol that can do anything like that? Have they ever delivered us in our troubles, or answered prayer after this sort?"

After six years in China the missionary was worn out, and a trip to England was planned, with Mrs. Taylor. It was a very profitable trip, for their health was built up, and the China Inland Mission was founded. Then back to China he went, for many more years of work for his Master. England was again visited, then America, and there was a period of rest in Switzerland. But his heart was in the land to which God called him in his young manhood, and there he laid his armor down. June 3, 1905 was the day of his death. Chinese Christians bought the most beautiful coffin they could find. However, his work did not die with him, and many souls in Heaven, won to God through the work of the China Inland Mission, will thank God because its founder, James Hudson Taylor, went to China.

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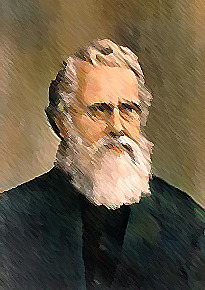
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Hudson Taylor

May 21, 1832 to June 3, 1905 (73), Missionary

Hudson Taylor was a British Protestant Christian missionary to China, and founder of the China Inland Mission (CIM) (now OMF International).

## Relationships

* http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/charlesspurgeon_main.mini.jpg[Charles Spurgeon](http://www.christians.com/charlesspurgeon/main) was moved by Hudson Taylor's zeal that he supported his mission financially and encouraged missionaries to do the same.
* http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/dwightmoody_main.mini.jpg[Dwight Moody](http://www.christians.com/dwightmoody/main) was instrumental in converting a few of the Cambridge students (Cambridge Seven) who later became missionaries for Hudson Taylor.
* http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/georgemuller_main.mini.jpgGeorge Muller was one of the primary supporters of Hudson Taylor and what was then known as the China Inland Mission.

# Hudson Taylor

* [At A Glance](http://www.christians.com/hudsontaylor/main)
* [Testimony](http://www.christians.com/hudsontaylor/main)
* [**Biography**](http://www.christians.com/hudsontaylor/main)
* [Works](http://www.christians.com/hudsontaylor/main)

Historical Timeline

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1790

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Taylor was known for his sensitivity to Chinese culture and zeal for evangelism. He adopted wearing native Chinese clothing even though this was rare among missionaries of that time. Under his leadership, the CIM was singularly non-denominational in practice and accepted members from all Protestant groups, including individuals from the working class and single women as well as multinational recruits. Primarily because of the CIM's campaign against the Opium trade, Taylor has been referred to as one of the most significant Europeans to visit China in the 19th Century.



In 1851, he moved to a poor neighborhood in Kingston upon Hull to be a medical assistant with Dr. William Hardey, and began preparing himself for a life of faith and service, devoting himself to the poor and exercising faith that God would provide for his needs. He practiced distributing gospel tracts and open-air preaching among the poor. Again Taylor was in contact with Andrew Jukes, a notable Brethren teacher in Hull.



Hudson Taylor left England on September 19, 1853 before completing his medical studies, arriving in Shanghai, China, on March 1, 1854. The nearly disastrous voyage aboard the clipper Dumfries through an Easterly passage near Pulau Buru lasted about five months. In China, he was immediately faced with civil war, throwing his first year there into turmoil.  
  
Taylor made 18 preaching tours in the vicinity of Shanghai starting in 1855, and was often poorly received by the people, even though he brought with him medical supplies and skills.



In 1858, Taylor married Maria Jane Dyer, the orphaned daughter of the Rev. Samuel Dyer of the London Missionary Society, who had been a pioneer missionary to the Chinese in Penang, Malaysia[5]. Hudson met Maria in Ningbo where she lived and worked at a school for girls which was run by one of the first female missionaries to the Chinese, Mary Ann Aldersey.



Because of health problems, in 1860 Taylor decided to return to England for a furlough with his family. The Taylors sailed back to England aboard the tea clipper Jubliee along with their daughter, Grace and a young man,Wang Laijun, from the Bridge Street church in Ningbo, who would help with the Bible translation work that would continue in England.

[«](http://www.christians.com/hudsontaylor/main#prev) [1](http://www.christians.com/hudsontaylor/main#1) [2](http://www.christians.com/hudsontaylor/main#2) [3](http://www.christians.com/hudsontaylor/main#3) [4](http://www.christians.com/hudsontaylor/main#4) [5](http://www.christians.com/hudsontaylor/main#5) [»](http://www.christians.com/hudsontaylor/main#next)

Hudson Taylor's Conversion

My mother being absent from home, I had a holiday, and in the afternoon looked through my father's library to find some book with which to while away the unoccupied hours. Nothing attracting me, I turned over a basket of pamphlets and selected from amongst them a Gospel tract that looked interesting, saying to myself, "There will be a story at the commencement and a sermon or moral at the close. I will take the former and leave the latter for those who like it."

I sat down to read the book in an utterly unconcerned state of mind, believing indeed at the time that if there were any salvation it was not for me, and with a distinct intention to put away the tract as soon as it should seem prosy.

Little did I know at the time what was going on in the heart of my mother, seventy or eighty miles away. She rose from the dinner table that afternoon with an intense yearning for the conversion of her boy; and feeling that, absent from home and having more leisure than she could otherwise secure, a special opportunity was afforded her of pleading with God on my behalf. She went to her room and turned the key in the door, resolved not to leave the spot until her prayers were answered. Hour after hour that dear mother pleaded, until at length she could pray no longer, but was constrained to praise God for that which His Spirit taught her had already been accomplished, the conversion of her only son.

I in the meantime had been led in the way I have mentioned to take up this little tract, and while reading it was struck with the phrase: "The finished work of Christ."

"Why does the author use this expression?" I questioned. "Why not say the atoning or propitiatory work of Christ?"

Immediately the words "It is finished" suggested themselves to my mind.

"What was finished?"

And I at once replied, "A full and perfect atonement and satisfaction for sin. The debt was paid for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

Then came the further thought, "If the whole work was finished and the whole debt paid, what is there left for me to do?"

And with this dawned the joyful conviction, as light was flashed into my soul by the Holy Spirit, that there was nothing in the world to be done but to fall down on one's knees and, accepting this Saviour and His salvation, praise Him forevermore.

Thus while my mother was praising God on her knees in her chamber, I was praising Him in the old warehouse to which I had gone alone to read at my leisure this little book.

Several days elapsed before I ventured to make even my sister the confidante of my joy, and then only after she had promised not to tell anyone. When Mother returned a fortnight later I was the first to meet her at the door and to tell her I had such glad news to give. I can almost feel that dear mother's arms round my neck as she said,

"I know, my boy."

"Why," I asked in surprise, "has Amelia broken her promise? She said she would tell no one."

My mother assured me that it was not from any human source she had learned the tidings, and went on to tell the incident mentioned above. You will agree with me that it would be strange indeed if I were not a believer in the power of prayer.

Nor was this all. Some time after, I picked up a pocket-book exactly like my own and, thinking it was mine, opened it. The lines that caught my eye were an entry in the little diary belonging to my sister, to the effect that she would give herself daily to prayer until God should answer in the conversion of her brother. One month later the Lord was pleased to turn me from darkness to light.

Brought up in such a circle and saved in such circumstances, it was perhaps natural that from the commencement of my Christian life I was led to feel that the promises were very real, and that prayer was in sober matter of fact transacting business with God, whether on one's own behalf or on the behalf of those for whom one sought His blessing.

"When I am a man, I mean to be a missionary and go to China," said a little boy many, many years ago. And that is exactly what came to pass.

Family Background

This little boy was James Hudson Taylor, who was born in Barnsley, England, May 1, 1832. His father, James Taylor, was the son and the grandson of preachers, and was a local preacher himself. He loved God and served Him so faithfully that every one knew he was a Christian. And his wife, Amelia Hudson Taylor, was as good and as true to God as he was. No boy could have had better parents than little Hudson had.

As a baby, he was sweet and bright, but not very strong, and it would have been easy to spoil him. But his father and mother knew he must be taught obedience and self-control, and they agreed to teach him these lessons, even though he was a frail child.

When he was just a little fellow of two or three, he went with his father and mother to church. If he was good all through the long service, after the benediction was pronounced, they would hand him back to his grandfather, who sat in the pew behind them. This was something he remembered all through his life.

One of the things he enjoyed as a little boy was playing meeting with his little brother. When his little sister Amelia was big enough to walk, it was Hudson who taught her how to take the first little steps. When his two little brothers died, Hudson learned that sorrow, as well as joy, is a part of this life.

One day there was a fair in town, and the one great attraction for Hudson was a collection of stuffed birds and animals, for he loved the things of nature. To his dismay, he found that they were enclosed within a high board fence. In his hand was a hard-earned penny which he offered to the man at the entrance, only to be told that the admittance fee was "tuppence" [twopence]. "But I haven't got another penny, and don't you see that it would be better to have one penny than none at all?" he reasoned. The argument was logical, but the gate-keeper remained firm, and little Hudson went away to tell his troubles to his mother. She explained that it was the man's duty to charge two pennies for admission, and then she found a very satisfactory way of solving the problem. She said that he had been so good and worked so well in the past days that she would give him another penny for his work, and off he ran with a glad heart.

The Taylor children were taught that it was just as important to keep themselves neat, with hands and faces clean, shoes polished, and nails well kept, when at home as when in company.

Punctuality was another valuable lesson they learned. Each child was expected to be on time at meals and for every other appointment. Mr. Taylor said,

If there are five people, and they are kept waiting one minute, do you not see that five minutes are lost, which can never be found again?

He had not much to give his children in the way of wealth or worldly advantage, but he bequeathed to them something far better -- a simple strong faith in God and reverence for His Word.

Not being strong enough to go to school when he was small, Hudson's education was mostly gained at home; and from his sensible and wise parents he learned more valuable lessons than he would have learned at school.

Mr. Taylor was interested in foreign missionary work, and especially in China. The children shared his interest, and a little book: Peter Parley was read and reread. Both Hudson and his sister Amelia declared that they intended to go to that country some day.

School and Work

Hudson's schooldays began when he was eleven. It was a help to him to be in the company of other boys, yet these were not especially happy days for him. He lost the simple faith of his younger days, and it was a number of years before he yielded himself fully to God.

At the age of fifteen he began working as a clerk in a bank. His old-fashioned ideas were laughed at by an older clerk, and when he returned home after nine months, he was further away from God than ever before.

Mother and father were burdened for the salvation of their boy. His sister Amelia made up her mind that she would go alone three times a day to pray for him, and it was not long before those prayers were answered.

The Conversion

One day when he had nothing in particular to do, his eyes fell on a tract. "There will be a story at the beginning and a sermon or moral at the close," he said to himself; "I will take the former and leave the latter for those who like it." But as he read, conviction seized him and he gave himself to God. Amelia was the first to hear the joyful news, as his mother was away from home. Upon her return he greeted her gladly, eager to tell her about his conversion. "I know, my boy," she said, "I have been rejoicing a fortnight in the glad tidings you have to tell."

"Why, has Amelia broken her promise?" he asked. "She said she would tell no one."

"Ah, my son," was the answer, "no one has told me. But my heart became so burdened for you a fortnight ago that I determined not to arise from prayer until the assurance of your salvation came. So clearly did it come that I have been praising God ever since.

The Calling

There was peace and joy in Hudson's heart, and in his gratitude he offered himself to God, to work wherever He might call him. "Then go for Me to China," God said. The call seemed as clear as if God had spoken in an audible voice, and the young man did not hesitate.

He told his Sunday-school teacher of his call, and was encouraged and given a copy of the gospel of Luke in a Chinese dialect. He tried to prepare himself in every possible way for the life of a missionary. He gave up his feather bed and other things he had enjoyed, so that he would be used to a rugged life. Plenty of outdoor exercise made him stronger in body and Christian work strengthened his soul. He felt that if he wanted to win souls in China he must begin at home, so he distributed tracts, taught a Sunday-school class, called on the sick and the poor, and did everything he could find to do for God.

Then he began studying the meaning of the Chinese letters in the little book his Sunday-school superintendent had given him. He knew that it would not be an easy task to learn the Chinese language and he wanted to begin as soon as possible. Some one had said that those who learned it needed "bodies of iron, lungs of brass, heads of oak, hands of spring steel, eyes of eagles, hearts of apostles, memories of angels, and lives of Methuselah." Though far from possessing all these qualifications Hudson went at it courageously and made good progress.

The next definite step in his preparation was to become the assistant of Doctor Hardey. He knew that if he could become skilful in caring for sick bodies, it would give him a good chance to help souls. At first he lived in Doctor Hardey's home, which was very comfortable and pleasant, but not the best preparation for a missionary's life. The next move was to his aunt's home, which was less luxurious than the doctor's. Still he felt there was much more chance for self-denial, and it was not long until he found just the kind of place he felt he needed.

About this time Hudson met a German missionary who had come back from China. When this man noticed the light hair and eyes of the younger one he said, "Why, you would never do for China. They call me 'red-haired devil,' and they would run from you in terror! You could never get them to listen at all." This might have discouraged some, but Hudson only replied quietly, "And yet it is God who has called me and He knows all about the color of my hair and eyes."

Living in Poverty

Hudson Taylor's next abode -- and the one where he felt that he could get real training for China -- was in a very undesirable portion of the city of Hull. Two rows of poor little cottages faced each other, and between them was a ditch where rubbish was thrown. The neighborhood was called "Drainside." When the tide rose high enough the rubbish was carried away. Unattractive as this was, Hudson Taylor selected one of these cottages as his dwelling-place. A room less than twelve feet square was his, while his landlady, Mrs. Finch, with her children, occupied the upstairs room and the kitchen. Mr. Finch was away at sea most of the time, and his wife was glad of the three shillings a week paid her by Hudson Taylor.

Hudson Taylor worked at Dr. Hardey's residence in Hull and lived in the near poverty of Drainside He boarded himself and lived mostly on oatmeal, rice, and brown bread, finding it a pleasure to deny himself in order that he might have money with which to help others. At the close of his day's work he would take his lonely walk to his comfortless room, and on Sundays he visited the sick and helped the poor. It was not the kind of life one would be apt to choose, but God's blessing was upon him, and that is more than all the world has to offer.

There was one lesson that young Mr. Taylor knew he must learn, if he wanted to be a successful missionary in China, and that was the lesson of faith. He knew there would be many times in that far-away country when he would have no one to depend upon but God, and he must know how to get his prayers through and receive an answer. He wanted to know how to "move man, through God, by prayer alone."

Dr. Hardey had told Hudson Taylor to remind him when it was time for his salary to be paid, as he was a very busy man, and probably rather forgetful, but Hudson made up his mind that he would do nothing except to pray about it. He felt that God could remind Dr. Hardey in answer to his prayers, and this would strengthen his faith.

One time the day drew near, and passed by, and the salary was not paid. At the end of the week, he found he had just a half-crown left. Still he said nothing, except to God. Sunday night, after a meeting with the poor people to whom he often preached, a man asked him to come and pray for his wife, who seemed to be dying. He had asked the priest to come, but he was too poor to pay the eighteen pence which the priest asked. His family was starving and the poor man was discouraged.

Taylor knew they needed food and he thought, "Ah, if I only had two shillings and sixpence instead of this half-crown, how gladly would I give these poor people a shilling." He had something at home for supper that night and for breakfast the next morning, but nothing more than that. Could he give up all he had and trust God to supply his need?

Through a dark court they went, then up some rickety stairs, and reached the poor room where the man's wife lay, with a baby thirty-six hours old, moaning at her side. Four or five hungry children stood about the room. When Taylor saw this scene of poverty, he thought he would like to give them a shilling and a half, but had not made up his mind to give up the whole coin. He tried to tell them of a loving heavenly Father who would care for them, but he could not say very much. Then he knelt to pray, but his conscience troubled him. How could he pray when he was not willing to give to these poor people who needed help so desperately? "You see what a terrible state we are in, sir; if you can help us, for God's sake do!" the poor man said. Taylor remembered that Jesus said, "Give to him that asketh thee," and he obeyed the command. He gave up his all, and in doing that he not only helped the poor people in their distress, but he won a victory and was happy.

"Give, and it shall be given unto you," the Bible says, "good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over." Early the next morning the mailman left an envelop containing no letter, nor even the name of the sender, but a pair of new kid gloves and a half-sovereign coin. This was five times as much as he had given away, and he felt that God had paid him good interest.

Two weeks more passed by and still the salary was unpaid. His room rent would be due on Saturday night and his landlady really needed the money. But he had made up his mind not to say anything to the doctor about it, and he adhered to his purpose.

Late Saturday afternoon Dr. Hardey suddenly asked, "By the by, Taylor, is not your salary due?" Quietly the young man replied, "It is overdue some little time."

"Oh, I am sorry you didn't remind me," the doctor said. "You know how busy I am. Wish I had thought a little sooner, for only this afternoon I sent all the money I had to the bank. Otherwise I would pay you at once."

This was a test of the young man's faith, indeed, but as soon as he could, he found a quiet place to pray, and God assured him that everything would work out all right. That evening he prepared for Sunday's meetings among the poor people, and was just ready to go home, when the doctor appeared on the scene, laughing. "Such a funny thing has just happened," he said. "One of my wealthiest patients has just come at this late hour to pay his doctor bill. Look up the ledger, Taylor, and see how much it is. Strange, isn't it, that he should come at this hour of the night, when he could write a check any day?" The bill was paid and the money turned over to Taylor. He was very happy, for several reasons. His needs were supplied, and more than that his landlady could be paid. But the greatest reason of all for his happiness was that prayer was answered. Dr. Hardey had been "moved, through God, by prayer alone." It was a big step in his preparation for a missionary's life.

It was not long after this that he went to London for further preparation. He had very little money, and met with some difficulties, but in due time he found a hospital where he could continue his studies. His lodging-place was a long distance from the hospital, and he could not afford to ride on the omnibus, so he had plenty of exercise going back and forth. He also had chances to exercise his faith.

As an act of kindness to Mrs. Finch, who had rented him his room at "Drainside," Taylor went to the shipping company for which Mr. Finch worked, and obtained his wages, which he sent to Mrs. Finch, saving her the cost of the commission which would have been charged if the money had been forwarded by the company.

Being especially in need of money at one time, she asked him to send the monthly salary as early as possible. Taylor was very busy at the time, and rather than spend a day in going to the city he sent money of his own, expecting to replace it when he should draw his pay. When he went to the company and asked for the money, the clerk said, "In looking this matter up, I find that the officer whose pay you wish to draw has run away from the ship and gone to the gold-diggings. Therefore, we have no money of his to be drawn."

"Well, that is very inconvenient for me, as I have already advanced the money and I know his wife will have no means of repaying it." The clerk could do nothing for him, and it was indeed a test, but he placed his trust in God.

A Test of Faith

It was not long until there was another faith test. He pricked his finger one day while sewing some sheets of paper together for a note book to use in the lecture room. The next day he helped dissect the body of some one who had died with a very dangerous fever. He had forgotten all about the finger-prick until he felt himself becoming tired and sick. The poison from the dead body had entered his system through that tiny needle-prick and the surgeon said, "Go home and arrange your affairs as quickly as possible, for you are a dead man."

Hudson Taylor told the surgeon that the thought of being with his Lord very soon filled him with joy, "but," he added, "I do not think I shall die, for unless I am much mistaken I have work to do in China; and if so, however severe the struggle, I must be brought through."

"That is all very well," said the surgeon, who did not believe in God, "but get a carriage and drive home as soon as possible. You have no time to lose, for you will soon be incapable of winding up your affairs."

When he reached his room he bathed his hand in hot water, and while doing this, talked to the servant about salvation. He was "instant in season, out of season," always watching for an opportunity to say something for Jesus. The doctor who was called to see him told him there was a chance of his pulling through if he had been living simply. "But," he said, "if you have been going in for beer and that kind of thing, there is no manner of chance for you." For some time his meals consisted of brown bread and water, which was about as simple as the diet of the Hebrew children in Babylon, and the plain food worked well in both cases.

When the worst of the disease was over and he was slowly recovering, he was told of the death of two fellow-students who had worked with him in the dissecting room that day. God had work for Hudson Taylor to do and had spared his life. He was advised to take a trip to the country, but had not the necessary money. As usual, he took the matter to the Lord in prayer and God answered in an unexpected way.

One day while he was still very weak he thought of going to the office of the shipping company to inquire about Mr. Finch's wages. It seemed unlikely that it would do any good, and the two-mile walk looked like an impossibility. But as he prayed about it God made it very plain that He wanted him to go, and he started out, trusting Him for strength. As soon as he entered the office the clerk said, "Oh, I am so glad you have come, for it turns out that it was an able seaman by the same name that ran away. The mate is still on board." He gladly paid the money, which Taylor received with joy. Though severely tested, his faith had been rewarded.

The next day he saw the doctor who had attended him during his sickness, and told him all about his answers to prayer. When he mentioned the long walk he had taken to get the money, the doctor said, "Impossible! Why I left you lying there more like a ghost than a man." When he was convinced that the walk had actually been taken and that the money received was just enough to take him to the country, after making all necessary payments, his eyes filled with tears and he said, "I would give all the world for a faith like yours."

Going to China

Over three years had gone by since Hudson Taylor heard the voice of God say, "Go for Me to China," and he was becoming anxious to go. His medical course was not finished, but he felt inclined to give it up, and go as soon as the way should open. Very earnestly he prayed for guidance, and the more he prayed, the more he felt that it would be God's plan for him to go at once.

China seemed to be opening her doors for missionary work and the Missionary Society decided to send their young candidate without delay to that distant land.

Hudson Taylor traveled by boat around the canals and waterways of China, preaching and distributing BiblesAn ocean voyage in those days was a very different matter from one today, and Hudson Taylor spent five months and a half on the sailing vessel Dumfries, which took him from Liverpool to Shanghai. September 19, 1853, he left his native land. His mother and one or two friends boarded the boat with him and in his cabin they prayed and sang and read a Psalm, before the boat started. "Dear Mother," he said, "do not weep. It is but for a little while and we shall meet again. Think of the glorious object I have in leaving you! It is not for wealth or fame, but to try to bring the poor Chinese to the knowledge of Jesus." When the others had gone ashore, he wrote on a piece of paper, "The love of God which passeth knowledge. J.H.T." This little parting word was tossed across to his mother as she stood on the pier. As the ship sailed away, he climbed a mast that he might have a longer view of the friends on the shore. There he waved his hat, while they waved their handkerchiefs until the boat was out of sight. Hudson Taylor was actually on his way to China!

The next twelve days were stormy ones. The captain said, "Unless God helps us, there is no hope." And God did help them. The young missionary remembered the promise "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me," and calmly looked to God.

At last the storm was over. Around the Cape of Good Hope, past Australia, and into the Pacific ocean, then through the China Sea they sailed, reaching their destination March 1, 1854. During that time Taylor had not been idle, but had held meetings for the ship's crew, assisted by another Christian young man who was on the ship.

Can you imagine how a missionary feels as he nears the shores of the country where he has chosen to spend his life? Hudson Taylor felt when he had his first glimpse of China's shores, that the prayers of years were answered, and when he saw a group of natives, and heard them chatter in their strange tongue, he longed to be able to tell them the glad tidings of salvation. "My feelings on stepping ashore," he wrote, "I cannot describe. My heart felt as though it had not room and must burst its bonds, while tears of gratitude and thankfulness fell from my eyes."

Mr. Taylor had been given three letters of introduction, and started out to look up the people to whom they were addressed. The first one, he found, had died a month before, and the second one had left for America. Then he found his way to the London Mission Compound, and the missionaries there, though strangers, made him welcome and gave him a place to stay. Eager to prepare for real work, he began studying the language the next morning.

After much searching he found at last a house which he could rent. It was dilapidated and very dirty but he was glad to have a place for himself, as he disliked to be dependent upon others. People found out that he was a doctor, and many sick came to him. As he ministered to the needs of their bodies, he told them of the cure for sin-sick souls. A school for boys and girls was started and Mr. Taylor was happy. There were difficulties too, but Taylor had fitted himself for hard things by the rugged life he had lived before leaving England.

Busy months and years followed, filled with joys and disappointments. He took a number of journeys in a houseboat, preaching the Gospel in villages and cities where the name of Jesus had never been heard. Hardships were many and sometimes his life was in danger, but he did not turn back.

For some time he considered the question of adopting Chinese dress, and finally decided to do so, believing he could accomplish more for the Lord in that way. He had his head shaved, leaving a little hair which would grow into a Chinese cue [hair tied at the back of the head in a braid], and with baggy trousers, white calico socks, satin shoes, and to complete the costume, a loose silk gown with wide sleeves, he attracted less attention, and won the hearts of the natives as he could not do when in English dress.

It would take too long to tell of all Hudson Taylor's strange experiences in that strange land. Once he started to go from Shanghai to Ningpo. The first part of the trip was made by boat, then he proceeded on foot, with coolies to carry his luggage. Stopping at an inn, the only supper he could obtain was one of cold rice and snakes fried in lamp oil. It was not very appetizing, but he tried to eat, fearing he would be recognized as a foreigner if he refused. His room was shared with ten or eleven other men, and a board laid across two stools, with his umbrella and shoes for a pillow, formed his bed.

In the morning he began looking for the bed and box which had been carried by coolies, and was greatly disappointed upon finding no trace of them. Search as he would, they were not to be found. The next night he tried in vain to find a place to lodge, and at last lay down on the steps of the temple, with his money under his head.

It was not long until he heard footsteps approaching, and soon stealthy hands were feeling about him. "What do you want?" he asked quietly, and the man disappeared, returning later with a companion.

"What do you want?" Taylor asked.

"We are passing the night outside the temple as you are," they answered.

He then suggested that as there was plenty of room on the other side, they'd better leave that side for him, but his advice didn't seem to be appreciated, so he decided he would sit up, to watch them more closely.

"You had better lie down and sleep, or you will not be able to work tomorrow," they said. "Don't be afraid, we shall not leave you, and shall see that no one does you harm."

Taylor knew better than to believe them and said, "Listen to me. I do not want your protection. I am not a Chinese and I do not worship your vain idols. I worship God. He is my Father and I trust in Him. I know well what you are, and what you wish to do, and shall keep my eye on you and shall not sleep." One of the men disappeared, only to return with another man. They watched for some time, hoping he would go to sleep, but he began to repeat verses of Scripture and sing hymns. They did not appreciate this, and finally went away.

Since Taylor's luggage was not to be found, he was obliged to return to Shanghai instead of going on to Ningpo. Later on it fell to his lot to nurse a man who was sick with smallpox, and when it was all over, he was obliged to burn the clothing he had used in the sick room. He had given his money away freely and was unable to buy a new supply. Then, just at the right time, the box lost on the way to Ningpo, turned up unexpectedly, and his needs were supplied.

This was only one of the almost numberless incidents which fulfilled the promise--"The LORD will provide" [Jehovah-jireh, Genesis 22:14]. This verse and "Hitherto hath the LORD helped us," were Taylor's favorite mottoes.

Hudson Taylor's Legacy

In the course of his work, Mr. Taylor became acquainted with Miss Maria Dyer, an English girl whose father had been a missionary in China. Her uncle in England, who acted as her guardian, gave his consent to her marriage, and in January, 1858, there was a wedding in one of the missions. In a humble little place in Ningpo they began their work together and were very happy as they told the beautiful old story of Jesus and His love.

It was well for Hudson Taylor that he learned before leaving England, "to move man, through God, by prayer alone," for he had many and many an opportunity to put the lesson into practice. At one time he was in charge of a hospital, and the workers were trusting God to supply the needs. One day the cook told him that their rice was almost gone -- the last bag had been opened. And this was his answer -- "Then the Lord's time for helping us must be close at hand." And sure enough, before the rice was gone, $250 came from England. Great was the joy of the workers, and patients in the hospital, listening to the songs and shouts of praise, said, "Where is the idol that can do anything like that? Have they ever delivered us in our troubles, or answered prayer after this sort?"

After six years in China the missionary was worn out, and a trip to England was planned, with Mrs. Taylor. It was a very profitable trip, for their health was built up, and the China Inland Mission was founded. Then back to China he went, for many more years of work for his Master. England was again visited, then America, and there was a period of rest in Switzerland. But his heart was in the land to which God called him in his young manhood, and there he laid his armor down. June 3, 1905 was the day of his death. Chinese Christians bought the most beautiful coffin they could find. However, his work did not die with him, and many souls in Heaven, won to God through the work of the China Inland Mission, will thank God because its founder, James Hudson Taylor, went to China.

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The Life and Story of the True Servant and Martyr of God, William Tyndale

We have now to enter into the story of the good martyr of God, William Tyndale; which William Tyndale, as he was a special organ of the Lord appointed, and as God's mattock to shake the inward roots and foundation of the pope's proud prelacy, so the great prince of darkness, with his impious imps, having a special malice against him, left no way unsought how craftily to entrap him, and falsely to betray him, and maliciously to spill his life, as by the process of his story here following may appear.

William Tyndale, the faithful minister of Christ, was born about the borders of Wales, and brought up from a child in the University of Oxford, where he, by long continuance, increased as well in the knowledge of tongues, and other liberal arts, as especially in the knowledge of the Scriptures, whereunto his mind was singularly addicted; insomuch that he, lying then in Magdalen Hall, read privily to certain students and fellows of Magdalen College some parcel of divinity; instructing them in the knowledge and truth of the Scriptures. His manners and conversation being correspondent to the same, were such that all they that knew him reputed him to be a man of most virtuous disposition, and of life unspotted.

Thus he, in the University of Oxford, increasing more and more in learning, and proceeding in degrees of the schools, spying his time, removed from thence to the University of Cambridge, where he likewise made his abode a certain space. Being now further ripened in the knowledge of God's Word, leaving that university, he resorted to one Master Welch, a knight of Gloucestershire, and was there schoolmaster to his children, and in good favor with his master. As this gentleman kept a good ordinary commonly at his table, there resorted to him many times sundry abbots, deans, archdeacons, with divers other doctors, and great beneficed men; who there, together with Master Tyndale siting at the same table, did use many times to enter communication, and talk of learned men, as of Luther and of Erasmus; also of divers other controversies and questions upon the Scripture.

Then Master Tyndale, as he was learned and well practiced in God's matters, spared not to show unto them simply and plainly his judgment, and when they at any time did vary from Tyndale in opinions, he would show them in the Book, and lay plainly before them the open and manifest places of the Scriptures, to confute their errors, and confirm his sayings. And thus continued they for a certain season, reasoning and contending together divers times, until at length they waxed weary, and bare a secret grudge in their hearts against him.

As this grew on, the priests of the country, clustering together, began to grudge and storm against Tyndale, railing against him in alehouses and other places, affirming that his sayings were heresy; and accused him secretly to the chancellor, and others of the bishop's officers.

It followed not long after this that there was a sitting of the bishop's chancellor appointed, and warning was given to the priests to appear, amongst whom Master Tyndale was also warned to be there. And whether he had any misdoubt by their threatenings, or knowledge given him that they would lay some things to his charge, it is uncertain; but certain this is (as he himself declared), that he doubted their privy accusations; so that he by the way, in going thitherwards, cried in his mind heartily to God, to give him strength fast to stand in the truth of His Word.

When the time came for his appearance before the chancellor, he threatened him grievously, reviling and rating him as though he had been a dog, and laid to his charge many things whereof no accuser could be brought forth, notwithstanding that the priests of the country were there present. Thus Master Tyndale, escaping out of their hands, departed home, and returned to his master again.

There dwelt not far off a certain doctor, that he been chancellor to a bishop, who had been of old, familiar acquaintance with Master Tyndale, and favored him well; unto whom Master Tyndale went and opened his mind upon divers questions of the Scripture: for to him he durst be bold to disclose his heart. Unto whom the doctor said, "Do you not know that the pope is very Antichrist, whom the Scripture speaketh of? But beware what you say; for if you shall be perceived to be of that opinion, it will cost you your life."

Not long after, Master Tyndale happened to be in the company of a certain divine, recounted for a learned man, and, in communing and disputing with him, he drove him to that issue, that the said great doctor burst out into these blasphemous words, "We were better to be without God's laws than the pope's." Master Tyndale, hearing this, full of godly zeal, and not bearing that blasphemous saying, replied, "I defy the pope, and all his laws;" and added, "If God spared him life, ere many years he would cause a boy that driveth the plough to know more of the Scripture than he did."

The grudge of the priests increasing still more and more against Tyndale, they never ceased barking and rating at him, and laid many things sorely to his charge, saying that he was a heretic. Being so molested and vexed, he was constrained to leave that country, and to seek another place; and so coming to Master Welch, he desired him, of his good will, that he might depart from him, saying: "Sir, I perceive that I shall not be suffered to tarry long here in this country, neither shall you be able, though you would, to keep me out of the hands of the spirituality; what displeasure might grow to you by keeping me, God knoweth; for the which I should be right sorry."

So that in fine, Master Tyndale, with the good will of his master, departed, and eftsoons came up to London, and there preached a while, as he had done in the country.

Bethinking himself of Cuthbert Tonstal, then bishop of London, and especially of the great commendation of Erasmus, who, in his annotations, so extolleth the said Tonstal for his learning, Tyndale thus cast with himself, that if he might attain unto his service, he were a happy man. Coming to Sir Henry Guilford, the king's comptroller, and bringing with him an oration of Isocrates, which he had translated out of Greek into English, he desired him to speak to the said bishop of London for him; which he also did; and willed him moreover to write an epistle to the bishop, and to go himself with him. This he did, and delivered his epistle to a servant of his, named William Hebilthwait, a man of his old acquaintance. But God, who secretly disposeth the course of things, saw that was not best for Tyndale's purpose, nor for the profit of His Church, and therefore gave him to find little favor in the bishop's sight; the answer of whom was this: his house was full; he had more than he could well find: and he advised him to seek in London abroad, where, he said, he could lack no service.

Being refused of the bishop he came to Humphrey Mummuth, alderman of London, and besought him to help him: who the same time took him into his house, where the said Tyndale lived (as Mummuth said) like a good priest, studying both night and day. He would eat but sodden meat by his good will, nor drink but small single beer. He was never seen in the house to wear linen about him, all the space of his being there.

And so remained Master Tyndale in London almost a year, marking with himself the course of the world, and especially the demeanor of the preachers, how they boasted themselves, and set up their authority; beholding also the pomp of the prelates, with other things more, which greatly misliked him; insomuch that he understood not only that there was no room in the bishop's house for him to translate the New Testament, but also that there was no place to do it in all England.

Therefore, having by God's providence some aid ministered unto him by Humphrey Mummuth, and certain other good men, he took his leave of the realm, and departed into Germany, where the good man, being inflamed with a tender care and zeal of his country, refused no travail nor diligence, how, by all means possible, to reduce his brethren and countrymen of England to the same taste and understanding of God's holy Word and verity, which the Lord had endued him withal. Whereupon, considering in his mind, and conferring also with John Frith, Tyndale thought with himself no way more to conduce thereunto, than if the Scripture were turned into the vulgar speech, that the poor people might read and see the simple plain Word of God. He perceived that it was not possible to establish the lay people in any truth, except the Scriptures were so plainly laid before their eyes in their mother tongue that they might see the meaning of the text; for else, whatsoever truth should be taught them, the enemies of the truth would quench it, either with reasons of sophistry, and traditions of their own making, founded without all ground of Scripture; or else juggling with the text, expounding it in such a sense as it were impossible to gather of the text, if the right meaning thereof were seen.

A leaf from the Tyndale Bible, the original Tyndale translation can be [downloaded here](http://www.christians.com/sites/all/themes/christians/files/tyndalebible.pdf).Master Tyndale considered this only, or most chiefly, to be the cause of all mischief in the Church, that the Scriptures of God were hidden from the people's eyes; for so long the abominable doings and idolatries maintained by the pharisaical clergy could not be espied; and therefore all their labor was with might and main to keep it down, so that either it should not be read at all, or if it were, they would darken the right sense with the mist of their sophistry, and so entangle those who reguked or despised their abominations; wresting the Scripture unto their own purpose, contrary unto the meaning of the text, they would so delude the unlearned lay people, that though thou felt in thy heart, and wert sure that all were false that they said, yet couldst thou not solve their subtle riddles.

For these and such other considerations this good man was stirred up of God to translate the Scripture into his mother tongue, for the profit of the simple people of his country; first setting in hand with the New Testament, which came forth in print about A.D. 1525. Cuthbert Tonstal, bishop of London, with Sir Thomas More, being sore aggrieved, despised how to destroy that false erroneous translation, as they called it.

It happened that one Augustine Packington, a mercer, was then at Antwerp, where the bishop was. This man favored Tyndale, but showed the contrary unto the bishop. The bishop, being desirous to bring his purpose to pass, communed how that he would gladly buy the New Testaments. Packington hearing him say so, said, "My lord! I can do more in this matter than most merchants that be here, if it be your pleasure; for I know the Dutchmen and strangers that have brought them of Tyndale, and have them here to sell; so that if it be your lordship's pleasure, I must disburse money to pay for them, or else I cannot have them: and so I will assure you to have every book of them that is printed and unsold." The bishop, thinking he had God "by the toe," said, "Do your diligence, gentle Master Packington! get them for me, and I will pay whatsoever they cost; for I intend to burn and destroy them all at Paul's Cross." This Augustine Packington went unto William Tyndale, and declared the whole matter, and so, upon compact made between them, the bishop of London had the books, Packington had the thanks, and Tyndale had the money.

After this, Tyndale corrected the same New Testaments again, and caused them to be newly imprinted, so that they came thick and threefold over into England. When the bishop perceived that, he sent for Packington, and said to him, "How cometh this, that there are so many New Testaments abroad? You promised me that you would buy them all." Then answered Packington, "Surely, I bought all that were to be had, but I perceive they have printed more since. I see it will never be better so long as they have letters and stamps: wherefore you were best to buy the stamps too, and so you shall be sure," at which answer the bishop smiled, and so the matter ended.

In short space after, it fortuned that George Constantine was apprehended by Sir Thomas More, who was then chancellor of England, as suspected of certain heresies. Master More asked of him, saying, "Constantine! I would have thee be plain with me in one thing that I will ask; and I promise thee I will show thee favor in all other things whereof thou art accused. There is beyond the sea, Tyndale, Joye, and a great many of you: I know they cannot live without help. There are some that succor them with money; and thou, being one of them, hadst thy part thereof, and therefore knowest whence it came. I pray thee, tell me, who be they that help them thus?" "My lord," quoth Constantine, "I will tell you truly: it is the bishop of London that hath holpen us, for he hath bestowed among us a great deal of money upon New Testaments to burn them; and that hath been, and yet is, our only succor and comfort." "Now by my troth," quoth More, "I think even the same; for so much I told the bishop before he went about it."

After that, Master Tyndale took in hand to translate the Old Testament, finishing the five books of Moses, with sundry most learned and godly prologues most worthy to be read and read again by all good Christians. These books being sent over into England, it cannot be spoken what a door of light they opened to the eyes of the whole English nation, which before were shut up in darkness.

At his first departing out of the realm he took his journey into Germany, where he had conference with Luther and other learned men; after he had continued there a certain season he came down into the Netherlands, and had his most abiding in the town of Antwerp.

The godly books of Tyndale, and especially the New Testament of his translation, after that they began to come into men's hands, and to spread abroad, wrought great and singular profit to the godly; but the ungodly (envying and disdaining that the people should be anything wiser than they and, fearing lest by the shining beams of truth, their works of darkness should be discerned) began to sir with no small ado.

At what time Tyndale had translated Deuteronomy, minding to print the same at Hamburg, he sailed thitherward; upon the coast of Holland he suffered shipwreck, by which he lost all his books, writings, and copies, his money and his time, and so was compelled to begin all again. He came in another ship to Hamburg, where, at his appointment, Master Coverdale tarried for him, and helped him in the translating of the whole five books of Moses, from Easter until December, in the house of a worshipful widow, Mistress Margaret Van Emmerson, A.D. 1529; a great sweating sickness being at the same time in the town. So, having dispatched his business at Hamburg, he returned to Antwerp.

When God's will was, that the New Testament in the common tongue should come abroad, Tyndale, the translator thereof, added to the latter end a certain epistle, wherein he desired them that were learned to amend, if ought were found amiss. Wherefore if there had been any such default deserving correction, it had been the part of courtesy and gentleness, for men of knowledge and judgment to have showed their learning therein, and to have redressed what was to be amended. But the clergy, not willing to have that book prosper, cried out upon it, that there were a thousand heresies in it, and that it was not to be corrected, but utterly to be suppressed. Some said it was not possible to translate the Scriptures into English; some that it was not lawful for the lay people to have it in their mother tongue; some, that it would make them all heretics. And to the intent to induce the temporal rulers unto their purpose, they said it would make the people to rebel against the king.

All this Tyndale himself, in his prologue before the first book of Moses, declareth; showing further what great pains were taken in examining that translation, and comparing it with their own imaginations, that with less labor, he supposeth, they might have translated a great part of the Bible; showing moreover that they scanned and examined every title and point in such sort, and so narrowly, that there was not one i therein, but if it lacked a prick over his head, they did note it, and numbered it unto the ignorant people for a heresy.

Tyndale also wrote The Obedience of a Christian ManSo great were then the froward devices of the English clergy (who should have been the guides of light unto the people), to drive the people from the knowledge of the Scripture, which neither they would translate themselves, nor yet abide it to be translated of others; to the intent (as Tyndale saith) that the world being kept still in darkness, they might sit in the consciences of the people through vain superstition and false doctrine, to satisfy their ambition, and insatiable covetousness, and to exalt their own honor above king and emperor.

The bishops and prelates never rested before they had brought the king to their consent; by reason whereof, a proclamation in all haste was devised and set forth under public authority, that the Testament of Tyndale's translation was inhibited-which was about A.D. 1537. And not content herewith, they proceeded further, how to entangle him in their nets, and to bereave him of his life; which how they brought to pass, now it remaineth to be declared.

In the registers of London it appeareth manifest how that the bishops and Sir Thomas More having before them such as had been at Antwerp, most studiously would search and examine all things belonging to Tyndale, where and with whom he hosted, whereabouts stood the house, what was his stature, in what apparel he went, what resort he had; all which things when they had diligently learned then began they to work their feats.

William Tyndale, being in the town of Antwerp, had been lodged about one whole year in the house of Thomas Pointz, an Englishman, who kept a house of English merchants. Came thither one out of England, whose name was Henry Philips, his father being customer of Poole, a comely fellow, like as he had been a gentleman having a servant with him: but wherefore he came, or for what purpose he was sent thither, no man could tell.

Master Tyndale divers times was desired forth to dinner and support amongst merchants; by means whereof this Henry Philips became acquainted with him, so that within short space Master Tyndale had a great confidence in him, and brought him to his lodging, to the house of Thomas Pointz; and had him also once or twice with him to dinner and supper, and further entered such friendship with him, that through his procurement he lay in the same house of the sait Pointz; to whom he showed moreover his books,a nd other secrets of his study, so little did Tyndale then mistrust this traitor.

But Pointz, having no great confidence in the fellow, asked Master Tyndale how he came acquainted with this Philips. Master Tyndale answered, that he was an honest man, handsomely learned, and very conformable. Pointz, perceiving that he bare such favor to him, said no more, thinking that he was brought acquainted with him by some friend of his. The said Philips, being in the town three or four days, upon a time desired Pointz to walk with him forth of the town to show him the commodities thereof, and in walking together without the town, had communication of divers things, and some of the king's affairs; by which talk Pointz as yet suspected nothing. But after, when the time was past, Pointz perceived this to be the mind of Philips, to feel whether the said Pointz might, for lucre of money, help him to his purpose, for he perceived before that Philips was monied, and would that Pointz should think no less. For he had desired Pointz before to help him to divers things; and such things as he named, he required might be of the best, "for," said he, "I have money enough."

Philips went from Antwerp to the court of Brussels, which is from thence twenty-four English miles, whence he brought with him to Antwerp, the procurator-general, who is the emperor's attorney, with certain other officers.

Within three or four days, Pointz went forth to the town of Barois, being eighteen English miles from Antwerp, where he had business to do for the space of a month or six weeks; and in the time of his absence Henry Philips came again to Antwerp, to the house of Pointz, and coming in, spake with his wife, asking whether Master Tyndale were within. Then went he forth again and set the officers whom he had brought with him from Brussels, in the street, and about the door. About noon he came again, and went to Master Tyndale, and desired him to lend him forty shillings; "for," said he, "I lost my purse this morning, coming over at the passage between this and Mechlin." So Master Tyndale took him forty shillings, which was easy to be had of him, if he had it; for in the wily subtleties of this world he was simple and inexpert. Then said Philips, "Master Tyndale! you shall be my guest here this day." "No," said Master Tyndale, "I go forth this day to dinner, and you shall go with me, and be my guest, where you shall be welcome."

So when it was dinner time, Master Tyndale went forth with Philips, and at the going forth of Pointz's house, was a long narrow entry, so that two could not go in front. Master Tyndale would have put Philips before him, but Philips would in no wise, but put Master Tyndale before, for that he pretended to show great humanity. So Master Tyndale, being a man of no great stature, went before, and Philips, a tall, comely person, followed behind him; who had set officers on either side of the door upon two seats, who might see who came in the entry. Philips pointed with his finger over Master Tyndale's head down to him, that the officers might see that it was he whom they should take. The officers afterwards told Pointz, when they had laid him in prison, that they pitied to see his simplicity. They brought him to the emperor's attorney, where he dined. Then came the procurator-general to the house of Pointz, and sent away all that was there of Master Tyndale's, as well his books as other things; and from thence Tyndale was had to the castle of Vilvorde, eighteen English miles from Antwerp.

Master Tyndale, remaining in prison, was proffered an advocate and a procurator; the which he refused, saying that he would make answer for himself. He had so preached to them who had him in charge, and such as was there conversant with him in the Castle that they reported of him, that if he were not a good Christian man, they knew not whom they might take to be one.

At last, after much reasoning, when no reason would serve, although he deserved no death, he was condemned by virtue of the emperor's decree, made in the assembly at Augsburg. Brought forth to the place of execution, he was tied to the stake, strangled by the hangman, and afterwards consumed with fire, at the town of Vilvorde, A.D. 1536; crying at the stake with a fervent zeal, and a loud voice, "Lord! open the king of England's eyes."

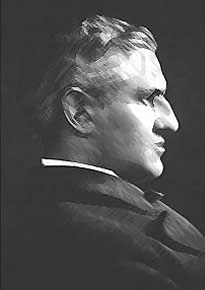
Such was the power of his doctrine, and the sincerity of his life, that during the time of his imprisonment (which endured a year and a half), he converted, it is said, his keeper, the keeper's daughter, and others of his household.

As touching his translation of the New Testament, because his enemies did so much carp at it, pretending it to be full of heresies, he wrote to John Frith, as followeth, "I call God to record against the day we shall appear before our Lord Jesus, that I never altered one syllable of God's Word against my conscience, nor would do this day, if all that is in earth, whether it be honor, pleasure, or riches, might be given me."

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Horatio Spafford

It Is Well with My Soul is a very influential hymn penned by hymnist Horatio Spafford and composed by Philip Bliss.

Listen to the hymn's music

[](http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/ac0008s.jpg)Original Manuscript of It Is Well With My Soul as written by Horatio Spafford

[](http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/ac0001s.jpg)The Spafford family album

[](http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/ac0006s.jpg)Anna's telegram to Horatio stating "Saved alone. What shall I do . . ."

A short video with the hymn as sung by Wintley Phipps.

# It Is Well With My Soul

Horatio Spafford

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,  
When sorrows like sea billows roll;  
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,  
It is well, it is well with my soul.

Refrain:  
It is well, with my soul,  
It is well, with my soul,  
It is well, it is well, with my soul.

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,  
Let this blest assurance control,  
That Christ hath regarded my helpless estate,  
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.

My sin, oh the bliss of this glorious thought!  
My sin, not in part but the whole,  
Is nailed to His cross, and I bear it no more,  
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

For me, be it Christ, be it Christ hence to live:  
If Jordan above me shall roll,  
No pang shall be mine, for in death as in life  
Thou wilt whisper Thy peace to my soul.

And Lord haste the day, when my faith shall be sight,  
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;  
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,  
Even so, it is well with my soul.

The Story Behind the Song

The popular hymn "It Is Well With My Soul" was written by [Horatio G. Spafford](http://www.christians.com/horatiospafford/main), a popular Chicago lawyer during the mid-1800s. You might think to write a worship song such as this, he would probably have to be a rich, successful Chicago lawyer. In reality, he was a very successful lawyer. But the words, ***"When sorrows like sea billows roll ... It is well with my soul”***, were not written during the happiest period of Spafford's life. On the contrary, they came from a man who had suffered almost unimaginable personal tragedy.

[Horatio G. Spafford](http://www.christians.com/horatiospafford/main) and his wife, Anna, were pretty well-known in 1860’s Chicago. And this was not just because of Horatio's legal career and business endeavors. The Spaffords were also prominent supporters and close friends of D.L. Moody, the famous preacher. In 1870, however, things started to go wrong. The Spaffords' only son was killed by scarlet fever at the age of four. A year later, it was fire rather than fever that struck. Horatio had invested heavily in real estate on the shores of Lake Michigan. In 1871, every one of these holdings was wiped out by the "Great Chicago Fire".

Aware of the toll that these disasters had taken on the family, Horatio decided to take his wife and four daughters on a holiday to England. And, not only did they need the rest but D.L. Moody, who was preaching in England, needed the help. He was traveling around Britain on one of his great evangelistic campaigns. Horatio and Anna planned to join Moody in late 1873. And so, the Spaffords traveled to New York in November, from where they were to catch the French steamer 'Ville de Havre' across the Atlantic. Yet just before they set sail, a last-minute business development forced Horatio to delay. Not wanting to ruin the family holiday, Spafford persuaded his family to go as planned. He would follow on later. With this decided, Anna and her four daughters sailed East to Europe while Spafford returned West to Chicago. Just nine days later, Spafford received a telegram from his wife in Wales. It read: "Saved alone."

On November 2nd 1873, the 'Ville de Havre' had collided with 'The Lochearn', an English vessel. It sank in minutes, claiming the lives of 226 people. Anna Spafford had stood bravely on the deck, with her daughters Annie, Maggie, Bessie and Tanetta clinging desperately to her. Her last memory had been of her baby being torn violently from her arms by the force of the waters. Anna was only saved from the fate of her daughters by a plank which floated beneath her unconscious body and propped her up. When the survivors of the wreck had been rescued, Mrs. Spafford's first reaction was one of complete despair. Then she heard a voice speak to her, "You were spared for a purpose." And she immediately recalled the words of a friend, "It's easy to be grateful and good when you have so much, but take care that you are not a fair-weather friend to God."

Upon hearing the terrible news, [Horatio Spafford](http://www.christians.com/horatiospafford/main) boarded the next ship out of New York to join his bereaved wife. Bertha Spafford (the fifth daughter of Horatio and Anna born later) explained that during her father's voyage, the captain of the ship had called him to the bridge. "A careful reckoning has been made", he said, "and I believe we are now passing the place where the de Havre was wrecked. The water is three miles deep." Horatio then returned to his cabin and penned the lyrics of his great hymn.

The words which Spafford wrote that day come from 2 Kings 4:26. They echo the response of the Shunammite woman to the sudden death of her only child. Though we are told "her soul is vexed within her", she still maintains that 'It is well." And Spafford's song reveals a man whose trust in the Lord is as unwavering as hers was.

It would be very difficult for any of us to predict how we would react under circumstances similar to those experienced by the Spaffords. But we do know that the God who sustained them would also be with us.

**that it is well with your soul no matter what comes?**

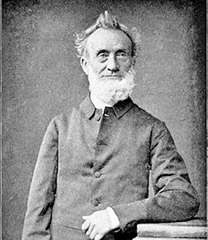
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Muller was born in Kroppenstedt, a village near Halberstadt in the Kingdom of Prussia. His early life was not marked by righteousness—on the contrary, he was a thief, a liar and a gambler. While his mother was dying, he, at 14 years of age, was playing cards with friends and drinking.



The work of Muller and his wife with orphans begin in 1836 with the preparation of their own home in Bristol for the accommodation of thirty girls. Soon after, three more houses were furnished, growing the total of children cared for to 130. In 1845, as growth continued, Muller decided that a separate building designed to house 300 children was necessary, and in 1849, at Ashley Down, Bristol, that home opened. By 1870, more than 2,000 children were being accommodated in five homes.



Muller never made requests for financial support, nor did he go into debt, even though the five homes cost over 100,000 pounds to build. Many times, he received unsolicited food donations only hours before they were needed to feed the children, further strengthening his faith in God. Every morning after breakfast there was a time of Bible reading and prayer, and every child was given a Bible upon leaving the orphanage. The children were dressed well and educated - Muller even employed a school inspector to maintain high standards.

[«](http://www.christians.com/georgemuller/main#prev) [1](http://www.christians.com/georgemuller/main#1) [2](http://www.christians.com/georgemuller/main#2) [3](http://www.christians.com/georgemuller/main#3) [»](http://www.christians.com/georgemuller/main#next)

George Mueller has proved to the world the truth of Philippians 4:19 and he will always be remembered as the man who got things from God. His testimony is an inspiration to Christians everywhere. Three weeks after his marriage, he and his wife decided to depend on God alone to supply their needs--never again to approach people about them. Now he felt led to relinquish his small salary as a preacher completely. Wishing that all support be spontaneous, he put a box in the chapel for his needs; determining never to run into debt, and to get his needs supplied only by requests to God Himself. This was October, 1830. When he died, in March 1898, 68 years later, he had obtained from God more than any one else who ever lived--seven and a half million dollars.

Mueller was the son of Herr and Frau Mueller. His father was a Prussian tax-collector. The family moved to Heimershleben, four miles away, in 1810. Soon two other sons were born. Strangely gullible, the father would entrust his small sons with considerable amounts of cash to teach them to acquire the habit of possessing money without spending it. This back-fired, for George, in particular, devised numerous methods of using the money for himself without being detected. Before he was ten years old, he repeatedly stole from the government funds in his father's keeping.

Herr Mueller wanted his son to be a clergyman and make a good living, in order to be able to support him when he became old. Schooling was obtained for George at Cathedral Classical School at Halberstadt, with very little supervision given him from about age ten to 16. His mother died when he was 14. George was playing cards, not even aware of her illness that night. He spent the next day at a tavern with some friends.

Lutheran church confirmation classes started at this time, and it was a custom for candidates on the eve of confirmation to make a formal confession of their sins to the clergyman in the vestry. Mueller used the opportunity to cheat clergyman of 11/12ths of the fee his father had given him for the cleric. Confirmed the Sunday after Easter, 1820, he was now a religious lost person. When George was 15, his father was transferred to Schoenebeck, Prussia. The son was left at home to supervise some repairs and to study for the ministry. George was up to his old tricks. He collected money which the villagers owed his father for taxes, then took a trip which he later called "...days of sin." He would stay in expensive hotels, sneaking out after a week without paying a bill. However, after a couple weeks of this, he was caught and put in jail for 24 days. The elder Mueller bailed his son out, and soon George entered school at Nordhausen, Prussia, where he stayed for two and one-half years. He studied from 4 a.m. until 10 p.m. The teacher said he had great promise, but drinking and debauchery continued to cancel these acclaims. This time (1820-1825) was also spent in contriving to provide himself with money for his bad habits.

In 1825, when 19 years old, he left school and entered Halle University as a student of Divinity. The University had 1,260 students, including some 900 divinity students preparing themselves for the Lutheran Church ministries. Here he decided he must reform if a parish was to ever choose him as pastor. He renewed an acquaintance in a tavern with a fellow student named Beta, who was a backslidden Christian. They were former school-fellows. In August, 1825, Mueller, Beta, and two other students, pawned some of their belongings to get enough money for a few days of travel. Switzerland was decided upon, and George forged the necessary letters from their parents with which to get passports. Mueller, like Judas, decided to carry the purse. His friends unwittingly paid part of his expenses as a result and 43 idle days of travel followed.

Back at the University, Beta was stricken with remorse and made full confession to his father. Beta began to attend a Saturday night Christian meeting in a home. Mueller, hearing about this, became sincerely interested, and pressed his friend into taking him to the meeting. Beta did, reluctantly, not believing George would like it - reading the Bible, praying, singing hymns, and listening to a sermon. As he sat in the Wagner residence, George saw something he had never seen before--people on their knees praying. He felt awkward for being there and even apologized for his presence. The host pleasantly invited him to come as often as he pleased. As he walked home, he declared, "All we have seen on our journey to Switzerland, and all our former pleasures,are as nothing in comparison with this evening!" That Saturday night in mid-November, 1825, turned him around as Christ became his Savior. At age 20 the unstable pagan found the power to overcome his moral weaknesses and a new life began.

In January, 1826, as he began reading missionary literature, he felt inclined in this direction more and more. He wrote his father and brother to this end. However, the reply from father was a furious objection to these plans. As a result, George decided he would have to support himself at the University, rather than take funds from his father. Back at Halle he obtained a well-paying job of teaching German to American college professors and translating lectures for them. He preached his first sermon on August 27, 1826, at a village six miles from Halle. During this time he lived for two months in the Orphan House built by August Hermann Francke, Professor of Divinity at Halle. Here the seed of an idea was sown that was to come to fruition later in Bristol. In 1828, he completed his University courses.

Mueller now had a desire to become a missionary to the Jews, so he applied to a society in London which majored in this work, which led to an invitation to come for a six-month probationary period in London. He left home on February 10, 1829 and arrived in London on March 19. His English became fluent, although he never lost his German accent. The regulations and routine at seminary tempted him to give up his ideas. His study of Hebrew was unremitting, and soon resulted in delicate health. Advised by doctors and friends, he went to the country for a change of air and schedule which was to change his life as well. He traveled to Teignmouth in Devonshire and became acquainted with Henry Craik, who would become his loyal associate in the ensuing years. Here he attended the reopening of a small meeting-house called Bethesda Chapel, where he was touched deeply by one of the speakers. By the time he returned to London, he was a different man, having learned the value of meditation upon the Scriptures, beginning in August, 1829.

Now he began to gather some of his fellow-students from 6 to 8 a.m. each morning for prayer and Bible reading. Evenings he would pray with anyone he could find, often until after mid-night. During these days he felt he did not want to be limited to ministry amongst the Jews alone, so he resigned from the London Society. Back in the Devonshire area he began to preach in chapels in Exmouth, Teignmouth and Shaldon. He was then called upon to pastor at the Ebenezer Chapel in Teignmouth, a congregation of 18 people where he began in 1830. During this year he became convinced of the necessity of believer's baptism, and was rebaptized. In January of 1830 he undertook a monthly preaching engagement just outside Exeter, lodging there with a Mrs. Hake, an invalid. Mary Groves, age 29, was keeping house for her. Mueller, with a mature outlook on life, was greatly attracted to Mary, though he was only 24 years of age. On October 7, 1830 they were joined in marriage at St. David's Church in Exeter.

Three weeks after their marriage, they decided to depend upon God alone to provide their needs as already indicated. They carried it to the extent that they would not give definite answers to inquiries as to whether or not they were in need of money at any particular moment. At the time of need, there would always seem to be funds available from some source, both in regards to their private income, and to the funds for his vast projects soon to be discussed. No matter how pressing was the need, George simply renewed his prayers, and either money or food always came in time to save the situation. On February 19, 1832, he records an instance of healing by faith. Suffering from a gastric ulcer, he believed God could heal him and four days later he was as well as ever. In the spring of 1832, he felt he must leave Teignmouth. Craik, his friend, had gone on to Bristol for a visit, and Mueller felt led to go there also. On April 22, he preached his first sermon in Bristol. A friend offered to rent Bethesda Chapel there for a year if the two men would stay and develop a work. Agreeing not to be bound by any stipulation, Craik and Mueller accepted the call. On May 25, 1832, the Muellers settled permanently in Bristol which became his home until he died. A long association with the chapel on Great George Street also began. In July of that year, Bristol was visited with a plague of cholera which took many lives, but none of those among whom he and Craik ministered. On September 17, 1832, his first child, Lydia, was born.

It was on February 25, 1834, that George Mueller founded a new Missionary Institution which he called "The Scriptural Knowledge Institution for Home and Abroad." It had four objectives:

1. To assist Sunday Schools, Day Schools and Adult Schools, and where possible to start new ones.
2. To sell Bibles and Testaments to the poor at low prices, and if necessary, to give them free of cost.
3. To aid missionary effort. (This was to provide financial aid to freelance missionaries.)
4. To circulate tracts in English and in various foreign languages.

The Orphan House became a fifth objective, and the most well known enterprise, yet it is right to point out that Mueller was greatly used in developing the other objectives as well.

On March 19, 1834, a son, Elijah, was born but he died the next year, June 25, 1835, from pneumonia, leaving the Muellers with only one child--Lydia. The summer of 1835 found Mueller himself in very poor health, slowing down his pace and giving him time to write "The Narrative of the Lord's Dealing with George Mueller."

For some time he had been thinking about starting an orphanage in Bristol. On December 9, 1835 he presented his burden at a public meeting. No collection was taken, but someone handed him ten shillings and a Christian woman offered herself for the work. After five days of prayer $300 came in and it seemed they might now have enough money to rent a house, equip and furnish it. The other request was for Christian people to work with the children. His basic aim was to have a work - something to point to as visible proof that God hears and answers prayer. His heart went out to the many ragged children running wild in the streets, but that was a secondary reason for starting the orphanage.

He rented Number 6 Wilson Street, where he himself had been living, and on April 11, 1836, the doors of the orphanage opened with 26 children. These were girls between seven and twelve years old.

The second House was opened on November 28, 1836, to care for children from babyhood to seven years of age. In September, 1837, a third house was opened for boys over seven years of age.

Illness plagued Mueller from time to time, and in late 1837 he was very weak. This time his head provided the discomfort. He went to Germany in the spring of 1838 as well as in February, 1840, when he saw his father for a last time. Presumably he still had not accepted Christ as George noted, "How it would have cheered the separation on both sides were my dear father a believer." He died shortly thereafter. The years 1828 to 1843 were surely years of trials for Craik and Mueller as they prayed in everything. All were properly clad and everyone sat down to regular meals in the Houses. Mueller never incurred a debt, and God supernaturally provided for everyone. A well known story indicates the kind of life that was lived.

The Ashley Down Orphanages in BristolOne morning the plates and cups and bowls on the table were empty. There was no food in the larder, and no money to buy food. The children were standing waiting for their morning meal, when Mueller said, "Children, you know we must be in time for school." Lifting his hand he said, "Dear Father, we thank Thee for what Thou art going to give us to eat." There was a knock on the door. The baker stood there, and said, "Mr. Mueller, I couldn't sleep last night. Somehow I felt you didn't have bread for breakfast and the Lord wanted me to send you some. So I got up at 2 a.m. and baked some fresh bread, and have brought it." Mueller thanked the man. No sooner had this transpired when there was a second knock at the door. It was the milkman. He announced that his milk cart had broken down right in front of the Orphanage, and he would like to give the children his cans of fresh milk so he could empty his wagon and repair it. No wonder, years later, when Mueller was to travel the world as an evangelist, he would be heralded as "the man who gets things from God!"

By March, 1843, he felt the need for a second home for girls. On July, 1844, the fourth house on Wilson Street was opened - the total of his homeless waifs now being 130. A letter received on October 30, 1845, changed his entire ministry... he was now age 40. Basically, it was a letter from a local resident complaining that the noise of the children was a nuisance. They were vastly over-crowded and there was not enough space for land cultivation, washing clothes, etc. He gave the letter much thought, listing the pros and cons. If he were to leave, he would have to build a structure to hold at least 300 orphans at a cost of $60,000. On his 36th day of prayer over the dilemma, the first $6,000 came in for a building program. By June, 1848, he received all of the $60,000 which he needed. He had begun to build the previous year on July 5, 1847, at a placed called Ashley Downs as the bulk of the money had been sent in. Building Number 1 was opened in June, 1849, and housed 300 children with staff sufficient to teach and care for them. It was a seven-acre site and finally cost about $90,000 as legal expenses, furnishings, and land purchase brought the price up higher than anticipated. The old houses on Wilson Street emptied and everyone was now under one roof.

Mueller was becoming a well known Christian leader. He answered some 3,000 letters a year without a secretary. Besides his orphanages, the four other objectives of his Scriptural Knowledge Institution claimed his attention and he continued his pastoral work at Bethesda Chapel also.

In 1850, he felt the need for a second orphanage. Donations began to come in miraculously again and finally, on November 12, 1857, a second building housing 400 children at a cost of $126,000 was built. Number 3 opened on March 12, 1862, housing 450 children, and costing over $138,000. It was housed on 11 1/2 acres. Number 4 was opened November 5, 1868, and Number 5 on January 6, 1870. These last two cost over $300,000 and housed 450 each.

From 1848 to 1874, money came in to improve and expand the work which went from 130 orphans to 2,050 during this time and up to 13 acres. Mueller describes these days, writing in 1874:

But God, our infinite rich Treasurer, remains with us. It is this which gives me peace. Moreover if it pleases Him, with a work requiring about $264,000 a year...would I gladly pass through all these trials of faith with regard to means, if He only might be glorified, and His Church and the world benefited...I have placed myself in the position of having no means at all left; and 2,100 persons, not only daily at the table, but with everything else to be provided for, and all the funds gone; 189 missionaries to be assisted, and nothing whatever left; about one hundred schools with 9,000 scholars in them, to be entirely supported, and no means for them in hand; about four million tracts and tens of thousands of copies of the Holy Scriptures yearly now to be sent out, and all the money expended...I commit the whole work to Him, and He will provide me with what I need, in future also, though I know not whence the means are to come.

His own personal income varied around $12,000 a year, of which he kept for himself $1,800 giving the rest away.

His fellow worker, Henry Craik, died on January 22, 1866, followed by the death of his wife on February 6, 1870. She was 72 and had suffered from rheumatic fever. James Wright married Mueller's daughter, Lydia in 1871 and also replaced Craik as his associate. Mueller himself remarried on November 30, 1871, to a Susannah Grace Sangar, whom he had known for 25 years as a consistent Christian. He was 66 and she in her late forties, a perfect companion for him in his ministries still ahead.

Mueller decided to fulfill the many requests for his appearance around the world. Turning the work over to Wright, from 1875 to 1892, Mueller made 16 preaching trips to various sectors of the world.

George and his wife traveled 200,000 miles in 17 years of world-wide evangelism efforts, in 42 countries, preaching to 3 million people.

Among the greatest monuments of what can be accomplished through simple faith in God are the great orphanages covering thirteen acres of ground on Ashley Downs, Bristol, England. When God put it into the heart of George Muller to build these orphanages, he had only two shillings (50 cents) in his pocket. Without making his wants known to any man, but to God alone, over a million, four hundred thousand pounds ($7,000,000) were sent to him for the building and maintaining of these orphan homes. When the writer first visited them, near the time of Mr. Muller's death, there were five immense buildings of solid granite, capable of accommodating two thousand orphans. In all the years since the first orphans arrived the Lord had sent food in due time, so that they had never missed a meal for want of food.

Although George Muller became famous as one of the greatest men of prayer known to history, he was not always a saint. He wandered very deep into sin before he was brought to Christ. He was born in the kingdom of Prussia, in 1805. His father was a revenue collector for the government, and was a worldly-minded man. He supplied George and his brother with plenty of money when they were boys, and they spent it very foolishly. George deceived his father about how much money he spent, and also as to how he spent it. He also stole the government money during his father's absence.

At ten years of age, George was sent to the cathedral classical school at Halberstadt. His father wanted to make a Lutheran clergyman of him, not that he might serve God, but that he might have an easy and comfortable living from the State Church. "My time," says he. "was now spent in studying, reading novels, and indulging, though so young, in sinful practices. Thus it continued until I was fourteen years old, when my mother was suddenly removed. The night she was dying, I, not knowing of her illness, was playing cards until two in the morning, and on the next day, being the Lord's day, I went with some of my companions in sin to a tavern, and then, being filled with strong beer, we went about the streets half intoxicated."

"I grew worse and worse," says he. "Three or four days before I was confirmed (and thus admitted to partake of the Lord's supper), I was guilty of gross immorality; and the very day before my confirmation, when I was in the vestry with the clergyman to confess my sins (according to the usual practice), after a formal manner, I defrauded him; for I handed over to him only a twelfth part of the fee which my father had given me for him."

A few solemn thoughts and desires to lead a better life came to him, but he continued to plunge deeper and deeper into sin. Lying, stealing, gambling, novel-reading, licentiousness, extravagance, and almost every form of sin was indulged in by him. No one would have imagined that the sinful youth would ever become eminent for his faith in God and for his power in prayer. He robbed his father of certain rents which his father had entrusted him to collect, falsifying the accounts of what he had received and pocketing the balance. His money was spent on sinful pleasures, and once he was reduced to such poverty that, in order to satisfy his hunger, he stole a piece of coarse bread, the allowance of a soldier who was quartered in the house where he was. In 1821 he set off on an excursion to Magdeburg, where he spent six days in "much sin." He then went to Brunswick, and put up at an expensive hotel until his money was exhausted. He then put up at a fine hotel in a neighboring village, intending to defraud the hotel-keeper. But his best clothes were taken in lieu of what he owed. He then walked six miles to another inn, where he was arrested for trying to defraud the landlord. He was imprisoned for this crime when sixteen years of age.

After his imprisonment young Muller returned to his home and received a severe thrashing from his angry father. He remained as sinful in heart as ever, but in order to regain his father's confidence he began to lead a very exemplary life outwardly, until he had the confidence of all around him. His father decided to send him to the classical school at Halle, where the discipline was very strict, but George had no intention of going there. He went to Nordhausen instead, and by using many lies and entreaties persuaded his father to allow him to remain there for two years and six months, till Easter, 1825. Here he studied diligently, was held up as an example to the other students, and became proficient in Latin, French, History, and his own language (German). "But whilst I was outwardly gaining the esteem of my fellow-creatures," says he, "I did not care in the least about God, but lived secretly in much sin, in consequence of which I was taken ill, and for thirteen weeks confined to my room. All this time I had no real sorrow of heart, yet being under certain natural impressions of religion, I read through Klopstock's works, without weariness. I cared nothing about the Word of God."

"Now and then I felt I ought to become a different person," says he, "and I tried to amend my conduct, particularly when I went to the Lord's supper, as I used to do twice every year, with the other young men. The day previous to attending that ordinance I used to refrain from certain things, and on the day itself I was serious, and also swore once or twice to God with the emblem of the broken body in my mouth, to become better, thinking that for the oath's sake I should be induced to reform. But after one or two days were over, all was forgotten, and I was as bad as before."

He entered the University of Halle as a divinity student, with good testimonials. This qualified him to preach in the Lutheran state church. While at the university he spent all his money in profligate living. "When my money was spent," says he, "I pawned my watch and part of my linen and clothes, or borrowed in other ways. Yet in the midst of all this I had a desire to renounce this wretched life, for I had no enjoyment in it, and had sense enough left to see, that the end one day or other would be miserable; for I should never get a living. But I had no sorrow of heart on account of offending God."

At the University he formed the acquaintance of a miserable backslider, named Beta, who was trying by means of worldly pleasures to drown out his conviction of sin. They plunged into sin together, and in June, 1825, George was again taken sick. After his recovery they forged letters purporting to be from his parents. With these they obtained passports and set out to see Switzerland. Muller stole from the friends who accompanied him and the journey did not cost him so much as it did them. They returned home to finish up the vacation and then went back to the University, Muller having lied to his father about the trip to Switzerland.

At the University of Halle there were about nine hundred divinity students. All of these were allowed to preach, but Muller estimates that not nine of them feared the Lord. "One Saturday afternoon, about the middle of November, 1825," says he, "I had taken a walk with my friend Beta. On our return he said to me, that he was in the habit of going on Saturday evenings to the house of a Christian, where there was a meeting. On further inquiry he told me that they read the Bible, sang, prayed, and read a printed sermon. No sooner had I heard this, but it was to me as if I had found something after which I had been seeking all my life long. I immediately wished to go with my friend, who was not at once willing to take me; for knowing me as a merry young man, he thought I should not like this meeting. At last, however, he said he would call for me."

Describing the meeting, Muller said: "We went together in the evening. As I did not know the manners of the brethren, and the joy they have in seeing poor sinners, even in any measure caring about the things of God, I made an apology for coming. The kind answer of this dear brother I shall never forget. He said: 'Come as often as you please; house and heart are open to you."' After a hymn was sung they fell upon their knees, and a brother, named Kayser, who afterwards became a missionary to Africa, asked God's blessing on the meeting. "This kneeling down made a deep impression upon me," says Muller, "for I had never either seen any one on his knees, nor had I ever myself prayed on my knees. He then read a chapter and a printed sermon; for no regular meetings for expounding the Scriptures were allowed in Prussia, except an ordained clergyman was present. At the close we sang another hymn, and then the master of the house prayed." The meeting made a deep impression upon Muller. "I was happy," says he, "though if I had been asked why I was happy, I could not clearly have explained it."

"When we walked home, I said to Beta, all we have seen on our journey to Switzerland, and all our former pleasures, are as nothing in comparison with this evening. Whether I fell on my knees when I returned home I do not remember; but this I know, that I lay peaceful and happy in my bed. This shows that the Lord may begin his work in different ways. For I have not the least doubt that on that evening He began a work of grace in me, though I obtained joy without any deep sorrow of heart, and with scarcely any knowledge. But that evening was the turning point in my life. The next day, and Monday, and once or twice besides, I went again to the house of this brother, where I read the Scriptures with him and another brother; for it was too long for me to wait until Saturday came again."

"Now my life became very different, though not so, that my sins were all given up at once. My wicked companions were given up; the going to taverns was discontinued; the habitual practice of telling falsehoods was no longer indulged in, but still a few times more I spoke an untruth... I now no longer lived habitually in sin, though I was still often overcome and sometimes even by open sins, though far less frequently than before, and not without sorrow of heart. I read the Scriptures, prayed often, loved the brethren, went to church from right motives and stood on the side of Christ, though laughed at by my fellow students."

For a few weeks after his conversion Muller made rapid advancement in the Christian life, and he was greatly desirous of becoming a missionary. But he fell in love with a Roman Catholic girl, and for some time the Lord was well nigh forgotten. Then Muller saw a young missionary giving up all the luxuries of a beautiful home for Christ. This opened his eyes to his own selfishness and enabled him to give up the girl who had taken the place of Christ in his heart. "It was at this time," says he, "that I began to enjoy the peace of God, which passeth all understanding. In this my joy I wrote to my father and brother, entreating them to seek the Lord, and telling them how happy I was; thinking, that if the way to happiness were set before them, they would gladly embrace it. To my great surprise an angry answer was returned."

George could not enter any German missionary training institution without the consent of his father, and this he could not obtain. His father was deeply grieved that after educating him so that he could obtain a comfortable living as a clergyman he should turn missionary. George felt that he could no longer accept any money from him. The Lord graciously sent him means with which to complete his education. He taught German to some American college professors at the University, and they handsomely remunerated him for his services. He was now the means of winning a number of souls to Christ. He gave away thousands of religious tracts and papers, and spoke to many persons concerning the salvation of their souls.

The playground at George Muller's OrphanageAlthough, before his conversion, Muller had written to his father and told him about sermons he had preached, he never really preached a sermon until some time after his conversion. He thought to please his father by making him believe that he was preaching. His first sermon was a printed one which he had memorized for the occasion. He had but little liberty in preaching it. The second time he preached extemporaneously and had some degree of liberty. "I now preached frequently," says he, "both in the churches of the villages and towns, but never had any enjoyment in doing so, except when speaking in a simple way; though the repetition of sermons which had been committed to memory brought more praise from my fellow creatures. But from neither way of preaching did I see any fruit. It may be that the last day will show the benefit even of those feeble endeavors. One reason why the Lord did not permit me to see fruit, seems to me, that I should have been most probably lifted up by success. It may be also because I prayed exceedingly little respecting the ministry of the Word, and because I walked so little with God, and was so rarely a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use."

The true believers at the University increased from six to about twenty in number before Muller left. They often met in Muller's room to pray, sing and read the Bible. He sometimes walked ten or fifteen miles to hear a really pious minister preach.

In 1827 Muller volunteered to go as a missionary pastor to the Germans at Bucharest, but the war between the Turks and Russians prevented this. In 1828, at the suggestion of their agent, he offered himself to the London Missionary Society as a missionary to the Jews. He was well versed in the Hebrew language and had a great love for it. The Society desired him to come to London that they might see him personally. Through the providence of God he finally secured exemption for life from serving in the Prussian army, and he went to England in 1829, at twenty-four years of age. He was not able to speak the English language for some time after he landed in England and then only in a very broken manner at first.

Soon after coming to England Muller received a deeper Christian experience which entirely revolutionized his life. "I came weak in body to England." says he, "and in consequence of much study, as I suppose, I was taken ill on May 15, and was soon, at least in my own estimation, apparently beyond recovery. The weaker I got in body, the happier I was in spirit. Never in my whole life had I seen myself so vile, so guilty, so altogether what I ought not to have been, as at that time. It was as if every sin of which I had been guilty was brought to my remembrance; but at the same time I could realize that all my sins were completely forgiven -- that I was washed and made clean, completely clean, in the blood of Jesus. The result of this was great peace. I longed exceedingly to depart and to be with Christ..."

"After I had been ill about a fortnight my medical attendant unexpectedly pronounced me better. This, instead of giving me joy, bowed me down, so great was my desire to be with the Lord; though almost immediately afterwards grace was given me to submit myself to the will of God."

That Muller always regarded the above experience as one which deepened his whole spiritual life is clearly shown by a letter of his which appeared in the British Christian, of August 14, 1902. In this letter Muller says: "I became a believer in the Lord Jesus in the beginning of November, 1825, now sixty-nine years and eight months. For the first four years afterwards, it was for a good part in great weakness; but in July, 1829, now sixty-six years since, it came with me to an entire and full surrender of heart. I gave myself fully to the Lord. Honors, pleasures, money, my physical powers, my mental powers, all were laid down at the feet of Jesus, and I became a great lover of the Word of God. I found my all in God, and thus in all my trials of a temporal and spiritual character, it has remained for sixty-six years. My faith is not merely exercised regarding temporal things, but regarding everything, because I cleave to the Word. My knowledge of God and His Word is that which helps me."

Being advised to go into the country for his health, he prayed about it and finally decided to go. He went to Devonshire, where the great blessing he had already received was greatly augmented by his conversations and prayers with a Spirit-filled minister whom he first heard preach at Teignmouth. Through the conversations and sermons of this minister he was led to see as never before "that the Word of God alone is our standard of judgment in spiritual things; that it can be explained only by His Holy Spirit; and that in our day, as well as in former times, He is the teacher of His people. The office of the Holy Spirit I had not experimentally understood before that time," says he. "The result of this was, that the first evening that I shut myself into my room to give myself to prayer and meditation over the Scriptures, I learned more in a few hours than I had done during a period of several months previously." Again, he says: "In addition to these truths, it pleased the Lord to lead me to see a higher standard of devotedness than I had seen before."

On his return to London, Muller sought to lead his brethren in the training seminary into the deeper truths he had been brought to realize. "One brother in particular," says he, "was brought into the same state in which I was; and others, I trust, were more or less benefited. Several times, when I went to my room after family prayer, I found communion with God so sweet that I continued in prayer until after twelve, and then being full of joy, went into the room of the brother just referred to, and finding him also in a similar frame of heart, we continued praying until one or two, and even then I was a few times so full of joy that I could scarcely sleep, and at six in the morning again called the brethren together for prayer."

Muller's health declined in London and his soul was also now on fire for God in such a way that he could not settle down to the routine of daily studies. His newly acquired belief in the near coming of Christ also urged him forward to work for the salvation of souls. He felt that the Lord was leading him to begin at once the Christian work he was longing to do, and as the London Missionary Society did not see proper to send him out without the prescribed course of training, he decided to go at once and trust the Lord for the means of support. Soon after this he became pastor of Ebenezer Chapel, Teignmouth, Devonshire. His marriage to Miss Mary Groves, a Devonshire lady, followed. She was always of the same mind as her husband and their married life was a very happy one. Not long after his marriage he began to have conscientious scruples about receiving a regular salary, and also about the renting of pews in his church. He felt that the latter was giving the "man with the ring on his finger" the best seat, and the poorer brother the footstool, and the former was taking money from those who did not give "cheerfully" or "as the Lord had prospered them." These two customs were discontinued by him. He and his wife told their needs to no one but the Lord. Occasionally reports were spread that they were starving; but though at times their faith was tried, their income was greater than before. He and his wife gave away freely all that they had above their present needs, and trusted the Lord for their "daily bread."

Muller preached in many surrounding towns, and many souls were brought to Christ in his meetings. In 1832 he felt profoundly impressed that, his work was ended in Teignmouth, and when he went to Bristol the same year he was as profoundly impressed that the Lord would have him work there. When the Spirit, the Word, and the providence of God agree, we may be quite certain that the Lord is leading us, for these three are always in harmony and cannot disagree. Not only did Muller feel led of the Lord to work in Bristol, but the providence of God opened the way, and it seemed in harmony with the Word of God.

Muller began his labors in Bristol in 1832, as co-pastor with his friend Mr. Craik, who had been called to that city. Without salaries or rented pews their labors were greatly blessed at Gideon and Bethesda Chapels. The membership more than quadrupled in numbers in a short time. Ten days after the opening of Bethesda there was such a crowd of persons inquiring the way of salvation that it took four hours to minister to them. Subsequently Gideon Chapel was relinquished, and in the course of time two neighboring chapels were secured. These churches, though calling themselves non-sectarian, were usually classed with the people commonly known as "Plymouth Brethren." Muller continued to preach to them as long as he lived, even after he began his great work for the orphans. At the time of his death he had a congregation of about two thousand persons at Bethesda Chapel.

In 1834 Mr. Muller started the Scripture Knowledge Institution for Home and Abroad. Its object was to aid Christian day-schools, to assist missionaries, and to circulate the Scriptures. This institution, without worldly patronage, without asking anyone for help, without contracting debts; without committees, subscribers, or memberships; but through faith in the Lord alone, had obtained and disbursed no less a sum than £1,500,000 ($7,500,000) at the time of Mr. Muller's death. The bulk of this was expended for the orphanage. At the time of Mr. Muller's death 122,000 persons had been taught in the schools supported by these funds; and about 282,000 Bibles and 1,500,000 Testaments had been distributed by means of the same fund. Also 112,000,000 religious books, pamphlets and tracts had been circulated; missionaries had been aided in all parts of the world; and no less than ten thousand orphans had been cared for by means of this same fund.

At the age of seventy, Mr. Muller began to make great evangelistic tours. He traveled 200,000 miles, going around the world and preaching in many lands and in several different languages. He frequently spoke to as many as 4,500 or 5,000 persons. Three times he preached throughout the length and breadth of the United States. He continued his missionary or evangelistic tours until he was ninety years of age. He estimated that during these seventeen years of evangelistic work he addressed three million people. All his expenses were sent in answer to the prayer of faith.

Greatest of all Muller's undertakings was the erection and maintenance of the great orphanages at Bristol. He began the undertaking with only two shillings (50 cents) in his pocket; but in answer to prayer and without making his needs known to human beings, he received the means necessary to erect the great buildings and to feed the orphans day by day for sixty years. In all that time the children did not have to go without a meal, and Mr. Muller said that if they ever had to go without a meal he would take it as evidence that the Lord did not will the work to continue. Sometimes the meal time was almost at hand and they did not know where the food would come from, but the Lord always sent it in due time, during the twenty thousand or more days that Mr. Muller had charge of the homes.

[](http://www.christians.com/node/96)

George Muller

September 27, 1805 to March 10, 1898 (93), Evangelist

George Muller is a Christian evangelist and coordinator of orphanages in Bristol, England.

## Relationships

* http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/dwightmoody_main.mini.jpg[Dwight Moody](http://www.christians.com/dwightmoody/main) was very anxious to meet George Muller when he visited England.
* http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/hudsontaylor_main.mini.jpg[Hudson Taylor](http://www.christians.com/hudsontaylor/main) received monetary and moral support from George Muller while he was a missionary in China.

# George Fredrick Muller

* [At A Glance](http://www.christians.com/georgemuller/main)
* [**Testimony**](http://www.christians.com/georgemuller/main)
* [Biography](http://www.christians.com/georgemuller/main)
* [Works](http://www.christians.com/georgemuller/main)

Historical Timeline

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1760

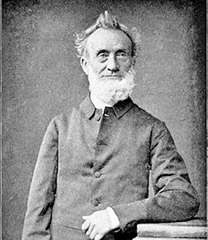
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Muller was born in Kroppenstedt, a village near Halberstadt in the Kingdom of Prussia. His early life was not marked by righteousness—on the contrary, he was a thief, a liar and a gambler. While his mother was dying, he, at 14 years of age, was playing cards with friends and drinking.



The work of Muller and his wife with orphans begin in 1836 with the preparation of their own home in Bristol for the accommodation of thirty girls. Soon after, three more houses were furnished, growing the total of children cared for to 130. In 1845, as growth continued, Muller decided that a separate building designed to house 300 children was necessary, and in 1849, at Ashley Down, Bristol, that home opened. By 1870, more than 2,000 children were being accommodated in five homes.



Muller never made requests for financial support, nor did he go into debt, even though the five homes cost over 100,000 pounds to build. Many times, he received unsolicited food donations only hours before they were needed to feed the children, further strengthening his faith in God. Every morning after breakfast there was a time of Bible reading and prayer, and every child was given a Bible upon leaving the orphanage. The children were dressed well and educated - Muller even employed a school inspector to maintain high standards.

[«](http://www.christians.com/georgemuller/main#prev) [1](http://www.christians.com/georgemuller/main#1) [2](http://www.christians.com/georgemuller/main#2) [3](http://www.christians.com/georgemuller/main#3) [»](http://www.christians.com/georgemuller/main#next)

George Mueller has proved to the world the truth of Philippians 4:19 and he will always be remembered as the man who got things from God. His testimony is an inspiration to Christians everywhere. Three weeks after his marriage, he and his wife decided to depend on God alone to supply their needs--never again to approach people about them. Now he felt led to relinquish his small salary as a preacher completely. Wishing that all support be spontaneous, he put a box in the chapel for his needs; determining never to run into debt, and to get his needs supplied only by requests to God Himself. This was October, 1830. When he died, in March 1898, 68 years later, he had obtained from God more than any one else who ever lived--seven and a half million dollars.

Mueller was the son of Herr and Frau Mueller. His father was a Prussian tax-collector. The family moved to Heimershleben, four miles away, in 1810. Soon two other sons were born. Strangely gullible, the father would entrust his small sons with considerable amounts of cash to teach them to acquire the habit of possessing money without spending it. This back-fired, for George, in particular, devised numerous methods of using the money for himself without being detected. Before he was ten years old, he repeatedly stole from the government funds in his father's keeping.

Herr Mueller wanted his son to be a clergyman and make a good living, in order to be able to support him when he became old. Schooling was obtained for George at Cathedral Classical School at Halberstadt, with very little supervision given him from about age ten to 16. His mother died when he was 14. George was playing cards, not even aware of her illness that night. He spent the next day at a tavern with some friends.

Lutheran church confirmation classes started at this time, and it was a custom for candidates on the eve of confirmation to make a formal confession of their sins to the clergyman in the vestry. Mueller used the opportunity to cheat clergyman of 11/12ths of the fee his father had given him for the cleric. Confirmed the Sunday after Easter, 1820, he was now a religious lost person. When George was 15, his father was transferred to Schoenebeck, Prussia. The son was left at home to supervise some repairs and to study for the ministry. George was up to his old tricks. He collected money which the villagers owed his father for taxes, then took a trip which he later called "...days of sin." He would stay in expensive hotels, sneaking out after a week without paying a bill. However, after a couple weeks of this, he was caught and put in jail for 24 days. The elder Mueller bailed his son out, and soon George entered school at Nordhausen, Prussia, where he stayed for two and one-half years. He studied from 4 a.m. until 10 p.m. The teacher said he had great promise, but drinking and debauchery continued to cancel these acclaims. This time (1820-1825) was also spent in contriving to provide himself with money for his bad habits.

In 1825, when 19 years old, he left school and entered Halle University as a student of Divinity. The University had 1,260 students, including some 900 divinity students preparing themselves for the Lutheran Church ministries. Here he decided he must reform if a parish was to ever choose him as pastor. He renewed an acquaintance in a tavern with a fellow student named Beta, who was a backslidden Christian. They were former school-fellows. In August, 1825, Mueller, Beta, and two other students, pawned some of their belongings to get enough money for a few days of travel. Switzerland was decided upon, and George forged the necessary letters from their parents with which to get passports. Mueller, like Judas, decided to carry the purse. His friends unwittingly paid part of his expenses as a result and 43 idle days of travel followed.

Back at the University, Beta was stricken with remorse and made full confession to his father. Beta began to attend a Saturday night Christian meeting in a home. Mueller, hearing about this, became sincerely interested, and pressed his friend into taking him to the meeting. Beta did, reluctantly, not believing George would like it - reading the Bible, praying, singing hymns, and listening to a sermon. As he sat in the Wagner residence, George saw something he had never seen before--people on their knees praying. He felt awkward for being there and even apologized for his presence. The host pleasantly invited him to come as often as he pleased. As he walked home, he declared, "All we have seen on our journey to Switzerland, and all our former pleasures,are as nothing in comparison with this evening!" That Saturday night in mid-November, 1825, turned him around as Christ became his Savior. At age 20 the unstable pagan found the power to overcome his moral weaknesses and a new life began.

In January, 1826, as he began reading missionary literature, he felt inclined in this direction more and more. He wrote his father and brother to this end. However, the reply from father was a furious objection to these plans. As a result, George decided he would have to support himself at the University, rather than take funds from his father. Back at Halle he obtained a well-paying job of teaching German to American college professors and translating lectures for them. He preached his first sermon on August 27, 1826, at a village six miles from Halle. During this time he lived for two months in the Orphan House built by August Hermann Francke, Professor of Divinity at Halle. Here the seed of an idea was sown that was to come to fruition later in Bristol. In 1828, he completed his University courses.

Mueller now had a desire to become a missionary to the Jews, so he applied to a society in London which majored in this work, which led to an invitation to come for a six-month probationary period in London. He left home on February 10, 1829 and arrived in London on March 19. His English became fluent, although he never lost his German accent. The regulations and routine at seminary tempted him to give up his ideas. His study of Hebrew was unremitting, and soon resulted in delicate health. Advised by doctors and friends, he went to the country for a change of air and schedule which was to change his life as well. He traveled to Teignmouth in Devonshire and became acquainted with Henry Craik, who would become his loyal associate in the ensuing years. Here he attended the reopening of a small meeting-house called Bethesda Chapel, where he was touched deeply by one of the speakers. By the time he returned to London, he was a different man, having learned the value of meditation upon the Scriptures, beginning in August, 1829.

Now he began to gather some of his fellow-students from 6 to 8 a.m. each morning for prayer and Bible reading. Evenings he would pray with anyone he could find, often until after mid-night. During these days he felt he did not want to be limited to ministry amongst the Jews alone, so he resigned from the London Society. Back in the Devonshire area he began to preach in chapels in Exmouth, Teignmouth and Shaldon. He was then called upon to pastor at the Ebenezer Chapel in Teignmouth, a congregation of 18 people where he began in 1830. During this year he became convinced of the necessity of believer's baptism, and was rebaptized. In January of 1830 he undertook a monthly preaching engagement just outside Exeter, lodging there with a Mrs. Hake, an invalid. Mary Groves, age 29, was keeping house for her. Mueller, with a mature outlook on life, was greatly attracted to Mary, though he was only 24 years of age. On October 7, 1830 they were joined in marriage at St. David's Church in Exeter.

Three weeks after their marriage, they decided to depend upon God alone to provide their needs as already indicated. They carried it to the extent that they would not give definite answers to inquiries as to whether or not they were in need of money at any particular moment. At the time of need, there would always seem to be funds available from some source, both in regards to their private income, and to the funds for his vast projects soon to be discussed. No matter how pressing was the need, George simply renewed his prayers, and either money or food always came in time to save the situation. On February 19, 1832, he records an instance of healing by faith. Suffering from a gastric ulcer, he believed God could heal him and four days later he was as well as ever. In the spring of 1832, he felt he must leave Teignmouth. Craik, his friend, had gone on to Bristol for a visit, and Mueller felt led to go there also. On April 22, he preached his first sermon in Bristol. A friend offered to rent Bethesda Chapel there for a year if the two men would stay and develop a work. Agreeing not to be bound by any stipulation, Craik and Mueller accepted the call. On May 25, 1832, the Muellers settled permanently in Bristol which became his home until he died. A long association with the chapel on Great George Street also began. In July of that year, Bristol was visited with a plague of cholera which took many lives, but none of those among whom he and Craik ministered. On September 17, 1832, his first child, Lydia, was born.

It was on February 25, 1834, that George Mueller founded a new Missionary Institution which he called "The Scriptural Knowledge Institution for Home and Abroad." It had four objectives:

1. To assist Sunday Schools, Day Schools and Adult Schools, and where possible to start new ones.
2. To sell Bibles and Testaments to the poor at low prices, and if necessary, to give them free of cost.
3. To aid missionary effort. (This was to provide financial aid to freelance missionaries.)
4. To circulate tracts in English and in various foreign languages.

The Orphan House became a fifth objective, and the most well known enterprise, yet it is right to point out that Mueller was greatly used in developing the other objectives as well.

On March 19, 1834, a son, Elijah, was born but he died the next year, June 25, 1835, from pneumonia, leaving the Muellers with only one child--Lydia. The summer of 1835 found Mueller himself in very poor health, slowing down his pace and giving him time to write "The Narrative of the Lord's Dealing with George Mueller."

For some time he had been thinking about starting an orphanage in Bristol. On December 9, 1835 he presented his burden at a public meeting. No collection was taken, but someone handed him ten shillings and a Christian woman offered herself for the work. After five days of prayer $300 came in and it seemed they might now have enough money to rent a house, equip and furnish it. The other request was for Christian people to work with the children. His basic aim was to have a work - something to point to as visible proof that God hears and answers prayer. His heart went out to the many ragged children running wild in the streets, but that was a secondary reason for starting the orphanage.

He rented Number 6 Wilson Street, where he himself had been living, and on April 11, 1836, the doors of the orphanage opened with 26 children. These were girls between seven and twelve years old.

The second House was opened on November 28, 1836, to care for children from babyhood to seven years of age. In September, 1837, a third house was opened for boys over seven years of age.

Illness plagued Mueller from time to time, and in late 1837 he was very weak. This time his head provided the discomfort. He went to Germany in the spring of 1838 as well as in February, 1840, when he saw his father for a last time. Presumably he still had not accepted Christ as George noted, "How it would have cheered the separation on both sides were my dear father a believer." He died shortly thereafter. The years 1828 to 1843 were surely years of trials for Craik and Mueller as they prayed in everything. All were properly clad and everyone sat down to regular meals in the Houses. Mueller never incurred a debt, and God supernaturally provided for everyone. A well known story indicates the kind of life that was lived.

The Ashley Down Orphanages in BristolOne morning the plates and cups and bowls on the table were empty. There was no food in the larder, and no money to buy food. The children were standing waiting for their morning meal, when Mueller said, "Children, you know we must be in time for school." Lifting his hand he said, "Dear Father, we thank Thee for what Thou art going to give us to eat." There was a knock on the door. The baker stood there, and said, "Mr. Mueller, I couldn't sleep last night. Somehow I felt you didn't have bread for breakfast and the Lord wanted me to send you some. So I got up at 2 a.m. and baked some fresh bread, and have brought it." Mueller thanked the man. No sooner had this transpired when there was a second knock at the door. It was the milkman. He announced that his milk cart had broken down right in front of the Orphanage, and he would like to give the children his cans of fresh milk so he could empty his wagon and repair it. No wonder, years later, when Mueller was to travel the world as an evangelist, he would be heralded as "the man who gets things from God!"

By March, 1843, he felt the need for a second home for girls. On July, 1844, the fourth house on Wilson Street was opened - the total of his homeless waifs now being 130. A letter received on October 30, 1845, changed his entire ministry... he was now age 40. Basically, it was a letter from a local resident complaining that the noise of the children was a nuisance. They were vastly over-crowded and there was not enough space for land cultivation, washing clothes, etc. He gave the letter much thought, listing the pros and cons. If he were to leave, he would have to build a structure to hold at least 300 orphans at a cost of $60,000. On his 36th day of prayer over the dilemma, the first $6,000 came in for a building program. By June, 1848, he received all of the $60,000 which he needed. He had begun to build the previous year on July 5, 1847, at a placed called Ashley Downs as the bulk of the money had been sent in. Building Number 1 was opened in June, 1849, and housed 300 children with staff sufficient to teach and care for them. It was a seven-acre site and finally cost about $90,000 as legal expenses, furnishings, and land purchase brought the price up higher than anticipated. The old houses on Wilson Street emptied and everyone was now under one roof.

Mueller was becoming a well known Christian leader. He answered some 3,000 letters a year without a secretary. Besides his orphanages, the four other objectives of his Scriptural Knowledge Institution claimed his attention and he continued his pastoral work at Bethesda Chapel also.

In 1850, he felt the need for a second orphanage. Donations began to come in miraculously again and finally, on November 12, 1857, a second building housing 400 children at a cost of $126,000 was built. Number 3 opened on March 12, 1862, housing 450 children, and costing over $138,000. It was housed on 11 1/2 acres. Number 4 was opened November 5, 1868, and Number 5 on January 6, 1870. These last two cost over $300,000 and housed 450 each.

From 1848 to 1874, money came in to improve and expand the work which went from 130 orphans to 2,050 during this time and up to 13 acres. Mueller describes these days, writing in 1874:

But God, our infinite rich Treasurer, remains with us. It is this which gives me peace. Moreover if it pleases Him, with a work requiring about $264,000 a year...would I gladly pass through all these trials of faith with regard to means, if He only might be glorified, and His Church and the world benefited...I have placed myself in the position of having no means at all left; and 2,100 persons, not only daily at the table, but with everything else to be provided for, and all the funds gone; 189 missionaries to be assisted, and nothing whatever left; about one hundred schools with 9,000 scholars in them, to be entirely supported, and no means for them in hand; about four million tracts and tens of thousands of copies of the Holy Scriptures yearly now to be sent out, and all the money expended...I commit the whole work to Him, and He will provide me with what I need, in future also, though I know not whence the means are to come.

His own personal income varied around $12,000 a year, of which he kept for himself $1,800 giving the rest away.

His fellow worker, Henry Craik, died on January 22, 1866, followed by the death of his wife on February 6, 1870. She was 72 and had suffered from rheumatic fever. James Wright married Mueller's daughter, Lydia in 1871 and also replaced Craik as his associate. Mueller himself remarried on November 30, 1871, to a Susannah Grace Sangar, whom he had known for 25 years as a consistent Christian. He was 66 and she in her late forties, a perfect companion for him in his ministries still ahead.

Mueller decided to fulfill the many requests for his appearance around the world. Turning the work over to Wright, from 1875 to 1892, Mueller made 16 preaching trips to various sectors of the world.

George and his wife traveled 200,000 miles in 17 years of world-wide evangelism efforts, in 42 countries, preaching to 3 million people.

Among the greatest monuments of what can be accomplished through simple faith in God are the great orphanages covering thirteen acres of ground on Ashley Downs, Bristol, England. When God put it into the heart of George Muller to build these orphanages, he had only two shillings (50 cents) in his pocket. Without making his wants known to any man, but to God alone, over a million, four hundred thousand pounds ($7,000,000) were sent to him for the building and maintaining of these orphan homes. When the writer first visited them, near the time of Mr. Muller's death, there were five immense buildings of solid granite, capable of accommodating two thousand orphans. In all the years since the first orphans arrived the Lord had sent food in due time, so that they had never missed a meal for want of food.

Although George Muller became famous as one of the greatest men of prayer known to history, he was not always a saint. He wandered very deep into sin before he was brought to Christ. He was born in the kingdom of Prussia, in 1805. His father was a revenue collector for the government, and was a worldly-minded man. He supplied George and his brother with plenty of money when they were boys, and they spent it very foolishly. George deceived his father about how much money he spent, and also as to how he spent it. He also stole the government money during his father's absence.

At ten years of age, George was sent to the cathedral classical school at Halberstadt. His father wanted to make a Lutheran clergyman of him, not that he might serve God, but that he might have an easy and comfortable living from the State Church. "My time," says he. "was now spent in studying, reading novels, and indulging, though so young, in sinful practices. Thus it continued until I was fourteen years old, when my mother was suddenly removed. The night she was dying, I, not knowing of her illness, was playing cards until two in the morning, and on the next day, being the Lord's day, I went with some of my companions in sin to a tavern, and then, being filled with strong beer, we went about the streets half intoxicated."

"I grew worse and worse," says he. "Three or four days before I was confirmed (and thus admitted to partake of the Lord's supper), I was guilty of gross immorality; and the very day before my confirmation, when I was in the vestry with the clergyman to confess my sins (according to the usual practice), after a formal manner, I defrauded him; for I handed over to him only a twelfth part of the fee which my father had given me for him."

A few solemn thoughts and desires to lead a better life came to him, but he continued to plunge deeper and deeper into sin. Lying, stealing, gambling, novel-reading, licentiousness, extravagance, and almost every form of sin was indulged in by him. No one would have imagined that the sinful youth would ever become eminent for his faith in God and for his power in prayer. He robbed his father of certain rents which his father had entrusted him to collect, falsifying the accounts of what he had received and pocketing the balance. His money was spent on sinful pleasures, and once he was reduced to such poverty that, in order to satisfy his hunger, he stole a piece of coarse bread, the allowance of a soldier who was quartered in the house where he was. In 1821 he set off on an excursion to Magdeburg, where he spent six days in "much sin." He then went to Brunswick, and put up at an expensive hotel until his money was exhausted. He then put up at a fine hotel in a neighboring village, intending to defraud the hotel-keeper. But his best clothes were taken in lieu of what he owed. He then walked six miles to another inn, where he was arrested for trying to defraud the landlord. He was imprisoned for this crime when sixteen years of age.

After his imprisonment young Muller returned to his home and received a severe thrashing from his angry father. He remained as sinful in heart as ever, but in order to regain his father's confidence he began to lead a very exemplary life outwardly, until he had the confidence of all around him. His father decided to send him to the classical school at Halle, where the discipline was very strict, but George had no intention of going there. He went to Nordhausen instead, and by using many lies and entreaties persuaded his father to allow him to remain there for two years and six months, till Easter, 1825. Here he studied diligently, was held up as an example to the other students, and became proficient in Latin, French, History, and his own language (German). "But whilst I was outwardly gaining the esteem of my fellow-creatures," says he, "I did not care in the least about God, but lived secretly in much sin, in consequence of which I was taken ill, and for thirteen weeks confined to my room. All this time I had no real sorrow of heart, yet being under certain natural impressions of religion, I read through Klopstock's works, without weariness. I cared nothing about the Word of God."

"Now and then I felt I ought to become a different person," says he, "and I tried to amend my conduct, particularly when I went to the Lord's supper, as I used to do twice every year, with the other young men. The day previous to attending that ordinance I used to refrain from certain things, and on the day itself I was serious, and also swore once or twice to God with the emblem of the broken body in my mouth, to become better, thinking that for the oath's sake I should be induced to reform. But after one or two days were over, all was forgotten, and I was as bad as before."

He entered the University of Halle as a divinity student, with good testimonials. This qualified him to preach in the Lutheran state church. While at the university he spent all his money in profligate living. "When my money was spent," says he, "I pawned my watch and part of my linen and clothes, or borrowed in other ways. Yet in the midst of all this I had a desire to renounce this wretched life, for I had no enjoyment in it, and had sense enough left to see, that the end one day or other would be miserable; for I should never get a living. But I had no sorrow of heart on account of offending God."

At the University he formed the acquaintance of a miserable backslider, named Beta, who was trying by means of worldly pleasures to drown out his conviction of sin. They plunged into sin together, and in June, 1825, George was again taken sick. After his recovery they forged letters purporting to be from his parents. With these they obtained passports and set out to see Switzerland. Muller stole from the friends who accompanied him and the journey did not cost him so much as it did them. They returned home to finish up the vacation and then went back to the University, Muller having lied to his father about the trip to Switzerland.

At the University of Halle there were about nine hundred divinity students. All of these were allowed to preach, but Muller estimates that not nine of them feared the Lord. "One Saturday afternoon, about the middle of November, 1825," says he, "I had taken a walk with my friend Beta. On our return he said to me, that he was in the habit of going on Saturday evenings to the house of a Christian, where there was a meeting. On further inquiry he told me that they read the Bible, sang, prayed, and read a printed sermon. No sooner had I heard this, but it was to me as if I had found something after which I had been seeking all my life long. I immediately wished to go with my friend, who was not at once willing to take me; for knowing me as a merry young man, he thought I should not like this meeting. At last, however, he said he would call for me."

Describing the meeting, Muller said: "We went together in the evening. As I did not know the manners of the brethren, and the joy they have in seeing poor sinners, even in any measure caring about the things of God, I made an apology for coming. The kind answer of this dear brother I shall never forget. He said: 'Come as often as you please; house and heart are open to you."' After a hymn was sung they fell upon their knees, and a brother, named Kayser, who afterwards became a missionary to Africa, asked God's blessing on the meeting. "This kneeling down made a deep impression upon me," says Muller, "for I had never either seen any one on his knees, nor had I ever myself prayed on my knees. He then read a chapter and a printed sermon; for no regular meetings for expounding the Scriptures were allowed in Prussia, except an ordained clergyman was present. At the close we sang another hymn, and then the master of the house prayed." The meeting made a deep impression upon Muller. "I was happy," says he, "though if I had been asked why I was happy, I could not clearly have explained it."

"When we walked home, I said to Beta, all we have seen on our journey to Switzerland, and all our former pleasures, are as nothing in comparison with this evening. Whether I fell on my knees when I returned home I do not remember; but this I know, that I lay peaceful and happy in my bed. This shows that the Lord may begin his work in different ways. For I have not the least doubt that on that evening He began a work of grace in me, though I obtained joy without any deep sorrow of heart, and with scarcely any knowledge. But that evening was the turning point in my life. The next day, and Monday, and once or twice besides, I went again to the house of this brother, where I read the Scriptures with him and another brother; for it was too long for me to wait until Saturday came again."

"Now my life became very different, though not so, that my sins were all given up at once. My wicked companions were given up; the going to taverns was discontinued; the habitual practice of telling falsehoods was no longer indulged in, but still a few times more I spoke an untruth... I now no longer lived habitually in sin, though I was still often overcome and sometimes even by open sins, though far less frequently than before, and not without sorrow of heart. I read the Scriptures, prayed often, loved the brethren, went to church from right motives and stood on the side of Christ, though laughed at by my fellow students."

For a few weeks after his conversion Muller made rapid advancement in the Christian life, and he was greatly desirous of becoming a missionary. But he fell in love with a Roman Catholic girl, and for some time the Lord was well nigh forgotten. Then Muller saw a young missionary giving up all the luxuries of a beautiful home for Christ. This opened his eyes to his own selfishness and enabled him to give up the girl who had taken the place of Christ in his heart. "It was at this time," says he, "that I began to enjoy the peace of God, which passeth all understanding. In this my joy I wrote to my father and brother, entreating them to seek the Lord, and telling them how happy I was; thinking, that if the way to happiness were set before them, they would gladly embrace it. To my great surprise an angry answer was returned."

George could not enter any German missionary training institution without the consent of his father, and this he could not obtain. His father was deeply grieved that after educating him so that he could obtain a comfortable living as a clergyman he should turn missionary. George felt that he could no longer accept any money from him. The Lord graciously sent him means with which to complete his education. He taught German to some American college professors at the University, and they handsomely remunerated him for his services. He was now the means of winning a number of souls to Christ. He gave away thousands of religious tracts and papers, and spoke to many persons concerning the salvation of their souls.

The playground at George Muller's OrphanageAlthough, before his conversion, Muller had written to his father and told him about sermons he had preached, he never really preached a sermon until some time after his conversion. He thought to please his father by making him believe that he was preaching. His first sermon was a printed one which he had memorized for the occasion. He had but little liberty in preaching it. The second time he preached extemporaneously and had some degree of liberty. "I now preached frequently," says he, "both in the churches of the villages and towns, but never had any enjoyment in doing so, except when speaking in a simple way; though the repetition of sermons which had been committed to memory brought more praise from my fellow creatures. But from neither way of preaching did I see any fruit. It may be that the last day will show the benefit even of those feeble endeavors. One reason why the Lord did not permit me to see fruit, seems to me, that I should have been most probably lifted up by success. It may be also because I prayed exceedingly little respecting the ministry of the Word, and because I walked so little with God, and was so rarely a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use."

The true believers at the University increased from six to about twenty in number before Muller left. They often met in Muller's room to pray, sing and read the Bible. He sometimes walked ten or fifteen miles to hear a really pious minister preach.

In 1827 Muller volunteered to go as a missionary pastor to the Germans at Bucharest, but the war between the Turks and Russians prevented this. In 1828, at the suggestion of their agent, he offered himself to the London Missionary Society as a missionary to the Jews. He was well versed in the Hebrew language and had a great love for it. The Society desired him to come to London that they might see him personally. Through the providence of God he finally secured exemption for life from serving in the Prussian army, and he went to England in 1829, at twenty-four years of age. He was not able to speak the English language for some time after he landed in England and then only in a very broken manner at first.

Soon after coming to England Muller received a deeper Christian experience which entirely revolutionized his life. "I came weak in body to England." says he, "and in consequence of much study, as I suppose, I was taken ill on May 15, and was soon, at least in my own estimation, apparently beyond recovery. The weaker I got in body, the happier I was in spirit. Never in my whole life had I seen myself so vile, so guilty, so altogether what I ought not to have been, as at that time. It was as if every sin of which I had been guilty was brought to my remembrance; but at the same time I could realize that all my sins were completely forgiven -- that I was washed and made clean, completely clean, in the blood of Jesus. The result of this was great peace. I longed exceedingly to depart and to be with Christ..."

"After I had been ill about a fortnight my medical attendant unexpectedly pronounced me better. This, instead of giving me joy, bowed me down, so great was my desire to be with the Lord; though almost immediately afterwards grace was given me to submit myself to the will of God."

That Muller always regarded the above experience as one which deepened his whole spiritual life is clearly shown by a letter of his which appeared in the British Christian, of August 14, 1902. In this letter Muller says: "I became a believer in the Lord Jesus in the beginning of November, 1825, now sixty-nine years and eight months. For the first four years afterwards, it was for a good part in great weakness; but in July, 1829, now sixty-six years since, it came with me to an entire and full surrender of heart. I gave myself fully to the Lord. Honors, pleasures, money, my physical powers, my mental powers, all were laid down at the feet of Jesus, and I became a great lover of the Word of God. I found my all in God, and thus in all my trials of a temporal and spiritual character, it has remained for sixty-six years. My faith is not merely exercised regarding temporal things, but regarding everything, because I cleave to the Word. My knowledge of God and His Word is that which helps me."

Being advised to go into the country for his health, he prayed about it and finally decided to go. He went to Devonshire, where the great blessing he had already received was greatly augmented by his conversations and prayers with a Spirit-filled minister whom he first heard preach at Teignmouth. Through the conversations and sermons of this minister he was led to see as never before "that the Word of God alone is our standard of judgment in spiritual things; that it can be explained only by His Holy Spirit; and that in our day, as well as in former times, He is the teacher of His people. The office of the Holy Spirit I had not experimentally understood before that time," says he. "The result of this was, that the first evening that I shut myself into my room to give myself to prayer and meditation over the Scriptures, I learned more in a few hours than I had done during a period of several months previously." Again, he says: "In addition to these truths, it pleased the Lord to lead me to see a higher standard of devotedness than I had seen before."

On his return to London, Muller sought to lead his brethren in the training seminary into the deeper truths he had been brought to realize. "One brother in particular," says he, "was brought into the same state in which I was; and others, I trust, were more or less benefited. Several times, when I went to my room after family prayer, I found communion with God so sweet that I continued in prayer until after twelve, and then being full of joy, went into the room of the brother just referred to, and finding him also in a similar frame of heart, we continued praying until one or two, and even then I was a few times so full of joy that I could scarcely sleep, and at six in the morning again called the brethren together for prayer."

Muller's health declined in London and his soul was also now on fire for God in such a way that he could not settle down to the routine of daily studies. His newly acquired belief in the near coming of Christ also urged him forward to work for the salvation of souls. He felt that the Lord was leading him to begin at once the Christian work he was longing to do, and as the London Missionary Society did not see proper to send him out without the prescribed course of training, he decided to go at once and trust the Lord for the means of support. Soon after this he became pastor of Ebenezer Chapel, Teignmouth, Devonshire. His marriage to Miss Mary Groves, a Devonshire lady, followed. She was always of the same mind as her husband and their married life was a very happy one. Not long after his marriage he began to have conscientious scruples about receiving a regular salary, and also about the renting of pews in his church. He felt that the latter was giving the "man with the ring on his finger" the best seat, and the poorer brother the footstool, and the former was taking money from those who did not give "cheerfully" or "as the Lord had prospered them." These two customs were discontinued by him. He and his wife told their needs to no one but the Lord. Occasionally reports were spread that they were starving; but though at times their faith was tried, their income was greater than before. He and his wife gave away freely all that they had above their present needs, and trusted the Lord for their "daily bread."

Muller preached in many surrounding towns, and many souls were brought to Christ in his meetings. In 1832 he felt profoundly impressed that, his work was ended in Teignmouth, and when he went to Bristol the same year he was as profoundly impressed that the Lord would have him work there. When the Spirit, the Word, and the providence of God agree, we may be quite certain that the Lord is leading us, for these three are always in harmony and cannot disagree. Not only did Muller feel led of the Lord to work in Bristol, but the providence of God opened the way, and it seemed in harmony with the Word of God.

Muller began his labors in Bristol in 1832, as co-pastor with his friend Mr. Craik, who had been called to that city. Without salaries or rented pews their labors were greatly blessed at Gideon and Bethesda Chapels. The membership more than quadrupled in numbers in a short time. Ten days after the opening of Bethesda there was such a crowd of persons inquiring the way of salvation that it took four hours to minister to them. Subsequently Gideon Chapel was relinquished, and in the course of time two neighboring chapels were secured. These churches, though calling themselves non-sectarian, were usually classed with the people commonly known as "Plymouth Brethren." Muller continued to preach to them as long as he lived, even after he began his great work for the orphans. At the time of his death he had a congregation of about two thousand persons at Bethesda Chapel.

In 1834 Mr. Muller started the Scripture Knowledge Institution for Home and Abroad. Its object was to aid Christian day-schools, to assist missionaries, and to circulate the Scriptures. This institution, without worldly patronage, without asking anyone for help, without contracting debts; without committees, subscribers, or memberships; but through faith in the Lord alone, had obtained and disbursed no less a sum than £1,500,000 ($7,500,000) at the time of Mr. Muller's death. The bulk of this was expended for the orphanage. At the time of Mr. Muller's death 122,000 persons had been taught in the schools supported by these funds; and about 282,000 Bibles and 1,500,000 Testaments had been distributed by means of the same fund. Also 112,000,000 religious books, pamphlets and tracts had been circulated; missionaries had been aided in all parts of the world; and no less than ten thousand orphans had been cared for by means of this same fund.

At the age of seventy, Mr. Muller began to make great evangelistic tours. He traveled 200,000 miles, going around the world and preaching in many lands and in several different languages. He frequently spoke to as many as 4,500 or 5,000 persons. Three times he preached throughout the length and breadth of the United States. He continued his missionary or evangelistic tours until he was ninety years of age. He estimated that during these seventeen years of evangelistic work he addressed three million people. All his expenses were sent in answer to the prayer of faith.

Greatest of all Muller's undertakings was the erection and maintenance of the great orphanages at Bristol. He began the undertaking with only two shillings (50 cents) in his pocket; but in answer to prayer and without making his needs known to human beings, he received the means necessary to erect the great buildings and to feed the orphans day by day for sixty years. In all that time the children did not have to go without a meal, and Mr. Muller said that if they ever had to go without a meal he would take it as evidence that the Lord did not will the work to continue. Sometimes the meal time was almost at hand and they did not know where the food would come from, but the Lord always sent it in due time, during the twenty thousand or more days that Mr. Muller had charge of the homes.

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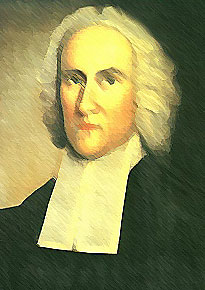
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   Uplifting and motivational

[](http://www.christians.com/node/8)

Jonathan Edwards

October 5, 1703 to March 22, 1758 (55), Preacher

Jonathan Edwards was a colonial American Congregational preacher, theologian, and missionary to Native Americans.

## Relationships

* http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/georgewhitefield_main.mini.jpg[George Whitefield](http://www.christians.com/georgewhitefield/main) and Jonathan Edwards met during the Great Awakening.

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Jonathan Edwards was the only son of Timothy Edwards and Esther Stoddard. He was the fifth of eleven children. He was trained for college by his father and by his elder sisters, all of whom received an excellent education.



Jonathan Edwards entered Yale College in 1716, at just under the age of thirteen. In the following year, he became acquainted with John Locke's (pictured) Essay Concerning Human Understanding, which influenced him profoundly. During his college studies, he kept note books labelled "The Mind," "Natural Science", "The Scriptures" and "Miscellanies," had a grand plan for a work on natural and mental philosophy, and drew up for himself rules for its composition. Even before his graduation in September 1720, as valedictorian and head of his class, he seems to have had a well formulated philosophy. He spent two years after his graduation in New Haven studying theology.



On February 15, 1727, he was ordained minister at Northampton (pictured) and assistant to his grandfather, Solomon Stoddard. Solomon Stoddard died on February 11, 1729, leaving to his grandson the difficult task of the sole ministerial charge of one of the largest and wealthiest congregations in the colony, and one proud of its morality, its culture and its reputation.

[«](http://www.christians.com/jonathanedwards/main#prev) [1](http://www.christians.com/jonathanedwards/main#1) [2](http://www.christians.com/jonathanedwards/main#2) [3](http://www.christians.com/jonathanedwards/main#3) [»](http://www.christians.com/jonathanedwards/main#next)

The Awakening

I had a variety of concerns and exercises about my soul from my childhood; but had two more remarkable seasons of awakening, before I met with that change by which I was brought to those new dispositions, and that new sense of things, that I have since had. The first time was when I was a boy, some years before I went to college, at a time of remarkable awakening in my father's congregation. I was then very much affected for many months, and concerned about the things of religion, and my soul's salvation; and was abundant in duties. I used to pray five times a day in secret, and to spend much time in religious talk with other boys; and used to meet with them to pray together. I experienced I know not what kind of delight in religion.

My mind was much engaged in it, and had much self-righteous pleasure; and it was my delight to abound in religious duties.

I with some of my schoolmates joined together, and built a booth in a swamp, in a very retired spot, for a place of prayer. And besides, I had particular secret places of my own in the woods, where I used to retire by myself; and was from time to time much affected. My affections seemed to be lively and easily moved, and I seemed to be in my element when engaged in religious duties. And I am ready to think, many are deceived with such affections, and such a kind of delight as I then had in religion, and mistake it for grace.

But in process of time, my convictions and affections wore off; and I entirely lost all those affections and delights and left off secret prayer, at least as to any constant performance of it; and returned like a dog to his vomit, and went on in the ways of sin. Indeed I was at times very uneasy, especially towards the latter part of my time at college; when it pleased God, to seize me with a pleurisy; in which he brought me nigh to the grave, and shook me over the pit of hell. And yet, it was not long after my recovery, before I fell again into my old ways of sin. But God would not suffer me to go on with any quietness; I had great and violent inward struggles, till, after many conflicts with wicked inclinations, repeated resolutions, and bonds that I laid myself under by a kind of vows to God,

I was brought wholly to break off all former wicked ways, and all ways of known outward sin; and to apply myself to seek salvation, and practice many religious duties; but without that kind of affection and delight which I had formerly experienced. My concern now wrought more by inward struggles and conflicts, and selfish reflections. But yet, it seems to me, I sought after a miserable manner; which has made me sometimes since to question, whether ever it issued in that which was saving; being ready to doubt, whether such miserable seeking ever succeeded. I was indeed brought to seek salvation in a manner that I never was before; I felt a spirit to part with all things in the world, for an interest in Christ. My concern continued and prevailed, with many exercising thoughts and inwards struggles; but yet it never seemed to be proper to express that concern by the name of terror.

From my childhood up, my mind had been full of objections against the doctrine of God's sovereignty, in choosing whom he would give eternal life to, and rejecting whom he pleased; leaving them eternally to perish, and be everlastingly tormented in hell. It used to appear like a horrible doctrine to me. But I remember the time very well, when I seemed to be convinced, and fully satisfied, as to this sovereignty of God, and his justice in thus eternally disposing of men, according to his sovereign pleasure. But never could give an account, how, or by what means, I was thus convinced, not in the least imagining at the time, nor a long time after, that there was any extraordinary influence of God's Spirit in it; but only that now I saw further, and my reason apprehended the justice and reasonableness of it. However, my mind rested in it; and it put an end to all those cavils and objections. And there has been a wonderful alteration in my mind, in respect to the doctrine of God's sovereignty, from that day to this; so that I scarce ever have found so much as the rising of an objection against it, in the most absolute sense, in God's strewing mercy to whom he will shew mercy, and hardening whom he will. God's absolute sovereignty and justice, with respect to salvation and damnation, is what my mind seems to rest assured of, as much as of any thing that I see with my eyes; at least it is so at times. But I have often, since that first conviction, had quite another kind of sense of God's sovereignty than I had then. I have often since had not only a conviction, but a delightful conviction. The doctrine has very often appeared exceeding pleasant, bright, and sweet. Absolute sovereignty is what I love to ascribe to God. But my first conviction was not so.

The first instance that I remember of that sort of inward, sweet delight in God and divine things that I have lived much in since, was on reading those words,

I Tim. 1:17. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever, Amen.

As I read the words, there came into my soul, and was as it were diffused through it, a sense of the glory of the Divine Being; a new sense, quite different from any thing I ever experienced before Never any words of scripture seemed to me as these words did. I thought with myself, how excellent a Being that was, and how happy I should be, if I might enjoy that God, and be rapt up to him in heaven, and be as it were swallowed up in him for ever! I kept saying, and as it were singing over these words of scripture to myself; and went to pray to God that I might enjoy him, and prayed in a manner quite different from what I used to do; with a new sort of affection. But it never came into my thought, that there was any thing spiritual, or of a saving nature in this.

New Ideas

From about that time, I began to have new kinds of apprehensions and ideas of Christ. and the work of redemption, and the glorious way of salvation by him. An inward, sweet sense of these things, at times, came into my heart; and my soul was led away in pleasant views and contemplations of them. And my mind was greatly engaged to spend my time in reading and meditating on Christ, on the beauty and excellency of his person, and the lovely way of salvation by free grace in him. I found no books so delightful to me, as those that treated of these subjects. Those words Cant. 2:1, used to be abundantly with me, I am the Rose of Sharon, and the Lilly of the valleys. The words seemed to me, sweetly to represent the loveliness and beauty of Jesus Christ. The whole book of Canticles used to be pleasant to me, and I used to be much in reading it, about that time; and found, from time to time, an inward sweetness, that would carry me away, in my contemplations. This I know not how to express otherwise, than by a calm, sweet abstraction of soul from all the concerns of this world; and sometimes a kind of vision, or fixed ideas and imaginations, of being alone in the mountains, or some solitary wilderness, far from all mankind, sweetly conversing with Christ, and wrapt and swallowed up in God. The sense I had of divine things, would often of a sudden kindle up, as it were, a sweet burning in my heart; an ardor of soul, that I know not how to express.

Not long after I first began to experience these things, I gave an account to my father of some things that had passed in my mind. I was pretty much affected by the discourse we had together; and when the discourse was ended, I walked abroad alone, in a solitary place in my father's pasture, for contemplation. And as I was walking there, and looking up on the sky and clouds, there came into my mind so sweet a sense of the glorious majesty and grace of God, that I know not how to express. I seemed to see them both in a sweet conjunction; majesty and meekness joined together; it was a sweet, and gentle, and holy majesty; and also a majestic meekness; an awful sweetness; a high, and great, and holy gentleness.

After this my sense of divine things gradually increased, and became more and more lively, and had more of that inward sweetness. The appearance of every thing was altered; there seemed to be, as it were, a calm sweet cast, or appearance of divine glory, in almost every thing. God's excellency, his wisdom, his purity and love, seemed to appear in every thing; in the sun, moon, and stars; in the clouds, and blue sky; in the grass, flowers, trees; in the water, and all nature; which used greatly to fix my mind. I often used to sit and view the moon for continuance; and in the day, spent much time in viewing the clouds and sky, to behold the sweet glory of God in these things; in the mean time, singing forth, with a low voice my contemplations of the Creator and Redeemer. And scarce any thing, among all the works of nature, was so sweet to me as thunder and lightning; formerly, nothing had been so terrible to me. Before, I used to be uncommonly terrified with thunder, and to be struck with terror when I saw a thunder storm rising; but now, on the contrary, it rejoiced me. I felt God, so to speak, at the first appearance of a thunder storm; and used to take the opportunity, at such times, to fix myself in order to view the clouds, and see the lightnings play, and hear the majestic and awful voice of God's thunder, which oftentimes was exceedingly entertaining, leading me to sweet contemplations of my great and glorious God. While thus engaged, it always seemed natural to me to sing, or chant for my mediations; or, to speak my thoughts in soliloquies with a singing voice.

The Jonathan Edwards Center housed within Yale University's Divinity School came into being in October 2003, on the three-hundredth anniversary of Jonathan Edwards' birthI felt then great satisfaction, as to my good state; but that did not content me. I had vehement longings of soul after God and Christ, and after more holiness, wherewith my heart seemed to be full, and ready to break; which often brought to my mind the words of the Psalmist, Psal. 119:28. My soul breaketh for the longing it hath. I often felt a mourning and lamenting in my heart, that I had not turned to God sooner, that I might have had more time to grow in grace. My mind was greatly fixed on divine things; almost perpetually in the contemplation of them. I spent most of my time in thinking of divine things, year after year; often walking alone in the woods, and solitary places, for meditation, soliloquy, and prayer, and converse with God; and it was always my manner, at such times, to sing forth my contemplations. I was almost constantly in ejaculatory prayer, wherever I was. Prayer seemed to be natural to me, as the breath by which the inward burnings of my heart had vent. The delights which I now felt in the things of religion, were of an exceeding different kind from those before mentioned, that I had when a boy; and what I then had no more notion of, than one born blind has of pleasant and beautiful colors. They were of a more inward, pure, soul animating and refreshing nature. Those former delights never reached the heart; and did not arise from any sight of the divine excellency of the things of God; or any taste of the soul satisfying and life&SHY;giving good there is in them

My sense of divine things seemed gradually to increase, until I went to preach at New York, which was about a year and a half after they began; and while I was there, I felt them, very sensibly, in a much higher degree than I had done before. My longings after God and holiness, were much increased. Pure and humble, holy and heavenly Christianity, appeared exceeding amiable to me. I felt a burning desire to be in every thing a complete Christian; and conformed to the blessed image of Christ; and that I might live, in all things, according to the pure, sweet and blessed rules of the gospel. I had an eager thirsting after progress in these things; which put me upon pursuing and pressing after them. It was my continual strife day and night, and constant inquiry, how I should be more holy, and live more holily, and more becoming a child of God, and a disciple of Christ. I now sought an increase of grace and holiness, and a holy life, with much more earnestness, than ever I sought grace before I had it. I used to be continually examining myself, and studying and contriving for likely ways and means, how I should live holily, with far greater diligence and earnestness, than ever I pursued any thing in my life; but yet with too great a dependence on my own strength; which afterwards proved a great damage to me. My experience had not then taught me, as it has done since, my extreme feebleness and impotence, every manner of way; and the bottomless depths of secret corruption and deceit there was in my heart. However, I went on with my eager pursuit after more holiness, and conformity to Christ.

The heaven I desired was a heaven of holiness; to be with God, and to spend my eternity in divine love, and holy communion with Christ. My mind was very much taken up with contemplations on heaven, and the enjoyments there; and living there in perfect holiness, humility and love: And it used at that time to appear a great part of the happiness of heaven, that there the saints could express their love to Christ. It appeared to me a great clog and burden, that what I felt within, I could not express as I desired. The inward ardor of my soul, seemed to be hindered and pent up, and could not freely flame out as it would. I used often to think, how in heaven this principle should freely and fully vent and express itself. Heaven appeared exceedingly delightful, as a world of love; and that all happiness consisted in living in pure, humble, heavenly, divine love.

The heaven I desired was a heaven of holiness; to be with God, and to spend my eternity in divine love, and holy communion with Christ.

I remember the thoughts I used then to have of holiness; and said sometimes to myself, "I do certainly know that I love holiness, such as the gospel prescribes." It appeared to me that there was nothing in it but what was ravishingly lovely; and highest beauty and amiableness ... a divine beauty; far purer than any thing here upon earth; and that every thing else was like mire and defilement, in comparison of it.

Holiness, as I then wrote down some of my contemplations on it, appeared to me to be of a sweet, pleasant, charming, serene, calm nature; which brought an inexpressible purity, brightness, peacefulness and ravishment to the soul. In other words, that it made the soul like a field or garden of God, with all manner of pleasant flowers; all pleasant, delightful, and undisturbed: enjoying a sweet calm. and the gently vivifying beams of the sun. The soul of a true Christian, as I then wrote my meditations, appeared like such a little white flower as we see in the spring of the years; low and humble on the ground, opening its bosom to receive the pleasant beams of the sun's glory; rejoicing as it were in a calm rapture; diffusing around a sweet flagrancy;; standing peacefully and lovingly, in the midst of other flowers round about; all in like manner opening their bosoms, to drink in the light of the sun. There was no part of creature holiness, that I had so great a sense of its loveliness, as humility, brokenness of heart and poverty of spirit; and there was nothing that I so earnestly longed for. My heart panted after this, to lie low before God, as in the dust; that I might be nothing, and that God might be all, that I might become as a little child.

While at New York, I was sometimes much affected with reflections of my past life, considering how late it was before I began to be truly religious; and how wickedly I had lived till then; and once so as to weep abundantly, and for a considerable time together.

On January 12, 1723. I made a solemn dedication of myself to God, and wrote it down; giving up myself, and all that I had to God; to be for the future, in no respect, my own; to act as one that had no right to himself, in any respect. And solemnly vowed, to take God for my whole portion and felicity; looking on nothing else, as any part of my happiness, nor acting as if it were; and his law for the constant rule of my obedience: engaging to fight, with all my might, against the world, the flesh, and the devil, to the end of my life. But I have reason to be infinitely humbled, when I consider, how much I have failed, of answering my obligation.

I had then, and at other times, the greatest delight in the holy scriptures, of any book whatsoever. Oftentimes in reading it, every word seemed to touch my heart. I felt a harmony between something in my heart, and those sweet and powerful words.

I had, then, abundance of sweet, religious conversation, in the family where I lived, with Mr. John Smith, and his pious mother. My heart was knit in affection, to those, in whom were appearances of true piety; and I could bear the thoughts of no other companions, but such as were holy, and the disciples of the blessed Jesus. I had great longings, for the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world; and my secret prayer used to be, in great part, taken up in praying for it. If I heard the least hint, of any thing that happened, in any part of the world, that appeared, in some respect or other, to have a favourable aspect, on the interests of Christ's kingdom, my soul eagerly catched at it; and it would much animate and refresh me. I used to be eager to read public news&SHY;letters, mainly for that end; to see if I could not find some news, favourable to the interest of religion in the world.

I very frequently used to retire into a solitary place, on the banks of Hudson's River, at some distance from the city, for contemplation on divine things and secret converse with God: and had many sweet hours there. Sometimes Mr. Smith and I walked there together, to converse on the things of God; and our conversation used to turn much on the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world, and the glorious things that God would accomplish for his church in the latter days. I had then, and at other times, the greatest delight in the holy scriptures, of any book whatsoever. Oftentimes in reading it, every word seemed to touch my heart. I felt a harmony between something in my heart, and those sweet and powerful words. I seemed often to see so much light exhibited by every sentence, and such a refreshing food communicated, that I could not get along in reading; often dwelling long on one sentence, to see the wonders contained in it; and yet almost every sentence seemed to be full of wonders.

I came away from New York in the month of April, 1723, and had a most bitter parting with Madam Smith and her son. My heart seemed to sink within me, at leaving the family and city, where I had enjoyed so many sweet and pleasant days. I went from New York to Wethersfield, by water; and as I sailed away, I kept sight of the city as long as I could. However, that night after this sorrowful parting, I was greatly comforted in God at Westchester, where we went ashore to lodge: and had a pleasant time of it all the voyage to Saybrook. It was sweet to me to think of meeting dear Christians in heaven, where we should never part more. At Saybrook we went ashore to lodge on Saturday, and there kept the Sabbath; where I had a sweet and refreshing season, walking alone in the fields.

After I came home to Windsor, I remained much in a like frame of mind, as when at New York; only sometimes I felt my heart ready to sink, with the thoughts of my friends at New York. My support was in contemplations on the heavenly state; as I find in my Diary of May 1, 1723. It was a comfort to think of that state, where there is fulness of joy; where reigns heavenly, calm, and delightful love, without alloy; where there are continually the dearest expressions of this love; where is the enjoyment of the persons loved, without ever parting; where those persons who appear so lovely in this world, will really be inexpressibly more lovely, and full of love to us. And how sweetly will the mutual lovers join together, to sing the praises of God and the Lamb! How will it fill us with joy to think, that this enjoyment, these sweet exercises, will never cease, but will last to all eternity ... I continued much in the same frame, in the general, as when at New York, till I went to New Haven, as Tutor of the College: particularly, once at Bolton, on a journey from Boston, while walking out alone in the fields. After I went to New Haven, I sunk in religion; my mind being diverted from my eager pursuits after holiness, by some affairs, that greatly perplexed and distracted my thoughts.

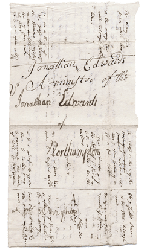
My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning . . .

In September, 1725, I was taken ill at New Haven, and while endeavouring to go home to Windsor, was so ill at the North Village, that I could go no farther, where I lay sick, for about a quarter of a year. In this sickness, God was pleased to visit me again, with the sweet influences of his Spirit. My mind was greatly engaged there, on divine and pleasant contemplations, and longings of soul. I observed, that those who watched with me, would often be looking out wishfully for the morning; which brought to my mind those words of the Psalmist, and which my soul with delight made its own language, My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning; I say, more than they that watch for the morning; and when the light of day came in at the window, it refreshed my soul, from one morning to another. It seemed to be some image of the light of God's glory.

I remember, about that time, I used greatly to long for the conversion of some, that I was concerned with; I could gladly honour them, and with delight be a servant to them, and lie at their feet, if they were but truly holy. But some time after this, I was again greatly diverted with some temporal concerns, that exceedingly took up my thoughts, greatly to the wounding of my soul; and went on, through various exercises, that it would be tedious to relate, which gave me much more experience of my own heart, than I ever had before....

Since I came to this town [i.e. Northampton], I have often had sweet complacency in God, in views of his glorious perfections and the excellency of Jesus Christ. God has appeared to me a glorious and lovely Being, chiefly on account of his holiness. The holiness of God has always appeared to me the most lovely of all his attributes. The doctrines of God's absolute sovereignty, and free grace, in strewing mercy to whom he would shew mercy; and man's absolute dependence on the operations of God's Holy Spirit, have very often appeared to me as sweet and glorious doctrines. These doctrines have been much my delight. God's sovereignty has ever appeared to me, great part of his glory. It has often been my delight to approach God, and adore him as a sovereign God, and ask sovereign mercy of him.

I have loved the doctrines of the gospel; they have been to my soul like green pastures. The gospel has seemed to me the richest treasure; the treasure that I have most desired, and longed that it might dwell richly in me. The way of salvation by Christ has appeared, in a general way, glorious and excellent, most pleasant and most beautiful. It has often seemed to me, that it would in a great measure spoil heaven, to receive it in any other way. That text has often been affecting and delightful to me, Isa. 32:2, A man shall be an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, etc.

A team of student editorial assistants, most of them Yale Divinity students assist the staff with the transcription of Edwards’ manuscripts at Beinecke Library.It has often appeared to me delightful, to be united to Christ; to have him for my head, and to be a member of his body; also to have Christ for my teacher and prophet. I very often think with sweetness, and longings, and partings of soul, of being a little child, taking hold of Christ, to be led by him through the wilderness of this world. That text, Matt. 18:3, has often been sweet to me, except ye be converted and become as little children, etc. I love to think of coming to Christ, to receive salvation of him, poor in spirit, and quite empty of self, humbly exalting him alone; cut off entirely from my own root, in order to grow into, and out of Christ; to have God in Christ to be all in all; and to live by faith in the Son of God, a life of humble, unfeigned confidence in him. That scripture has often been sweet to me, Psal. 95:1, Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake. And those words of Christ, Luke 10:21, In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. That sovereignty of God which Christ rejoiced in, seemed to me worthy of such joy; and that rejoicing seemed to shew the excellency of Christ. and of what spirit he was.

Sometimes, only mentioning a single word caused my heart to burn within me; or only seeing the name of Christ, or the name of some attribute of God. And God has appeared glorious to me, on account of the Trinity. It has made me have exalting thoughts of God, that he subsists in three persons; Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The sweetest joys and delights I have experienced, have not been those that have arisen from a hope of my own good estate; but in a direct view of the glorious things of the gospel. When I enjoy this sweetness, it seems to carry me above the thoughts of my own estate; it seems at such times a loss that I cannot bear, to take off my eye from the glorious, pleasant object I behold without me, to turn my eye in upon myself, and my own good estate.

My heart has been much on the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world. The histories of the past advancement of Christ's kingdom have been sweet to me. When I have read histories of past ages, the pleasantest thing in all my reading has been, to read of the kingdom of Christ being promoted. And when I have expected, in my reading, to come to any such thing, I have rejoiced in the prospect, all the way as I read. And my mind has been much entertained and delighted with the scripture promises and prophecies, which relate to the future glorious advancement of Christ's kingdom upon earth.

I have sometimes had a sense of the excellent fulness of Christ, and his meekness and suitableness as a Saviour; whereby he has appeared to me, far above all, the chief of ten thousands. His blood and atonement have appeared sweet, and his righteousness sweet; which was always accompanied with ardency of spirit; and inward strugglings and breathings, and groanings that cannot be uttered, to be emptied of myself, and swallowed up in Christ.

Once, as I rode out into the woods for my health, in 1737, having alighted from my horse in a retired place, as my manner commonly has been, to walk for divine contemplation and prayer, I had a view that for me was extraordinary, of the glory of the Son of God, as Mediator between God and man, and his wonderful, great, full, pure and sweet grace and love, and meek and gentle condescension. This grace that appeared so calm and sweet, appeared also great above the heavens. The person of Christ appeared ineffably excellent with an excellency great enough to swallow up all thought and conception ... which continued as near as I can judge, about an hour; which kept me the greater part of the time in a flood of tears, and weeping aloud. I felt an ardency of soul to be, what I know not otherwise how to express, emptied and annihilated; to lie in the dust, and to be full of Christ alone; to love him with a holy and pure love; to trust in him; to live upon him; to serve and follow him; and to be perfectly sanctified and made pure, with a divine and heavenly purity. I have, several other times, had views very much of the same nature, and which have had the same effects.

I have many times had a sense of the glory of the third person in the Trinity, in his office of Sanctifier; in his holy operations, communicating divine light and life to the soul. God, in the communications of his Holy Spirit, has appeared as an infinite fountain of divine glory and sweetness; being full, and sufficient to fill and satisfy the soul; pouring forth itself in sweet communications; like the sun in its glory, sweetly and pleasantly diffusing light and life. And I have sometimes had an affecting sense of the excellency of the word of God, as a word of life; as the light of life; a sweet, excellent life&SHY;giving word; accompanied with a thirsting after that word, that it might dwell richly in my heart.

Often, since I lived in this town, I have had very affecting views of my own sinfulness and vileness; very frequently to such a degree as to hold me in a kind of loud weeping, sometimes for a considerable time together; so that I have often been forced to shut myself up. I have had a vastly greater sense of my own wickedness, and the badness of my heart, than ever I had before my conversion. It has often appeared to me, that if God should mark iniquity against me, I should appear the very worst of all mankind; of all that have been, since the beginning of the world to this time; and that I should have by far the lowest place in hell. When others, that have come to talk with me about their soul concerns, have expressed the sense they have had of their own wickedness, by saying that it seemed to them, that they were as bad as the devil himself; I thought their expressions seemed exceeding faint and feeble, to represent my wickedness.

My wickedness, as I am in myself, has long appeared to me perfectly ineffable, and swallowing up all thought and imagination; like an infinite deluge, or mountain over my head. I know not how to express better what my sins appear to me to be, than by heaping infinite upon infinite, and multiplying infinite by infinite. Very often, for these many years, these expressions are in my mind, and in my mouth, "Infinite upon infinite ... Infinite upon infinite!" When I look into my heart, and take a view of my wickedness, it looks like an abyss infinitely deeper than hell. And it appears to me, that were it not for free grace, exalted and raised up to the infinite height of all the fulness and glory of the great Jehovah, and the arm of his power and grace stretched forth in all the majesty of his power, and in all the glory of his sovereignty, I should appear sunk down in my sins below hell itself; far beyond the sight of every thing, but the eye of sovereign grace, that can pierce even down to such a depth. And yet it seems to me, that my conviction of sin is exceeding small, and faint; it is enough to amaze me, that I have no more sense of my sin. I know certainly, that I have very lime sense of my sinfulness. When I have had turns of weeping and crying for my sins I thought I knew at the time, that my repentance was nothing to my sin.

When I look into my heart, and take a view of my wickedness, it looks like an abyss infinitely deeper than hell.

I have greatly longed of late, for a broken heart, and to lie low before God; and, when I ask for humility, I cannot bear the thoughts of being no more humble than other Christians. It seems to me, that though their degrees of humility may be suitable for them, yet it would be a vile self&SHY;exaltation in me, not to be the lowest in humility of all mankind. Others speak of their longing to be "humbled to the dust;" that may be a proper expression for them, but I always think of myself, that I ought, and it is an expression that has long been natural for me to use in prayer, "to lie infinitely low before God." And it is affecting to think, how ignorant I was, when a young Christian, of the bottomless, infinite depths of wickedness, pride, hypocrisy and deceit, left in my heart.

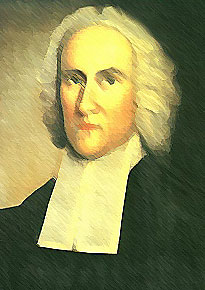
I have a much greater sense of my universal, exceeding dependence on God's grace and strength, and mere good pleasure, of late, than I used formerly to have; and have experienced more of an abhorrence of my own righteousness. The very thought of any joy arising in me, on any consideration of my own amiableness, performances, or experiences, or any goodness of heart or life, is nauseous and detestable to me. And yet I am greatly afflicted with a proud and self&SHY;righteous spirit, much more sensibly than I used to be formerly. I see that serpent rising and putting forth its head continually, every where, all around me.

Though it seems to me, that, in some respects, I was a far better Christian, for two or three years after my first conversion, than I am now; and lived in a more constant delight and pleasure; yet, of late years, I have had a more full and constant sense of the absolute sovereignty of God, and a delight in that sovereignty; and have had more of a sense of the glory of Christ, as a Mediator revealed in the gospel. On one Saturday night, in particular, I had such a discovery of the excellency of the gospel above all other doctrines, that I could not but say to myself, "This is my chosen light, my chosen doctrine;" and of Christ, "This is my chosen Prophet." It appeared sweet, beyond all expression, to follow Christ, and to be taught, and enlightened, and instructed by him; to learn of him, and live to him. Another Saturday night, (January 1739) I had such a sense, how sweet and blessed a thing it was to walk in the way of duty; to do that which was right and meet to be done, and agreeable to the holy mind of God; that it caused me to break forth into a kind of loud weeping, which held me some time, so that I was forced to shut myself up, and fasten the doors. I could not but, as it were, cry out, "How happy are they which do that which is right in the sight of God! They are blessed indeed, they are the happy ones!" l had, at the same time, a very affecting sense, how meet and suitable it was that God should govern the world, and order all things according to his own pleasure; and I rejoiced in it, that God reigned, and that his will was done.

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For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. - Hebrews 5:12

# The Importance And Advantage Of A Thorough Knowledge Of Divine Truth

by Jonathan Edwards

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## Introduction

THESE words are a complaint, which the apostle makes against the Christian Hebrews, for their want of such proficiency in the knowledge of the doctrines and mysteries of religion, as might have been expected of them. The apostle complains, that they had not made that progress in their acquaintance with the things taught in the oracles of God, which they ought to have made. And he means to reprove them, not merely for their deficiency in spiritual and experimental knowledge of divine things, but for their deficiency in a doctrinal acquaintance with the principles of religion, and the truths of Christian divinity, as is evident by the manner in which the apostle introduces this reproof. The occasion of his introducing it is this: in the next text but one preceding, he mentions Christ as being “Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchizedek.” In the Old Testament, the oracles of God, Melchizedek was held forth as an eminent type of Christ, and the account we there have of him contains many gospel mysteries. These mysteries the apostle was willing to point out to the Christian Hebrews, but he apprehended that through their weakness in knowledge, they would not understand him, and therefore breaks off for the present from saying anything about Melchizedek, thus (Heb. 5:11) “Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered; seeing ye are all dull of hearing.” i.e. There are many things concerning Melchizedek which contain wonderful gospel mysteries, and which I would take notice of to you, were it not that I am afraid, that through your dullness, and backwardness in understanding these things, you would only be puzzled and confounded by my discourse, and so receive no benefit, and that it would be too hard for you: as meat that is too strong.

Then come in the words of the text: “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.” As much as to say, Indeed it might have been expected of you, that you should have known enough of the Holy Scriptures, to be able to understand and digest such mysteries: but it is not so with you. The apostle speaks of their proficiency in such knowledge as is conveyed by human teaching, as appears by that expression, “When for the time ye ought to be teachers;” which includes not only a practical and experimental, but also a doctrinal, knowledge of the truths and mysteries of religion.

Again, the apostle speaks of such knowledge, whereby Christians are enabled to understand those things in divinity which are more abstruse and difficult to be understood, and which require great skill in things of this nature. This is more fully expressed in the two next verses: “For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” It is such knowledge, that proficiency in it shall carry persons beyond the first principles of religion. As here, “Ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God.” Therefore the apostle, in the beginning of the next chapter, advises them “to leave the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, and to go on unto perfection.”

We may observe that the fault of this defect appears, in that they had not made proficiency according to their time. — For the time, they ought to have been teachers. As they were Christians, their business was to learn and gain Christian knowledge. They were scholars in the school of Christ; and if they had improved their time in learning, as they ought to have done, they might, by the time when the apostle wrote, have been fit to be teachers in this school. To whatever business anyone is devoted, it may be expected that his perfection in it shall be answerable to the time he has had to learn and perfect himself. — Christians should not always remain babes, but should grow in Christian knowledge. Leaving the food of babes, they should learn to digest strong meat.

DOCTRINE. Every Christian should make a business of endeavoring to grow in knowledge in divinity. — This is indeed esteemed the business of divines and ministers: it is commonly thought to be their work, by the study of the Scriptures, and other instructive books, to gain knowledge. Most seem to think that it may be left to them, as what belongeth not to others. But if the apostle had entertained this notion, he would never have blamed the Christian Hebrews for not having acquired knowledge enough to be teachers. Or if he had thought that this concerned Christians in general only as a thing by the by, and that their time should not in a considerable measure be taken up with this business, he never would have so much blamed them, that their proficiency in knowledge had not been answerable to the time which they had had to learn.

In handling this subject, I shall show — what is intended by divinity — what kind of knowledge in divinity is intended — why knowledge in divinity is necessary.

And why all Christians should make a business of endeavoring to grow in this knowledge.

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## What is intended by divinity, as the object of Christian knowledge

VARIOUS definitions have been given of this subject by those who have treated on it. I shall not now stand to inquire which, according to the rules of art, is the most accurate definition, but shall so define or describe it, as I think has the greatest tendency to convey a proper notion of it. — It is that science or doctrine which comprehends all those truths and rules which concern the great business of religion.

There are various kinds of arts and sciences taught and learned in the schools, which are conversant about various objects: about the works of nature in general, as philosophy; or the visible heavens, as astronomy; or the sea, as navigation; or the earth, as geography; or the body of man, as physic and anatomy; or the soul of man with regard to its natural powers and qualities, as logic and pneumatology; or about human government, as politics and jurisprudence. But one science, or kind of knowledge and doctrine, is above all the rest; as it treats concerning God and the great business of religion. Divinity is not learned, as other sciences, merely by the improvement of man’s natural reason, but is taught by God himself in a book full of instruction, which he has given us for that end. This is the rule which God has given to the world to be their guide in searching after this kind of knowledge, and is a summary of all things of this nature needful for us to know. Upon this account divinity is rather called a doctrine, than an art or science.

Indeed there is what is called natural religion. There are many truths concerning God, and our duty to him, which are evident by the light of nature. But Christian divinity, properly so called, is not evident by the light of nature. It depends on revelation. Such are our circumstances now in our fallen state, that nothing which it is needful for us to know concerning God, is manifest by the light of nature, in the manner in which it is necessary for us to know it. For the knowledge of no truth in divinity is of significance to us, any otherwise than as it some way or other belongs to the gospel scheme, or as it relates to a Mediator. But the light of nature teaches us no truth in this matter. Therefore it cannot be said that we come to the knowledge of any part of Christian truth by the light of nature. It is only the Word of God, contained in the Old and New Testament, which teaches us Christian divinity.

This comprehends all that is taught in the Scriptures, and so all that we need know, or is to be known, concerning God and Jesus Christ, concerning our duty to God, and our happiness in God. Divinity is commonly defined, the doctrine of living to God; and by some who seem to be more accurate, the doctrine of living to God by Christ. It comprehends all Christian doctrines as they are in Jesus, and all Christian rules directing us in living to God by Christ. There is no one doctrine, no promise, no rule, but what some way or other relates to the Christian and divine life, or our living to God by Christ. They all relate to this, in two respects, viz. as they tend to promote our living to God here in this world, in a life of faith and holiness, and also as they tend to bring us to a life of perfect holiness and happiness, in the full enjoyment of God hereafter.

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## What kind of knowledge in divinity, is intended in the doctrine

THERE are two kinds of knowledge of divine truth, viz. speculative and practical, or in other terms, natural and spiritual. The former remains only in the head. No other faculty but the understanding is concerned in it. It consists in having a natural or rational knowledge of the things of religion, or such a knowledge as is to be obtained by the natural exercise of our own faculties, without any special illumination of the Spirit of God. The latter rests not entirely in the head, or in the speculative ideas of things, but the heart is concerned in it: it principally consists in the sense of the heart. The mere intellect, without the will or the inclination, is not the seat of it. And it may not only be called seeing, but feeling or tasting. Thus there is a difference between having a right speculative notion of the doctrines contained in the Word of God, and having a due sense of them in the heart. In the former consists the speculative or natural knowledge, in the latter consists the spiritual or practical knowledge of them.

Neither of these is intended in the doctrine exclusively of the other, but it is intended that we should seek the former in order to the latter. The latter, or the spiritual and practical, is of the greatest importance. For a speculative without a spiritual knowledge, is to no purpose, but to make our condemnation the greater. Yet a speculative knowledge is also of infinite importance in this respect, that without it we can have no spiritual or practical knowledge.

I have already shown that the apostle speaks not only of a spiritual knowledge, but of such as can be acquired, and communicated from one to another. Yet it is not to be thought that he means this exclusively of the other. But he would have the Christian Hebrews seek the one, in order to the other. Therefore the former is first and most directly intended. It is intended that Christians should, by reading and other proper means, seek a good rational knowledge of the things of divinity, while the latter is more indirectly intended, since it is to be sought by the other. But I proceed to:

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## The usefulness and necessity of the knowledge of divine truths

THERE is no other way by which any means of grace whatsoever can be of any benefit, but by knowledge. All teaching is in vain, without learning. Therefore the preaching of the gospel would be wholly to no purpose, if it conveyed no knowledge to the mind. There is an order of men which Christ has appointed on purpose to be teachers in his church. But they teach in vain, if no knowledge in these things is gained by their teaching. It is impossible that their teaching and preaching should be a mean of grace, or of any good in the hearts of their hearers, any otherwise than by knowledge imparted to the understanding. Otherwise it would be of as much benefit to the auditory, if the minister should preach in some unknown tongue. All the difference is that preaching in a known tongue conveys something to the understanding, which preaching in an unknown tongue doth not. On this account, such preaching must be unprofitable. In such things men receive nothing, when they understand nothing, and are not at all edified, unless some knowledge be conveyed; agreeable to the apostle’s arguing, 1 Cor. 14:2-6.

No speech can be a mean of grace, but by conveying knowledge. Otherwise the speech is as much lost as if there had been no man there, and if he that spoke, had spoken only into the air, as it follows in the passage just quoted, verse 6-10. God deals with man as with a rational creature, and when faith is in exercise, it is not about something he knows not what. Therefore hearing is absolutely necessary to faith, because hearing is necessary to understanding, Rom. 10:14, “How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?” In like manner, there can be no love without knowledge. It is not according to the nature of the human soul, to love an object which is entirely unknown. The heart cannot be set upon an object of which there is no idea in the understanding. The reasons which induce the soul to love, must first be understood, before they can have a reasonable influence on the heart.

God has given us the Bible, which is a book of instructions. But this book can be of no manner of profit to us, any otherwise than as it conveys some knowledge to the mind. It can profit us no more than if it were written in the Chinese or Tartarian language, of which we know not one word. So the sacraments of the gospel can have a proper effect no other way, than by conveying some knowledge. They represent certain things by visible signs. And what is the end of signs, but to convey some knowledge of the things signified? Such is the nature of man, that no object can come at the heart but through the door of the understanding, and there can be no spiritual knowledge of that of which there is not first a rational knowledge. It is impossible that anyone should see the truth or excellency of any doctrine of the gospel, who knows not what that doctrine is. A man cannot see the wonderful excellency and love of Christ in doing such and such things for sinners, unless his understanding be first informed how those things were done. He cannot have a taste of the sweetness and excellency of divine truth, unless be first have a notion that there is such a thing.

Without knowledge in divinity, none would differ from the most ignorant and barbarous heathens. The heathens remain in gross darkness, because they are not instructed, and have not obtained the knowledge of divine truths.

If men have no knowledge of these things, the faculty of reason in them will be wholly in vain. The faculty of reason and understanding was given for actual understanding and knowledge. If a man have no actual knowledge, the faculty or capacity of knowing is of no use to him. And if he have actual knowledge, yet if he be destitute of the knowledge of those things which are the last end of his being, and for the sake of the knowledge of which he had more understanding given him than the beasts, then still his faculty of reason is in vain. He might as well have been a beast as a man. But divine subjects are the things to know which we had the faculty of reason given us. They are the things which appertain to the end of our being, and to the great business for which we are made. Therefore a man cannot have his faculty of understanding to any good purpose, further than he has knowledge of divine truth.

So that this kind of knowledge is absolutely necessary. — Other kinds of knowledge may be very useful. Some other sciences, such as astronomy, natural philosophy, and geography, may be very excellent in their kind. But the knowledge of this divine science is infinitely more useful and important than that of all other sciences whatever.

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## Why all Christians should make a business of endeavoring to grow in the knowledge of divinity

CHRISTIANS ought not to content themselves with such degrees of knowledge of divinity as they have already obtained. It should not satisfy them, as they know as much as is absolutely necessary to salvation, but should seek to make progress.

This endeavor to make progress in such knowledge ought not to be attended to as a thing by the bye, but all Christians should make a business of it. They should look upon it as a part of their daily business, and no small part of it neither. It should be attended to as a considerable part of the work of their high calling. — For,

1. Our business should doubtless much consist in employing those faculties, by which we are distinguished from the beasts, about those things which are the main end of those faculties. The reason why we have faculties superior to those of the brutes given us, is that we are indeed designed for a superior employment. That which the Creator intended should be our main employment, is something above what he intended the beast for, and therefore has given us superior powers. Therefore, without doubt, it should be a considerable part of our business to improve those superior faculties. But the faculty by which we are chiefly distinguished from the brutes, is the faculty of understanding. It follows then, that we should make it our chief business to improve this faculty, and should by no means prosecute it as a business by the bye. For us to make the improvement of this faculty a business by the bye, is in effect for us to make the faculty of understanding itself a by-faculty, if I may so speak, a faculty of less importance than others: whereas indeed it is the highest faculty we have.

But we cannot make a business of the improvement of our intellectual faculty, any otherwise than by making a business of improving ourselves in actual knowledge. So that those who make not this very much their business, but instead of improving their understanding to acquire knowledge, are chiefly devoted to their inferior power — to please their senses, and gratify their animal appetites — not only behave themselves in a manner not becoming Christians, but also act as if they had forgotten that they are men, and that God has set them above the brutes by giving them understanding.

God has given to man some things in common with the brutes, as his outward senses, his bodily appetites, a capacity of bodily pleasure and pain, and other animal faculties. Some things he has given him superior to the brutes: the chief of which is a faculty of understanding and reason. Now God never gave man these faculties to be subject to those which he has in common with the brutes. This would be great confusion, and equivalent to making man to be a servant of the beasts. On the contrary, he has given those inferior powers to be employed in subserviency to man’s understanding. Therefore it must be a great part of man’s principal business to improve his understanding by acquiring knowledge. If so, then it will follow that it should be a main part of his business to improve his understanding in acquiring divine knowledge, or the knowledge of the things of divinity. For the knowledge of these things is the principal end of this faculty. God gave man the faculty of understanding, chiefly, that he might understand divine things.

The wiser heathens were sensible that the main business of man was the improvement and exercise of his understanding. But they knew not the object about which the understanding should chiefly be employed. That science which many of them thought should chiefly employ the understanding, was philosophy, and accordingly they made it their chief business to study it. But we who enjoy the light of the gospel are more happy. We are not left, as to this particular, in the dark. God has told us about what things we should chiefly employ our understandings, having given us a book full of divine instructions, holding forth many glorious objects about which all rational creatures should chiefly employ their understandings. These instructions are accommodated to persons of all capacities and conditions, and proper to be studied, not only by men of learning, but by persons of every character, learned and unlearned, young and old, men and women. Therefore the acquisition of knowledge in these things should be a main business of all those who have the advantage of enjoying the Holy Scriptures.

2. The truths of divinity are of superlative excellency, and are worthy that all should make a business of endeavoring to grow in the knowledge of them. They are as much above those things which are treated of in other sciences, as heaven is above the earth. God himself, the eternal Three in one, is the chief object of this science, and next Jesus Christ, as God-man and Mediator, and the glorious work of redemption, the most glorious work that ever was wrought. Then [it is] the great things of the heavenly world, the glorious and eternal inheritance purchased by Christ and promised in the gospel, the work of the Holy Spirit of God on the hearts of men, our duty to God, and the way in which we ourselves may become like angels and like God himself in our measure. All these are objects of this science.

Such things as these have been the main subject of the study of the holy patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, and the most excellent men that ever existed. They are also the subject of study to the angels in heaven, 1 Pet. 1:10-12. — They are so excellent and worthy to be known that the knowledge of them will richly pay for all the pains and labor of an earnest seeking of it. If there were a great treasure of gold and pearls accidentally found, and opened with such circumstances that all might have as much as they could gather, would not everyone think it worth his while to make a business of gathering while it should last? But that treasure of divine knowledge, which is contained in the Scriptures, and is provided for everyone to gather to himself as much of it as he can, is far more rich than anyone of gold and pearls. How busy are all sorts of men, all over the world, in getting riches! But this knowledge is a far better kind of riches than that after which they so diligently and laboriously pursue.

3. Divine truths not only concern ministers, but are of infinite importance to all Christians. It is not with the doctrine of divinity as it is with the doctrines of philosophy and other sciences. These last are generally speculative points, which are of little concern in human life, and it very little alters the case as to our temporal or spiritual interests, whether we know them or not. Philosophers differ about them, some being of one opinion, and others of another. And while they are engaged in warm disputes about them, others may well leave them to dispute among themselves, without troubling their heads much about them: it being of little concern to them, whether the one or the other be in the right. — But it is not thus in matters of divinity. The doctrines of this nearly concern everyone. They are about those things which relate to every man’s eternal salvation and happiness. The common people cannot say, “Let us leave these matters to ministers and divines. Let them dispute them out among themselves as they can. They concern not us,” for they are of infinite importance to every man. Those doctrines which relate to the essence, attributes, and subsistencies of God, concern all, as it is of infinite importance to common people, as well as to ministers, to know what kind of being God is. For he is a Being who has made us all, “in whom we live, and move, and have our being;” who is the Lord of all, the Being to whom we are all accountable, who is the last end of our being, and the only fountain of our happiness.

The doctrines also which relate to Jesus Christ and his mediation, his incarnation, his life and death, his resurrection and ascension, his sitting at the right hand of the Father, his satisfaction and intercession, infinitely concern common people as well as divines. They stand in as much need of this Savior, and of an interest in his person and offices, and the things which he has done and suffered, as ministers and divines. — The same may be said of the doctrines which relate to the manner of a sinner’s justification, or the way in which he becomes interested in the mediation of Christ. They equally concern all, for all stand in equal necessity of justification before God. That eternal condemnation, to which we are all naturally exposed, is equally dreadful. So with respect to those doctrines which relate to the work of the Spirit of God on the heart, in the application of redemption in our effectual calling and sanctification, all are equally concerned in them. There is no doctrine of divinity whatever, which doth not some way or other concern the eternal interest of every Christian.

4. We may argue in favor of the same position, from the great things which God has done in order to give us instruction in these things. As to other sciences, he has left us to ourselves, to the light of our own reason. But divine things being of infinitely greater importance to us, he has not left us to an uncertain guide, but has himself given us a revelation of the truth in these matters, and has done very great things to convey and confirm it to us. [He has] raised up many prophets in different ages, immediately inspiring them with his Holy Spirit, and confirming their doctrine with innumerable miracles or wonderful works out of the established course of nature. Yea, he raised up a succession of prophets, which was upheld for several ages.

It was very much for this end that God separated the people of Israel, in so wonderful a manner, from all other people, and kept them separate, that to them he might commit the oracles of God, and that from them they might be communicated to the world. He has also often sent angels to bring divine instructions to men, and has often himself appeared in miraculous symbols or representations of his presence. Now in these last days [he] has sent his own Son into the world, to be his great prophet, to teach us divine truth. Heb. 1:1, etc. God has given us a book of divine instructions, which contains the sum of divinity. Now, these things has God done, not only for the instruction of ministers and men of learning, but for the instruction of all men, of all sorts, learned and unlearned, men, women, and children. And certainly if God doth such great things to teach us, we ought to do something to learn.

God giving instructions to men in these things is not a business by the by, but what he has undertaken and prosecuted in a course of great and wonderful dispensations, as an affair in which his heart has been greatly engaged, which is sometimes in Scripture signified by the expression of God’s rising early to teach us, and to send us prophets and teachers, Jer. 7:25, “Since that day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt, unto this day, I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early, and sending them.” And verse 13, “I spake unto you, rising up early, and speaking.” This is a figurative speech, signifying that God has done this as a business of great importance, in which he took great care, and had his heart much engaged. Because persons are wont to rise early to prosecute such business as they are earnestly engaged in. — If God has been so engaged in teaching, certainly we should not be negligent in learning, but should make growing in knowledge a great part of the business of our lives.

5. It may be argued from the abundance of the instructions which God has given us, from the largeness of that book which God has given to teach us divinity, and from the great variety that is therein contained. Much was taught by Moses of old, which we have transmitted down to us. After that, other books were from time to time added. Much is taught us by David and Solomon, and many and excellent are the instructions communicated by the prophets. Yet God did not think all this enough, but after this sent Christ and his apostles, by whom there is added a great and excellent treasure to that holy book, which is to be our rule in the study of this important subject.

This book was written for the use of all. All are directed to search the Scriptures, John 5:39, “Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they that testify of me;” and Isa. 34:16, “Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read.” They that read and understand are pronounced blessed, Rev. 1:3, “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that understand the words of this prophecy.” If this be true of that particular book of the Revelation, much more is it true of the Bible in general. Nor is it to be believed that God would have given instructions in such abundance, if he had intended that receiving instruction should be only a bye concern with us.

It is to be considered, that all those abundant instructions which are contained in the Scriptures were written that they might be understood: otherwise they are not instructions. That which is not given that the learner may understand it, is not given for the learner’s instruction. Unless we endeavor to grow in the knowledge of divinity, a very great part of those instructions will to us be in vain. For we can receive benefit by no more of the Scriptures than we understand. We have reason to bless God that he has given us such various and plentiful instruction in his Word, but we shall be hypocritical in so doing, if we after all content ourselves with but little of this instruction.

When God has opened a very large treasure before us for the supply of our wants, and we thank him that he has given us so much, if at the same time we be willing to remain destitute of the greatest part of it, because we are too lazy to gather it, this will not show the sincerity of our thankfulness. We are now under much greater advantages to acquire knowledge in divinity, than the people of God were of old, because since that time the canon of Scripture is much increased. But if we be negligent of our advantages, we may be never the better for them, and may remain with as little knowledge as they.

6. However diligent we apply ourselves, there is room enough to increase our knowledge in divine truth. None have this excuse to make for not diligently applying themselves to gain knowledge in divinity, that they already know all. Nor can they make this excuse, that they have no need diligently to apply themselves, in order to know all that is to be known. None can excuse themselves for want of business in which to employ themselves. There is room enough to employ ourselves forever in this divine science with the utmost application. Those who have applied themselves most closely, have studied the longest and have made the greatest attainments in this knowledge, know but little of what is to be known. The subject is inexhaustible. That Divine Being, who is the main subject of this science, is infinite, and there is no end to the glory of his perfections. His works at the same time are wonderful, and cannot be found out to perfection, especially the work of redemption, about which the science of divinity is chiefly conversant, is full of unsearchable wonders.

The Word of God, which is given for our instruction in divinity, contains enough in it to employ us to the end of our lives, and then we shall leave enough uninvestigated to employ the heads of the ablest divines to the end of the world. The psalmist found an end to the things that are human, but he could never find an end to what is contained in the Word of God: Psa. 119:96, “I have seen an end to all perfection; but thy command is exceeding broad.” There is enough in this divine science to employ the understandings of saints and angels to all eternity.

7. It doubtless concerns everyone to endeavor to excel in the knowledge of things which pertain to his profession, or principal calling. If it concerns men to excel in anything, or in any wisdom or knowledge at all, it certainly concerns them to excel in the affairs of their main profession and work. But the calling and work of every Christian is to live to God. This is said to be his high calling, Phil. 3:14. This is the business, and if I may so speak, the trade of a Christian, his main work, and indeed should be his only work. No business should be done by a Christian, but as it is some way or other a part of this. Therefore certainly the Christian should endeavor to be well acquainted with those things which belong to this work, that he may fulfill it, and be thoroughly furnished to it.

It becomes one who is called to be a soldier, to excel in the art of war. It becomes a mariner, to excel in the art of navigation. It becomes a physician, to excel in the knowledge of those things which pertain to the art of physic. So it becomes all such as profess to be Christians, and to devote themselves to the practice of Christianity, to endeavor to excel in the knowledge of divinity.

8. It may be argued hence that God has appointed an order of men for this end, to assist persons in gaining knowledge in these things. He has appointed them to be teachers, 1 Cor. 12:28, and God has set some in the church: first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, Eph. 4:11, 12, “He gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” If God has set them to be teachers, making that their business, then he has made it their business to impart knowledge. But what kind of knowledge? Not the knowledge of philosophy, or of human laws, or of mechanical arts, but of divinity.

If God has made it the business of some to be teachers, it will follow that he has made it the business of others to be learners. For teachers and learners are correlates, one of which was never intended to be without the other. God has never made it the duty of some to take pains to teach those who are not obliged to take pains to learn. He has not commanded ministers to spend themselves, in order to impart knowledge to those who are not obliged to apply themselves to receive it.

The name by which Christians are commonly called in the New Testament is disciples, the signification of which word is scholars or learners. All Christians are put into the school of Christ, where their business is to learn, or receive knowledge from Christ, their common master and teacher, and from those inferior teachers appointed by him to instruct in his name.

9. God has in the Scriptures plainly revealed it to be his will, that all Christians should diligently endeavor to excel in the knowledge of divine things. It is the revealed will of God that Christians should not only have some knowledge of things of this nature, but that they should be enriched with all knowledge, 1 Cor. 1:4, 5, “I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God that is given you by Jesus Christ, that in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge.” So the apostle earnestly prayed, that the Christian Philippians might abound more and more, not only in love, but in Christian knowledge; Phil. 1:9, “And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment.” So the apostle Peter advises to “give all diligence to add to faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge,” 2 Pet. 1:5, and the apostle Paul, in the next chapter to that wherein is the text, counsels the Christian Hebrews, leaving the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, to go on to perfection. He would by no means have them always to rest only in those fundamental doctrines of repentance, and faith, and the resurrection from the dead, and the eternal judgment, in which they were instructed when baptized, at their first initiation in Christianity. (See Heb. 6, etc.)

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## An exhortation that all may diligently endeavor to gain Christian knowledge

CONSIDER yourselves as scholars or disciples, put into the school of Christ, and therefore be diligent to make proficiency in Christian knowledge. Content not yourselves with this, that you have been taught your catechism in your childhood, and that you know as much of the principles of religion as is necessary to salvation, else you will be guilty of what the apostle warns against, viz. going no further than laying the foundation of repentance from dead works, etc.

You are all called to be Christians, and this is your profession. Endeavor, therefore, to acquire knowledge in things which pertain to your profession. Let not your teachers have cause to complain that while they spend and are spent, to impart knowledge to you, you take little pains to learn. It is a great encouragement to an instructor, to have such to teach as make a business of learning, bending their minds to it. This makes teaching a pleasure, when otherwise it will be a very heavy and burdensome task.

You all have by you a large treasure of divine knowledge, in that you have the Bible in your hands. Therefore be not contented in possessing but little of this treasure. God has spoken much to you in the Scriptures. Labor to understand as much of what he says as you can. God has made you all reasonable creatures, therefore let not the noble faculty of reason or understanding lie neglected. Content not yourselves with having so much knowledge as is thrown in your way, and receive in some sense unavoidably by the frequent inculcation of divine truth in the preaching of the Word, of which you are obliged to be hearers, or accidentally gain in conversation. But let it be very much your business to search for it, and that with the same diligence and labor with which men are wont to dig in mines of silver and gold.

Especially I would advise those who are young to employ themselves in this way. Men are never too old to learn, but the time of youth is especially the time for learning. It is peculiarly proper for gaining and storing up knowledge. — Further, to stir up all, both old and young, to this duty, let me entreat you to consider,

1. If you apply yourselves diligently to this work, you will not want employment, when you are at leisure from your common secular business. In this way, you may find something in which you may profitably employ yourselves. You will find something else to do, besides going about from house to house, spending one hour after another in unprofitable conversation, or at best, to no other purpose but to amuse yourselves, to fill up and wear away your time. And it is to be feared that very much of the time spent in evening visits, is spent to a much worse purpose than that which I have now mentioned. Solomon tells us, Pro. 10:19, “That in the multitude of words, there wanteth not sin.” And is not this verified in those who find little else to do but to go to one another’s houses, and spend the time in such talk as comes next, or such as anyone’s present disposition happens to suggest?

Some diversion is doubtless lawful, but for Christians to spend so much of their time, so many long evenings, in no other conversation than that which tends to divert and amuse, if nothing worse, is a sinful way of spending time, and tends to poverty of soul at least, if not to outward poverty, Pro. 14:23, “In all labor there is profit; but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury.” Besides, when persons for so much of their time have nothing else to do but to sit and talk and chat, there is great danger of falling into foolish and sinful conversation, venting their corrupt dispositions, in talking against others, expressing their jealousies and evil surmises concerning their neighbors, not considering what Christ has said, Mat. 12:36, “Of every idle word that men shall speak, shall they give account in the day of judgment.”

If you would comply with what you have heard from this doctrine, you would find something else to employ your time besides contention, or talking about those public affairs which tend to contention. Young people might find something else to do besides spending their time in vain company: something that would be much more profitable to themselves, as it would really turn to some good account, something in doing which they would both be more out of the way of temptation, and be more in the way of duty, and of a divine blessing. And even aged people would have something to employ themselves in, after they are become incapable of bodily labor. Their time, as is now often the case, would not lie heavy upon their hands, as they would with both profit and pleasure be engaged in searching the Scriptures, and in comparing and meditating upon the various truths which they should find there.

2. This would be a noble way of spending your time. — The Holy Spirit gives the Bereans this epithet, because they diligently employed themselves in this business: Acts 17:11, “These were more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” Similar to this is very much the employment of heaven. The inhabitants of that world spend much of their time in searching into the great things of divinity, and endeavoring to acquire knowledge in them, as we are told of the angels, 1 Pet. 1:12, “Which things the angels desire to look into.” This will be very agreeable to what you hope will be your business to all eternity, as you doubtless hope to join in the same employment with the angels of light. Solomon says, Pro. 25:2, “It is the honor of kings to search out a matter;” and certainly, above all others, to search out divine matters. Now, if this be the honor even of kings, is it not much more your honor?

3. This is a pleasant way of improving time. Knowledge is pleasant and delightful to intelligent creatures, and above all, the knowledge of divine things. For in them are the most excellent truths, and the most beautiful and amiable objects held forth to view. However tedious the labor necessarily attending this business may be, yet the knowledge once obtained will richly requite the pains taken to obtain it. “When wisdom entereth the heart, knowledge is pleasant to the soul.” Pro. 2:10.

4. This knowledge is exceedingly useful in Christian practice. Such as have much knowledge in divinity have great means and advantages for spiritual and saving knowledge. For no means of grace have a saving effect, otherwise than by the knowledge they impart. The more you have of a rational knowledge of divine things, the more opportunity will there be, when the Spirit shall be breathed into your heart, to see the excellency of these things, and to taste the sweetness of them. The heathens, who have no rational knowledge of the things of the gospel, have no opportunity to see the excellency of them. Therefore the more rational knowledge of these things you have, the more opportunity and advantage you have to see the divine excellency and glory of them.

Again, the more knowledge you have of divine things, the better will you know your duty. Your knowledge will be of great use to direct you as to your duty in particular cases. You will also be the better furnished against the temptations of the devil. For the devil often takes advantage of persons’ ignorance to ply them with temptations which otherwise would have no hold of them. By having much knowledge, you will be under greater advantages to conduct yourselves with prudence and discretion in your Christian course, and so to live much more to the honor of God and religion. Many who mean well, and are full of a good spirit, yet for want of prudence, conduct themselves so as to wound religion. Many have a zeal of God, which doth more hurt than good, because it is not according to knowledge, Rom. 10:2. The reason why many good men behave no better in many instances, is not so much that they want grace, as that they want knowledge. Beside, an increase of knowledge would be a great help to profitable conversation. It would supply you with matter for conversation when you come together, or when you visit your neighbors, so you would have less temptation to spend the time in such conversation as tends to your own and others’ hurt.

5. Consider the advantages you are under to grow in the knowledge of divinity. We are under far greater advantages to gain much of this knowledge now than God’s people under the Old Testament, both because the canon of Scripture is so much enlarged since that time, and also because evangelical truths are now so much more plainly revealed. So that common men are now in some respects under advantages to know more than the greatest prophets were then. Thus that saying of Christ is in a sense applicable to us, Luke 10:23, 24, “Blessed are the eyes which see the things which ye see. For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.” We are in some respects under far greater advantages for gaining knowledge, now in these latter ages of the church, than Christians were formerly, especially by reason of the art of printing, of which God has given us the benefit, whereby Bibles and other books of divinity are exceedingly multiplied, and persons may now be furnished with helps for the obtaining of Christian knowledge, at a much easier and cheaper rate than they formerly could.

6. We know not what opposition we may meet with in the religious principles which we hold. We know that there are many adversaries to the gospel and its truths. If therefore we embrace those truths, we must expect to be attacked by the said adversaries. Unless we be well informed concerning divine things, how shall we be able to defend ourselves? Beside, the apostle Paul enjoins it upon us, always to be ready to give an answer to every man who asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us. But this we cannot expect to do without considerable knowledge in divine things.

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## Directions for the acquisition of Christian knowledge

1. BE assiduous in reading the Holy Scriptures. This is the fountain whence all knowledge in divinity must be derived. Therefore let not this treasure lie by you neglected. Every man of common understanding who can read, may if he please, become well acquainted with the Scriptures. And what an excellent attainment would this be!

2. Content not yourselves with only a cursory reading, without regarding the sense. This is an ill way of reading, to which, however, many accustom themselves all their days. When you read, observe what you read. Observe how things come in. Take notice of the drift of the discourse, and compare one scripture with another. For the Scripture, by the harmony of its different parts, casts great light upon itself. — We are expressly directed by Christ to search the Scriptures, which evidently intends something more than a mere cursory reading. And use means to find out the meaning of the Scripture. When you have it explained in the preaching of the Word, take notice of it. If at any time a scripture that you did not understand be cleared up to your satisfaction, mark it, lay it up, and if possible remember it.

3. Procure, and diligently use, other books which may help you to grow in this knowledge. There are many excellent books extant, which might greatly forward you in this knowledge, and afford you a very profitable and pleasant entertainment in your leisure hours. There is doubtless a great defect in many, that through a lothness to be at a little expense, they furnish themselves with no more helps of this nature. They have a few books indeed, which now and then on sabbath days they read. But they have had them so long, and read them so often, that they are weary of them, and it is now become a dull story, a mere task to read them.

4. Improve conversation with others to this end. How much might persons promote each other’s knowledge in divine things, if they would improve conversation as they might, if men that are ignorant were not ashamed to show their ignorance and were willing to learn of others, if those that have knowledge would communicate it without pride and ostentation, and if all were more disposed to enter on such conversation as would be for their mutual edification and instruction.

5. Seek not to grow in knowledge chiefly for the sake of applause, and to enable you to dispute with others, but seek it for the benefit of your souls, and in order to practice. — If applause be your end, you will not be so likely to be led to the knowledge of the truth, but may justly, as often is the case of those who are proud of their knowledge, be led into error to your own perdition. This being your end, if you should obtain much rational knowledge, it would not be likely to be of any benefit to you, but would puff you up with pride: 1 Cor. 8:1, “Knowledge puffeth up.”

6. Seek to God, that he would direct you, and bless you, in this pursuit after knowledge. This is the apostle’s direction, Jam. 1:5, “If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not.” God is the fountain of all divine knowledge: Pro. 2:6, “The Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.” Labor to be sensible of your own blindness and ignorance, and your need of the help of God, lest you be led into error, instead of true knowledge: 1 Cor. 3:18, “If any man would be wise, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.”

7. Practice according to what knowledge you have. This will be the way to know more. The psalmist warmly recommends this way of seeking knowledge in divine truth, from his own experience, Psa. 119:100, “I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.” Christ also recommends the same John 7:17, “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”

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## What is intended by divinity, as the object of Christian knowledge

VARIOUS definitions have been given of this subject by those who have treated on it. I shall not now stand to inquire which, according to the rules of art, is the most accurate definition, but shall so define or describe it, as I think has the greatest tendency to convey a proper notion of it. — It is that science or doctrine which comprehends all those truths and rules which concern the great business of religion.

There are various kinds of arts and sciences taught and learned in the schools, which are conversant about various objects: about the works of nature in general, as philosophy; or the visible heavens, as astronomy; or the sea, as navigation; or the earth, as geography; or the body of man, as physic and anatomy; or the soul of man with regard to its natural powers and qualities, as logic and pneumatology; or about human government, as politics and jurisprudence. But one science, or kind of knowledge and doctrine, is above all the rest; as it treats concerning God and the great business of religion. Divinity is not learned, as other sciences, merely by the improvement of man’s natural reason, but is taught by God himself in a book full of instruction, which he has given us for that end. This is the rule which God has given to the world to be their guide in searching after this kind of knowledge, and is a summary of all things of this nature needful for us to know. Upon this account divinity is rather called a doctrine, than an art or science.

Indeed there is what is called natural religion. There are many truths concerning God, and our duty to him, which are evident by the light of nature. But Christian divinity, properly so called, is not evident by the light of nature. It depends on revelation. Such are our circumstances now in our fallen state, that nothing which it is needful for us to know concerning God, is manifest by the light of nature, in the manner in which it is necessary for us to know it. For the knowledge of no truth in divinity is of significance to us, any otherwise than as it some way or other belongs to the gospel scheme, or as it relates to a Mediator. But the light of nature teaches us no truth in this matter. Therefore it cannot be said that we come to the knowledge of any part of Christian truth by the light of nature. It is only the Word of God, contained in the Old and New Testament, which teaches us Christian divinity.

This comprehends all that is taught in the Scriptures, and so all that we need know, or is to be known, concerning God and Jesus Christ, concerning our duty to God, and our happiness in God. Divinity is commonly defined, the doctrine of living to God; and by some who seem to be more accurate, the doctrine of living to God by Christ. It comprehends all Christian doctrines as they are in Jesus, and all Christian rules directing us in living to God by Christ. There is no one doctrine, no promise, no rule, but what some way or other relates to the Christian and divine life, or our living to God by Christ. They all relate to this, in two respects, viz. as they tend to promote our living to God here in this world, in a life of faith and holiness, and also as they tend to bring us to a life of perfect holiness and happiness, in the full enjoyment of God hereafter.

## What kind of knowledge in divinity, is intended in the doctrine

THERE are two kinds of knowledge of divine truth, viz. speculative and practical, or in other terms, natural and spiritual. The former remains only in the head. No other faculty but the understanding is concerned in it. It consists in having a natural or rational knowledge of the things of religion, or such a knowledge as is to be obtained by the natural exercise of our own faculties, without any special illumination of the Spirit of God. The latter rests not entirely in the head, or in the speculative ideas of things, but the heart is concerned in it: it principally consists in the sense of the heart. The mere intellect, without the will or the inclination, is not the seat of it. And it may not only be called seeing, but feeling or tasting. Thus there is a difference between having a right speculative notion of the doctrines contained in the Word of God, and having a due sense of them in the heart. In the former consists the speculative or natural knowledge, in the latter consists the spiritual or practical knowledge of them.

Neither of these is intended in the doctrine exclusively of the other, but it is intended that we should seek the former in order to the latter. The latter, or the spiritual and practical, is of the greatest importance. For a speculative without a spiritual knowledge, is to no purpose, but to make our condemnation the greater. Yet a speculative knowledge is also of infinite importance in this respect, that without it we can have no spiritual or practical knowledge.

I have already shown that the apostle speaks not only of a spiritual knowledge, but of such as can be acquired, and communicated from one to another. Yet it is not to be thought that he means this exclusively of the other. But he would have the Christian Hebrews seek the one, in order to the other. Therefore the former is first and most directly intended. It is intended that Christians should, by reading and other proper means, seek a good rational knowledge of the things of divinity, while the latter is more indirectly intended, since it is to be sought by the other. But I proceed to:

## The usefulness and necessity of the knowledge of divine truths

THERE is no other way by which any means of grace whatsoever can be of any benefit, but by knowledge. All teaching is in vain, without learning. Therefore the preaching of the gospel would be wholly to no purpose, if it conveyed no knowledge to the mind. There is an order of men which Christ has appointed on purpose to be teachers in his church. But they teach in vain, if no knowledge in these things is gained by their teaching. It is impossible that their teaching and preaching should be a mean of grace, or of any good in the hearts of their hearers, any otherwise than by knowledge imparted to the understanding. Otherwise it would be of as much benefit to the auditory, if the minister should preach in some unknown tongue. All the difference is that preaching in a known tongue conveys something to the understanding, which preaching in an unknown tongue doth not. On this account, such preaching must be unprofitable. In such things men receive nothing, when they understand nothing, and are not at all edified, unless some knowledge be conveyed; agreeable to the apostle’s arguing, 1 Cor. 14:2-6.

No speech can be a mean of grace, but by conveying knowledge. Otherwise the speech is as much lost as if there had been no man there, and if he that spoke, had spoken only into the air, as it follows in the passage just quoted, verse 6-10. God deals with man as with a rational creature, and when faith is in exercise, it is not about something he knows not what. Therefore hearing is absolutely necessary to faith, because hearing is necessary to understanding, Rom. 10:14, “How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?” In like manner, there can be no love without knowledge. It is not according to the nature of the human soul, to love an object which is entirely unknown. The heart cannot be set upon an object of which there is no idea in the understanding. The reasons which induce the soul to love, must first be understood, before they can have a reasonable influence on the heart.

God has given us the Bible, which is a book of instructions. But this book can be of no manner of profit to us, any otherwise than as it conveys some knowledge to the mind. It can profit us no more than if it were written in the Chinese or Tartarian language, of which we know not one word. So the sacraments of the gospel can have a proper effect no other way, than by conveying some knowledge. They represent certain things by visible signs. And what is the end of signs, but to convey some knowledge of the things signified? Such is the nature of man, that no object can come at the heart but through the door of the understanding, and there can be no spiritual knowledge of that of which there is not first a rational knowledge. It is impossible that anyone should see the truth or excellency of any doctrine of the gospel, who knows not what that doctrine is. A man cannot see the wonderful excellency and love of Christ in doing such and such things for sinners, unless his understanding be first informed how those things were done. He cannot have a taste of the sweetness and excellency of divine truth, unless be first have a notion that there is such a thing.

Without knowledge in divinity, none would differ from the most ignorant and barbarous heathens. The heathens remain in gross darkness, because they are not instructed, and have not obtained the knowledge of divine truths.

If men have no knowledge of these things, the faculty of reason in them will be wholly in vain. The faculty of reason and understanding was given for actual understanding and knowledge. If a man have no actual knowledge, the faculty or capacity of knowing is of no use to him. And if he have actual knowledge, yet if he be destitute of the knowledge of those things which are the last end of his being, and for the sake of the knowledge of which he had more understanding given him than the beasts, then still his faculty of reason is in vain. He might as well have been a beast as a man. But divine subjects are the things to know which we had the faculty of reason given us. They are the things which appertain to the end of our being, and to the great business for which we are made. Therefore a man cannot have his faculty of understanding to any good purpose, further than he has knowledge of divine truth.

So that this kind of knowledge is absolutely necessary. — Other kinds of knowledge may be very useful. Some other sciences, such as astronomy, natural philosophy, and geography, may be very excellent in their kind. But the knowledge of this divine science is infinitely more useful and important than that of all other sciences whatever.

## Why all Christians should make a business of endeavoring to grow in the knowledge of divinity

CHRISTIANS ought not to content themselves with such degrees of knowledge of divinity as they have already obtained. It should not satisfy them, as they know as much as is absolutely necessary to salvation, but should seek to make progress.

This endeavor to make progress in such knowledge ought not to be attended to as a thing by the bye, but all Christians should make a business of it. They should look upon it as a part of their daily business, and no small part of it neither. It should be attended to as a considerable part of the work of their high calling. — For,

1. Our business should doubtless much consist in employing those faculties, by which we are distinguished from the beasts, about those things which are the main end of those faculties. The reason why we have faculties superior to those of the brutes given us, is that we are indeed designed for a superior employment. That which the Creator intended should be our main employment, is something above what he intended the beast for, and therefore has given us superior powers. Therefore, without doubt, it should be a considerable part of our business to improve those superior faculties. But the faculty by which we are chiefly distinguished from the brutes, is the faculty of understanding. It follows then, that we should make it our chief business to improve this faculty, and should by no means prosecute it as a business by the bye. For us to make the improvement of this faculty a business by the bye, is in effect for us to make the faculty of understanding itself a by-faculty, if I may so speak, a faculty of less importance than others: whereas indeed it is the highest faculty we have.

But we cannot make a business of the improvement of our intellectual faculty, any otherwise than by making a business of improving ourselves in actual knowledge. So that those who make not this very much their business, but instead of improving their understanding to acquire knowledge, are chiefly devoted to their inferior power — to please their senses, and gratify their animal appetites — not only behave themselves in a manner not becoming Christians, but also act as if they had forgotten that they are men, and that God has set them above the brutes by giving them understanding.

God has given to man some things in common with the brutes, as his outward senses, his bodily appetites, a capacity of bodily pleasure and pain, and other animal faculties. Some things he has given him superior to the brutes: the chief of which is a faculty of understanding and reason. Now God never gave man these faculties to be subject to those which he has in common with the brutes. This would be great confusion, and equivalent to making man to be a servant of the beasts. On the contrary, he has given those inferior powers to be employed in subserviency to man’s understanding. Therefore it must be a great part of man’s principal business to improve his understanding by acquiring knowledge. If so, then it will follow that it should be a main part of his business to improve his understanding in acquiring divine knowledge, or the knowledge of the things of divinity. For the knowledge of these things is the principal end of this faculty. God gave man the faculty of understanding, chiefly, that he might understand divine things.

The wiser heathens were sensible that the main business of man was the improvement and exercise of his understanding. But they knew not the object about which the understanding should chiefly be employed. That science which many of them thought should chiefly employ the understanding, was philosophy, and accordingly they made it their chief business to study it. But we who enjoy the light of the gospel are more happy. We are not left, as to this particular, in the dark. God has told us about what things we should chiefly employ our understandings, having given us a book full of divine instructions, holding forth many glorious objects about which all rational creatures should chiefly employ their understandings. These instructions are accommodated to persons of all capacities and conditions, and proper to be studied, not only by men of learning, but by persons of every character, learned and unlearned, young and old, men and women. Therefore the acquisition of knowledge in these things should be a main business of all those who have the advantage of enjoying the Holy Scriptures.

2. The truths of divinity are of superlative excellency, and are worthy that all should make a business of endeavoring to grow in the knowledge of them. They are as much above those things which are treated of in other sciences, as heaven is above the earth. God himself, the eternal Three in one, is the chief object of this science, and next Jesus Christ, as God-man and Mediator, and the glorious work of redemption, the most glorious work that ever was wrought. Then [it is] the great things of the heavenly world, the glorious and eternal inheritance purchased by Christ and promised in the gospel, the work of the Holy Spirit of God on the hearts of men, our duty to God, and the way in which we ourselves may become like angels and like God himself in our measure. All these are objects of this science.

Such things as these have been the main subject of the study of the holy patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, and the most excellent men that ever existed. They are also the subject of study to the angels in heaven, 1 Pet. 1:10-12. — They are so excellent and worthy to be known that the knowledge of them will richly pay for all the pains and labor of an earnest seeking of it. If there were a great treasure of gold and pearls accidentally found, and opened with such circumstances that all might have as much as they could gather, would not everyone think it worth his while to make a business of gathering while it should last? But that treasure of divine knowledge, which is contained in the Scriptures, and is provided for everyone to gather to himself as much of it as he can, is far more rich than anyone of gold and pearls. How busy are all sorts of men, all over the world, in getting riches! But this knowledge is a far better kind of riches than that after which they so diligently and laboriously pursue.

3. Divine truths not only concern ministers, but are of infinite importance to all Christians. It is not with the doctrine of divinity as it is with the doctrines of philosophy and other sciences. These last are generally speculative points, which are of little concern in human life, and it very little alters the case as to our temporal or spiritual interests, whether we know them or not. Philosophers differ about them, some being of one opinion, and others of another. And while they are engaged in warm disputes about them, others may well leave them to dispute among themselves, without troubling their heads much about them: it being of little concern to them, whether the one or the other be in the right. — But it is not thus in matters of divinity. The doctrines of this nearly concern everyone. They are about those things which relate to every man’s eternal salvation and happiness. The common people cannot say, “Let us leave these matters to ministers and divines. Let them dispute them out among themselves as they can. They concern not us,” for they are of infinite importance to every man. Those doctrines which relate to the essence, attributes, and subsistencies of God, concern all, as it is of infinite importance to common people, as well as to ministers, to know what kind of being God is. For he is a Being who has made us all, “in whom we live, and move, and have our being;” who is the Lord of all, the Being to whom we are all accountable, who is the last end of our being, and the only fountain of our happiness.

The doctrines also which relate to Jesus Christ and his mediation, his incarnation, his life and death, his resurrection and ascension, his sitting at the right hand of the Father, his satisfaction and intercession, infinitely concern common people as well as divines. They stand in as much need of this Savior, and of an interest in his person and offices, and the things which he has done and suffered, as ministers and divines. — The same may be said of the doctrines which relate to the manner of a sinner’s justification, or the way in which he becomes interested in the mediation of Christ. They equally concern all, for all stand in equal necessity of justification before God. That eternal condemnation, to which we are all naturally exposed, is equally dreadful. So with respect to those doctrines which relate to the work of the Spirit of God on the heart, in the application of redemption in our effectual calling and sanctification, all are equally concerned in them. There is no doctrine of divinity whatever, which doth not some way or other concern the eternal interest of every Christian.

4. We may argue in favor of the same position, from the great things which God has done in order to give us instruction in these things. As to other sciences, he has left us to ourselves, to the light of our own reason. But divine things being of infinitely greater importance to us, he has not left us to an uncertain guide, but has himself given us a revelation of the truth in these matters, and has done very great things to convey and confirm it to us. [He has] raised up many prophets in different ages, immediately inspiring them with his Holy Spirit, and confirming their doctrine with innumerable miracles or wonderful works out of the established course of nature. Yea, he raised up a succession of prophets, which was upheld for several ages.

It was very much for this end that God separated the people of Israel, in so wonderful a manner, from all other people, and kept them separate, that to them he might commit the oracles of God, and that from them they might be communicated to the world. He has also often sent angels to bring divine instructions to men, and has often himself appeared in miraculous symbols or representations of his presence. Now in these last days [he] has sent his own Son into the world, to be his great prophet, to teach us divine truth. Heb. 1:1, etc. God has given us a book of divine instructions, which contains the sum of divinity. Now, these things has God done, not only for the instruction of ministers and men of learning, but for the instruction of all men, of all sorts, learned and unlearned, men, women, and children. And certainly if God doth such great things to teach us, we ought to do something to learn.

God giving instructions to men in these things is not a business by the by, but what he has undertaken and prosecuted in a course of great and wonderful dispensations, as an affair in which his heart has been greatly engaged, which is sometimes in Scripture signified by the expression of God’s rising early to teach us, and to send us prophets and teachers, Jer. 7:25, “Since that day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt, unto this day, I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early, and sending them.” And verse 13, “I spake unto you, rising up early, and speaking.” This is a figurative speech, signifying that God has done this as a business of great importance, in which he took great care, and had his heart much engaged. Because persons are wont to rise early to prosecute such business as they are earnestly engaged in. — If God has been so engaged in teaching, certainly we should not be negligent in learning, but should make growing in knowledge a great part of the business of our lives.

5. It may be argued from the abundance of the instructions which God has given us, from the largeness of that book which God has given to teach us divinity, and from the great variety that is therein contained. Much was taught by Moses of old, which we have transmitted down to us. After that, other books were from time to time added. Much is taught us by David and Solomon, and many and excellent are the instructions communicated by the prophets. Yet God did not think all this enough, but after this sent Christ and his apostles, by whom there is added a great and excellent treasure to that holy book, which is to be our rule in the study of this important subject.

This book was written for the use of all. All are directed to search the Scriptures, John 5:39, “Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they that testify of me;” and Isa. 34:16, “Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read.” They that read and understand are pronounced blessed, Rev. 1:3, “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that understand the words of this prophecy.” If this be true of that particular book of the Revelation, much more is it true of the Bible in general. Nor is it to be believed that God would have given instructions in such abundance, if he had intended that receiving instruction should be only a bye concern with us.

It is to be considered, that all those abundant instructions which are contained in the Scriptures were written that they might be understood: otherwise they are not instructions. That which is not given that the learner may understand it, is not given for the learner’s instruction. Unless we endeavor to grow in the knowledge of divinity, a very great part of those instructions will to us be in vain. For we can receive benefit by no more of the Scriptures than we understand. We have reason to bless God that he has given us such various and plentiful instruction in his Word, but we shall be hypocritical in so doing, if we after all content ourselves with but little of this instruction.

When God has opened a very large treasure before us for the supply of our wants, and we thank him that he has given us so much, if at the same time we be willing to remain destitute of the greatest part of it, because we are too lazy to gather it, this will not show the sincerity of our thankfulness. We are now under much greater advantages to acquire knowledge in divinity, than the people of God were of old, because since that time the canon of Scripture is much increased. But if we be negligent of our advantages, we may be never the better for them, and may remain with as little knowledge as they.

6. However diligent we apply ourselves, there is room enough to increase our knowledge in divine truth. None have this excuse to make for not diligently applying themselves to gain knowledge in divinity, that they already know all. Nor can they make this excuse, that they have no need diligently to apply themselves, in order to know all that is to be known. None can excuse themselves for want of business in which to employ themselves. There is room enough to employ ourselves forever in this divine science with the utmost application. Those who have applied themselves most closely, have studied the longest and have made the greatest attainments in this knowledge, know but little of what is to be known. The subject is inexhaustible. That Divine Being, who is the main subject of this science, is infinite, and there is no end to the glory of his perfections. His works at the same time are wonderful, and cannot be found out to perfection, especially the work of redemption, about which the science of divinity is chiefly conversant, is full of unsearchable wonders.

The Word of God, which is given for our instruction in divinity, contains enough in it to employ us to the end of our lives, and then we shall leave enough uninvestigated to employ the heads of the ablest divines to the end of the world. The psalmist found an end to the things that are human, but he could never find an end to what is contained in the Word of God: Psa. 119:96, “I have seen an end to all perfection; but thy command is exceeding broad.” There is enough in this divine science to employ the understandings of saints and angels to all eternity.

7. It doubtless concerns everyone to endeavor to excel in the knowledge of things which pertain to his profession, or principal calling. If it concerns men to excel in anything, or in any wisdom or knowledge at all, it certainly concerns them to excel in the affairs of their main profession and work. But the calling and work of every Christian is to live to God. This is said to be his high calling, Phil. 3:14. This is the business, and if I may so speak, the trade of a Christian, his main work, and indeed should be his only work. No business should be done by a Christian, but as it is some way or other a part of this. Therefore certainly the Christian should endeavor to be well acquainted with those things which belong to this work, that he may fulfill it, and be thoroughly furnished to it.

It becomes one who is called to be a soldier, to excel in the art of war. It becomes a mariner, to excel in the art of navigation. It becomes a physician, to excel in the knowledge of those things which pertain to the art of physic. So it becomes all such as profess to be Christians, and to devote themselves to the practice of Christianity, to endeavor to excel in the knowledge of divinity.

8. It may be argued hence that God has appointed an order of men for this end, to assist persons in gaining knowledge in these things. He has appointed them to be teachers, 1 Cor. 12:28, and God has set some in the church: first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, Eph. 4:11, 12, “He gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” If God has set them to be teachers, making that their business, then he has made it their business to impart knowledge. But what kind of knowledge? Not the knowledge of philosophy, or of human laws, or of mechanical arts, but of divinity.

If God has made it the business of some to be teachers, it will follow that he has made it the business of others to be learners. For teachers and learners are correlates, one of which was never intended to be without the other. God has never made it the duty of some to take pains to teach those who are not obliged to take pains to learn. He has not commanded ministers to spend themselves, in order to impart knowledge to those who are not obliged to apply themselves to receive it.

The name by which Christians are commonly called in the New Testament is disciples, the signification of which word is scholars or learners. All Christians are put into the school of Christ, where their business is to learn, or receive knowledge from Christ, their common master and teacher, and from those inferior teachers appointed by him to instruct in his name.

9. God has in the Scriptures plainly revealed it to be his will, that all Christians should diligently endeavor to excel in the knowledge of divine things. It is the revealed will of God that Christians should not only have some knowledge of things of this nature, but that they should be enriched with all knowledge, 1 Cor. 1:4, 5, “I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God that is given you by Jesus Christ, that in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge.” So the apostle earnestly prayed, that the Christian Philippians might abound more and more, not only in love, but in Christian knowledge; Phil. 1:9, “And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment.” So the apostle Peter advises to “give all diligence to add to faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge,” 2 Pet. 1:5, and the apostle Paul, in the next chapter to that wherein is the text, counsels the Christian Hebrews, leaving the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, to go on to perfection. He would by no means have them always to rest only in those fundamental doctrines of repentance, and faith, and the resurrection from the dead, and the eternal judgment, in which they were instructed when baptized, at their first initiation in Christianity. (See Heb. 6, etc.)

## An exhortation that all may diligently endeavor to gain Christian knowledge

CONSIDER yourselves as scholars or disciples, put into the school of Christ, and therefore be diligent to make proficiency in Christian knowledge. Content not yourselves with this, that you have been taught your catechism in your childhood, and that you know as much of the principles of religion as is necessary to salvation, else you will be guilty of what the apostle warns against, viz. going no further than laying the foundation of repentance from dead works, etc.

You are all called to be Christians, and this is your profession. Endeavor, therefore, to acquire knowledge in things which pertain to your profession. Let not your teachers have cause to complain that while they spend and are spent, to impart knowledge to you, you take little pains to learn. It is a great encouragement to an instructor, to have such to teach as make a business of learning, bending their minds to it. This makes teaching a pleasure, when otherwise it will be a very heavy and burdensome task.

You all have by you a large treasure of divine knowledge, in that you have the Bible in your hands. Therefore be not contented in possessing but little of this treasure. God has spoken much to you in the Scriptures. Labor to understand as much of what he says as you can. God has made you all reasonable creatures, therefore let not the noble faculty of reason or understanding lie neglected. Content not yourselves with having so much knowledge as is thrown in your way, and receive in some sense unavoidably by the frequent inculcation of divine truth in the preaching of the Word, of which you are obliged to be hearers, or accidentally gain in conversation. But let it be very much your business to search for it, and that with the same diligence and labor with which men are wont to dig in mines of silver and gold.

Especially I would advise those who are young to employ themselves in this way. Men are never too old to learn, but the time of youth is especially the time for learning. It is peculiarly proper for gaining and storing up knowledge. — Further, to stir up all, both old and young, to this duty, let me entreat you to consider,

1. If you apply yourselves diligently to this work, you will not want employment, when you are at leisure from your common secular business. In this way, you may find something in which you may profitably employ yourselves. You will find something else to do, besides going about from house to house, spending one hour after another in unprofitable conversation, or at best, to no other purpose but to amuse yourselves, to fill up and wear away your time. And it is to be feared that very much of the time spent in evening visits, is spent to a much worse purpose than that which I have now mentioned. Solomon tells us, Pro. 10:19, “That in the multitude of words, there wanteth not sin.” And is not this verified in those who find little else to do but to go to one another’s houses, and spend the time in such talk as comes next, or such as anyone’s present disposition happens to suggest?

Some diversion is doubtless lawful, but for Christians to spend so much of their time, so many long evenings, in no other conversation than that which tends to divert and amuse, if nothing worse, is a sinful way of spending time, and tends to poverty of soul at least, if not to outward poverty, Pro. 14:23, “In all labor there is profit; but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury.” Besides, when persons for so much of their time have nothing else to do but to sit and talk and chat, there is great danger of falling into foolish and sinful conversation, venting their corrupt dispositions, in talking against others, expressing their jealousies and evil surmises concerning their neighbors, not considering what Christ has said, Mat. 12:36, “Of every idle word that men shall speak, shall they give account in the day of judgment.”

If you would comply with what you have heard from this doctrine, you would find something else to employ your time besides contention, or talking about those public affairs which tend to contention. Young people might find something else to do besides spending their time in vain company: something that would be much more profitable to themselves, as it would really turn to some good account, something in doing which they would both be more out of the way of temptation, and be more in the way of duty, and of a divine blessing. And even aged people would have something to employ themselves in, after they are become incapable of bodily labor. Their time, as is now often the case, would not lie heavy upon their hands, as they would with both profit and pleasure be engaged in searching the Scriptures, and in comparing and meditating upon the various truths which they should find there.

2. This would be a noble way of spending your time. — The Holy Spirit gives the Bereans this epithet, because they diligently employed themselves in this business: Acts 17:11, “These were more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” Similar to this is very much the employment of heaven. The inhabitants of that world spend much of their time in searching into the great things of divinity, and endeavoring to acquire knowledge in them, as we are told of the angels, 1 Pet. 1:12, “Which things the angels desire to look into.” This will be very agreeable to what you hope will be your business to all eternity, as you doubtless hope to join in the same employment with the angels of light. Solomon says, Pro. 25:2, “It is the honor of kings to search out a matter;” and certainly, above all others, to search out divine matters. Now, if this be the honor even of kings, is it not much more your honor?

3. This is a pleasant way of improving time. Knowledge is pleasant and delightful to intelligent creatures, and above all, the knowledge of divine things. For in them are the most excellent truths, and the most beautiful and amiable objects held forth to view. However tedious the labor necessarily attending this business may be, yet the knowledge once obtained will richly requite the pains taken to obtain it. “When wisdom entereth the heart, knowledge is pleasant to the soul.” Pro. 2:10.

4. This knowledge is exceedingly useful in Christian practice. Such as have much knowledge in divinity have great means and advantages for spiritual and saving knowledge. For no means of grace have a saving effect, otherwise than by the knowledge they impart. The more you have of a rational knowledge of divine things, the more opportunity will there be, when the Spirit shall be breathed into your heart, to see the excellency of these things, and to taste the sweetness of them. The heathens, who have no rational knowledge of the things of the gospel, have no opportunity to see the excellency of them. Therefore the more rational knowledge of these things you have, the more opportunity and advantage you have to see the divine excellency and glory of them.

Again, the more knowledge you have of divine things, the better will you know your duty. Your knowledge will be of great use to direct you as to your duty in particular cases. You will also be the better furnished against the temptations of the devil. For the devil often takes advantage of persons’ ignorance to ply them with temptations which otherwise would have no hold of them. By having much knowledge, you will be under greater advantages to conduct yourselves with prudence and discretion in your Christian course, and so to live much more to the honor of God and religion. Many who mean well, and are full of a good spirit, yet for want of prudence, conduct themselves so as to wound religion. Many have a zeal of God, which doth more hurt than good, because it is not according to knowledge, Rom. 10:2. The reason why many good men behave no better in many instances, is not so much that they want grace, as that they want knowledge. Beside, an increase of knowledge would be a great help to profitable conversation. It would supply you with matter for conversation when you come together, or when you visit your neighbors, so you would have less temptation to spend the time in such conversation as tends to your own and others’ hurt.

5. Consider the advantages you are under to grow in the knowledge of divinity. We are under far greater advantages to gain much of this knowledge now than God’s people under the Old Testament, both because the canon of Scripture is so much enlarged since that time, and also because evangelical truths are now so much more plainly revealed. So that common men are now in some respects under advantages to know more than the greatest prophets were then. Thus that saying of Christ is in a sense applicable to us, Luke 10:23, 24, “Blessed are the eyes which see the things which ye see. For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.” We are in some respects under far greater advantages for gaining knowledge, now in these latter ages of the church, than Christians were formerly, especially by reason of the art of printing, of which God has given us the benefit, whereby Bibles and other books of divinity are exceedingly multiplied, and persons may now be furnished with helps for the obtaining of Christian knowledge, at a much easier and cheaper rate than they formerly could.

6. We know not what opposition we may meet with in the religious principles which we hold. We know that there are many adversaries to the gospel and its truths. If therefore we embrace those truths, we must expect to be attacked by the said adversaries. Unless we be well informed concerning divine things, how shall we be able to defend ourselves? Beside, the apostle Paul enjoins it upon us, always to be ready to give an answer to every man who asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us. But this we cannot expect to do without considerable knowledge in divine things.

## Directions for the acquisition of Christian knowledge

1. BE assiduous in reading the Holy Scriptures. This is the fountain whence all knowledge in divinity must be derived. Therefore let not this treasure lie by you neglected. Every man of common understanding who can read, may if he please, become well acquainted with the Scriptures. And what an excellent attainment would this be!

2. Content not yourselves with only a cursory reading, without regarding the sense. This is an ill way of reading, to which, however, many accustom themselves all their days. When you read, observe what you read. Observe how things come in. Take notice of the drift of the discourse, and compare one scripture with another. For the Scripture, by the harmony of its different parts, casts great light upon itself. — We are expressly directed by Christ to search the Scriptures, which evidently intends something more than a mere cursory reading. And use means to find out the meaning of the Scripture. When you have it explained in the preaching of the Word, take notice of it. If at any time a scripture that you did not understand be cleared up to your satisfaction, mark it, lay it up, and if possible remember it.

3. Procure, and diligently use, other books which may help you to grow in this knowledge. There are many excellent books extant, which might greatly forward you in this knowledge, and afford you a very profitable and pleasant entertainment in your leisure hours. There is doubtless a great defect in many, that through a lothness to be at a little expense, they furnish themselves with no more helps of this nature. They have a few books indeed, which now and then on sabbath days they read. But they have had them so long, and read them so often, that they are weary of them, and it is now become a dull story, a mere task to read them.

4. Improve conversation with others to this end. How much might persons promote each other’s knowledge in divine things, if they would improve conversation as they might, if men that are ignorant were not ashamed to show their ignorance and were willing to learn of others, if those that have knowledge would communicate it without pride and ostentation, and if all were more disposed to enter on such conversation as would be for their mutual edification and instruction.

5. Seek not to grow in knowledge chiefly for the sake of applause, and to enable you to dispute with others, but seek it for the benefit of your souls, and in order to practice. — If applause be your end, you will not be so likely to be led to the knowledge of the truth, but may justly, as often is the case of those who are proud of their knowledge, be led into error to your own perdition. This being your end, if you should obtain much rational knowledge, it would not be likely to be of any benefit to you, but would puff you up with pride: 1 Cor. 8:1, “Knowledge puffeth up.”

6. Seek to God, that he would direct you, and bless you, in this pursuit after knowledge. This is the apostle’s direction, Jam. 1:5, “If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not.” God is the fountain of all divine knowledge: Pro. 2:6, “The Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.” Labor to be sensible of your own blindness and ignorance, and your need of the help of God, lest you be led into error, instead of true knowledge: 1 Cor. 3:18, “If any man would be wise, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.”

7. Practice according to what knowledge you have. This will be the way to know more. The psalmist warmly recommends this way of seeking knowledge in divine truth, from his own experience, Psa. 119:100, “I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.” Christ also recommends the same John 7:17, “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”

# How To Know If You Are A Real Christian

by Jonathan Edwards

## Knowledge of God alone is no proof of salvation

"You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that-and shudder." James 2:19

How do you know if you belong to God? We see in these words what some people depend on as an evidence of their acceptance with God. Some people think that they are all right before God if they are not as bad as some evil person. Other people point to their family history or church membership to show that God approves of them. There is an evangelism programme in common use that asks people certain questions. One of the questions is, "Suppose you were to die today. Why should God let you into his heaven?" A very common response is, "I believe in God." Apparently the apostle James knew people who said the same thing: I know I am in God's favor, because I know these religious doctrines.

Of course James admits that this knowledge is good. Not only is it good, but it is also necessary. Nobody can be a Christian who doesn't believe in God; and more than that, the One True God. This is particularly true for those who had the great advantage of actually knowing the apostle, someone who could tell them of his first-hand experience with Jesus, the Son of God. Imagine the great sin of a person, who knew James, and then refused to believe in God! Certainly this would make their damnation greater. Of course, all Christians know that this belief in the One God is only the start of good things because

"anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." Heb. 11:6

However, James is clear that although this belief a good thing, it is definitely not proof that a person is saved. What he means is this: "You say you are a Christian and you are in God's favor. You think God will let you into heaven, and the proof of it is, you believe in God. But that is no evidence at all, because the demons also believe, and they are sure to be punished in hell." The demons believe in God, you can be sure of that! They not only believe that He exists, but they believe that God is a holy God, a sin-hating God, a God of truth, who has promised judgments, and who will carry out his vengeance upon them. This is the reason the demons "shudder" or tremble- they know God more clearly than most human beings do, and they are afraid. Nevertheless, nothing in the mind of man, that devils may experience as well, is any sure sign of God's grace in our hearts.

This reasoning may be easily turned around. Suppose demons could have, or find within themselves, something of God's saving grace-proof they would go to heaven. This would prove James wrong. But how absurd! The Bible makes it clear that demons have no hope of salvation, and their believing in God does not take away their future punishment. Therefore believing in God is not proof of salvation for demons, and it is safe to say, not for people, either.

This is seen even more clearly when we think about what demons are like. They are unholy: anything that they experience, cannot be a holy experience. The devil is perfectly wicked. "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies." (John 8:44) "He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning." (1 John 3:8 ) Therefore the demons are called evil spirits, unclean spirits, powers of darkness, and so on. "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." (Eph 6:12)

So it is plain that anything in the minds of demons cannot be holy, or lead to true holiness by itself. The demons clearly know many things about God and religion, but they do not have a holy knowledge. The things they know in their minds may make impressions in their hearts- indeed we do see that the demons have very strong feelings about God; so strong, in fact, that they "shudder." But they are not holy feelings because they have nothing to do with the work of the Holy Spirit. If this is true of the experience of demons, it is also true of the experience of men.

Notice this, that it does not matter how genuine, sincere, and powerful these thoughts and feelings are. Demons, being spiritual creatures, know God in a way that men on earth cannot. Their knowledge of God's existence is more concrete than any man's knowledge could be. Because they are locked in battle with the forces of good, they have a sincerity of knowledge as well. On one occasion Jesus cast out some demons. "What do you want with us, Son of God?" they shouted. "Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?" (Mat 8:29) What could possibly be a more clear-cut experience than this? However, while their thoughts and feelings are genuine and powerful, they are not holy.

Also we can see that the holy objects of their thoughts doesn't make their thoughts and feelings holy. The demons know God exists! Matthew 8:29 shows they know more about Jesus than many people do! They are thoroughly that Jesus will judge them some day, because He is holy. But it is clear that genuine, sincere, and powerful thoughts and feelings about holy, spiritual things, is no proof of God's grace in the heart. Demons have these things, and look forward to eternal punishment in hell. If men have no more than what the demons have, they will suffer in the same way.

We may make several conclusions based on these truths. First, that no matter how much people may know about God and the Bible, it is no sure sign of salvation. The devil before his fall, was one of the bright and morning stars, a flame of fire, one excelling in strength and wisdom. (Isa. 14:12, Ezek. 28:12-19) Apparently, as one of the chief angels, Satan knew much about God. Now that he is fallen, his sin has not destroyed his memories from before. Sin does destroy the spiritual nature, but not the natural abilities, such as memory. That the fallen angels do have many natural abilities may be seen from many Bible verses, for example Eph 6:12 "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." In the same way, the Bible says that Satan is "more crafty" than other created beings. (Gen 3:1, also 2 Cor. 11:3, Acts 13:10) Therefore we can see that the Devil has always had great mental ability and is able to know much about God, the visible and invisible world, and many other things. Since his job in the beginning was to be a chief angel before God, it is only natural that understanding these things has always been of first importance to him, and that all his activities have to do with these areas of thoughts, feelings, and knowledge.

Because it was his original employment to be one of the angels before the very face of God, and sin does not destroy the memory, it is clear that Satan knows more about God than just about any other created being. After the fall, we can see from his activities as a tempter, etc., (Matt 4:3) that he has been spending his time increasing his knowledge and its practical applications. That his knowledge is great can be seen in how tricky he is when tempting people. The craftiness of his lies shows how clever he is. Surely he could not manage his deceit so well without an actual and true knowledge of the facts.

This knowledge of God and his works is from the very beginning. Satan was there from the Creation, as Job 38:47 shows: "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. . .while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?" So he must know much about the way God created the world, and how He governs all the events in the universe. Furthermore, Satan has seen how God has worked his plan of redemption in the world; and not as an innocent bystander, but as an active enemy of God's grace. He saw God work in the lives of Adam and Eve, in Noah, Abraham, and David. He must have taken a special interest in the life of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of men, the Word of God incarnate. How closely did he watch Christ? How carefully did he observe his miracles and listen to His words? This is because Satan has set himself against Christ's work, and it is to his torment and anguish that Satan has watched Christ's work unfold successfully.

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Therefore we can see that there is no amount of knowledge of God and religion that could prove a person has been saved from their sin. A man may talk about the Bible, God, and the Trinity. He may be able to preach a sermon about Jesus Christ and everything He has done. Imagine, somebody might be able to speak about the way of salvation and the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of sinners, perhaps even enough to show others how to become Christians. All these things might build up the church and enlighten the world, yet it is not a sure proof of the saving grace of God in a person's heart.

It also may be seen that for people to merely agree with the Bible is no sure sign of salvation. James 2:19 shows that the demons really, truly, believe the truth. Just as they believe there is one God, they agree with all the truth of the Bible. The devil is not a heretic: all the articles of his faith are firmly established in the truth.

It must be understood, that when the Bible talks about believing that Jesus is the Son of God, as a proof of God's grace in the heart, the Bible means not a mere agreement with the truth, but another kind of believing.

"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." 1 John 5:1

This other kind of believing is called "the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness." (Titus 1:1) There is a spiritual holding to the truth, which will be explained later on.

* [Knowledge of God alone is no proof of salvation](javascript:tabs.expandit(0))
* [Religious experiences are no proof of salvation](javascript:tabs.expandit(1))
* [People are different from demons](javascript:tabs.expandit(2))
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* [The sight of Christ's beauty- God's greatest gift!](javascript:tabs.expandit(5))

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1  |  [2](http://www.christians.com/jonathanedwards/sermons/how_to_know_if_you_are_a_real_christian?navtabs=1))  |  [3](http://www.christians.com/jonathanedwards/sermons/how_to_know_if_you_are_a_real_christian?navtabs=2))  |  [4](http://www.christians.com/jonathanedwards/sermons/how_to_know_if_you_are_a_real_christian?navtabs=3))  |  [5](http://www.christians.com/jonathanedwards/sermons/how_to_know_if_you_are_a_real_christian?navtabs=4))  |  [6](http://www.christians.com/jonathanedwards/sermons/how_to_know_if_you_are_a_real_christian?navtabs=5))  |  [Next](http://www.christians.com/jonathanedwards/sermons/how_to_know_if_you_are_a_real_christian?navtabs=1)) »

## Religious experiences are no proof of salvation

Some people have strong religious experiences, and think of them as proof of God's working in their hearts. Often these experiences give people a sense of the importance of the spiritual world, and the reality of divine things. However, these, too, are no sure proof of salvation. Demons and damned human beings have many spiritual experiences which have a great effect on their heart attitudes. They live in the spiritual world and see first-hand what it is like. Their sufferings show them the worth of salvation and the worth of a human soul in the most powerful way imaginable. The parable in Luke chapter 16 teaches this clearly, as the suffering man asks that Lazarus might be sent to tell his brothers to avoid this place of torment. No doubt people in hell now have a distinct idea of the vastness of eternity, and of the shortness of life. They are completely convinced that all the things of this life are unimportant when compared to the experiences of the eternal world. People now in hell have a great sense of the preciousness of time, and of the wonderful opportunities people have, who have the privilege of hearing the Gospel. They are completely aware of the foolishness of their sin, of neglecting opportunities, and ignoring the warnings of God. When sinners find out by personal experience the final result of their sin there is "weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matt 13:42) So even the most powerful religious experiences are not a sure sign of God's grace in the heart.

Demons and damned people also have a strong sense of God's majesty and power. God's power is most clearly displayed in his execution of divine vengeance upon his enemies. "What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath-prepared for destruction?" (Rom 9:22) Shuddering, the devils await their final punishment, under the strongest sense of God's majesty. They feel it now, of course, but in the future it will show to the greatest degree, when the Lord Jesus "is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels." (2 Thess 2:7) On that day, they will desire to be run away, to be hidden from the presence of God.

"Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him." Rev 1:7

So everyone will see him in the glory of His Father. But, obviously, not all who see him will be saved.

## People are different from demons

Now it is possible that some people might object to all this, saying that ungodly men in this world are quite different from demons. They are under different circumstances and are different kind of beings. An objector might say, "Those things that are visible and present to demons are invisible and future to men. Besides, people have the disadvantage of having bodies, which restrain the soul, and keep people from seeing these spiritual things first-hand. Therefore, even if demons do have a great knowledge and personal experience of the things of God, and have no grace, the conclusion does not apply to me." Or, put another way: if people have these things in this life, it may very well be a sure sign of God's grace in their hearts.

In reply, it is agreed that no man in this life has ever had the degree of these things as the demons have them. No person has ever shuddered, with the same amount of fear that the demons shudder with. No man, in this life, can ever have the same kind of knowledge that the Devil has. It is clear that demons and damned men understand the vastness of eternity, and the importance of the other world, more than any living person, and so they crave salvation all the more.

But we can see that men in this world can have experiences of the same kind as those of demons and damned people. They have the same mental outlook, the same opinions and emotions, and the same kind of impressions on the mind and heart. Notice, that for the apostle James it is a convincing argument. He claims that if people think believing in one God is proof of God's grace, it is not proof, because demons believe the same. James is not referring to the act of believing only, but also to the emotions and actions that go along with their belief. Shuddering is an example of emotions from the heart. This shows that if people have the same kind of mental outlook, and respond from the heart in the same way, it is no sure sign of grace.

The Bible does not state how much people in this world may see God's glory, and not have God's grace in their hearts. We are not told exactly to what degree God reveals himself to certain people, and how much they will respond in their hearts. It is very tempting to say that if a person has a certain amount of religious experience, or a certain amount of truth, they must be saved. Perhaps it is even possible for some unsaved people to have greater experiences than some of those who have grace in their hearts! So it is wrong to look at experience or knowledge in terms of amount. Men who have a genuine work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts have experiences and knowledge of a different kind.

## People can have religious feelings that demons cannot

At this point, someone might answer these thoughts by saying, "I agree with you. I see that believing in God, seeing His majesty and holiness, and knowing that Jesus died for sinners is not proof of grace in my heart. I agree that demons can know these things as well. But I have some things they don't have. I have joy, peace, and love. Demons can't have them, so that must show that I am saved."

Yes, it is true that you have something more than a demon can have, but it is nothing better than a demon could have. A person's experience of love, joy, etc., may not be because they have any cause in them different from a demon, but just different circumstances. The causes, or origins, of their feelings are the same. This is why these experiences are no better than those of demons. To explain further:

All the things that were discussed before about demons and damned people, arise from two main causes, natural understanding and self-love. When they think about themselves, these two things are what determine their feelings and response. Natural understanding shows them that God is holy, while they are wicked. God is infinite, but they are limited. God is powerful, and they are weak. Self-love gives them a sense of the importance of religion, the eternal world, and a longing after salvation. When these two causes work together, demons and damned men become aware of the awesome majesty of God, whom they know will be their Judge. They know that God's judgment will be perfect and their punishment will be forever. Therefore, these two causes together with their senses will bring about their anguish on that judgment day, when they see the outward glory of Christ and His saints.

The reason many people feel joy, peace, and love today, while demons do not, may be more due to their circumstances, rather than any difference in their hearts. The causes in their hearts are the same. For example, the Holy Spirit is now at work in the world keeping all of mankind from being as wicked as they could be (2 Thess 2:17). This is in contrast to demons, who are just as wicked as they can be all the time. Furthermore, God in his mercy gives gifts to all people, such as the rain for crops (Matt 5:45), heat from the sun, etc. Not only that, but often people receive many things in life to bring them happiness, such as personal relationships, pleasures, music, good health, and so on. Most important of all, many people have heard news of hope: God has sent a Saviour, Jesus Christ, who died to save sinners. In these circumstances, the natural understanding of people can cause them to feel things that demons never can.

Self-love is a powerful force in the hearts of men, strong enough without grace to cause people to love those who love them,

"But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them." Luke 6:32

It is a natural thing for a person who sees God being merciful, and who knows that they are not as bad as they could be, to therefore be sure of God's love for them. If your love for God comes only from your feelings that God loves you, or because you have heard that Christ died for you, or something similar, the source of your love to God is only self-love. This reigns in the hearts of demons as well.

Imagine the situation of the demons. They know they are unrestrained in their wickedness. They know God is their enemy and always will be. Although they are without any hope, still they are active and fighting. Just think, what if they had some of the hope that people have? What if demons, with their knowledge of God, had their wickedness restrained? Imagine if a demon, after all his fears about God's judgment, was suddenly led to imagine that God might be his Friend? That God might forgive him and let him, sin and all, into heaven? Oh the joy, the wonder, the gratitude we would see! Would not this demon be a great lover of God, since, after all everybody loves people who help them? What else could cause feelings so powerful and sincere? Is it any wonder, that so many people are deceived this way? Especially since people have the demons to promote this delusion. They have been promoting it now for many centuries, and alas they are very good at it.

## True Spiritual experiences have a different source

Now we come to the question, if all these various experiences and feelings come from nothing more than demons are capable of, what are the kinds of experiences that are truly spiritual and holy? What do I have to find in my own heart, as a sure sign of God's grace there? What are the differences that show them to be from the Holy Spirit?

This is the answer: those feelings and experiences which are good signs of God's grace in the heart differ from the experience of demons in their source and in their results.

Their source is the sense of the overwhelming holy beauty and loveliness of the things of God. When a person grasps in his mind, or better yet, when he feels his own heart held captive by the attractiveness of the Divine, this is an unmistakable sign of God's working.

The demons and damned in hell do not now, and never will experience even the tiniest bit of this. Before their fall, the demons did have this sense of God. But in their fall, they lost it, the only thing they could lose of their knowledge of God. We have seen how the demons have very clear ideas about how powerful God is, his justice, holiness, and so on. They know a lot of facts about God. But now they haven't a clue about what God is like. They cannot know what God is like any more than a blind man can know about colors! Demons can have a strong sense God's awesome majesty, but they don't see his loveliness. They have observed His work among the human race for these thousands of years, indeed with the closest attention; but they never see a glimmer of His beauty. No matter how much they know about God (and we have seen that they know very much indeed) the knowledge they have will never bring them to this higher, spiritual knowing what God is like. On the contrary, the more they know about God, the more they hate Him. The beauty of God consists primarily in this holiness, or moral excellence, and this is what they hate the most. It is because God is holy that the demons hate Him. One could suppose that if God were to be less holy, the demons would hate Him less. No doubt demons would hate any holy Being, no matter what He was like otherwise. But surely they hate this Being all the more, for being infinitely holy, infinitely wise, and infinitely powerful!

Wicked people, including those alive today, will on the day of judgment see all there is to see of Jesus Christ, except His beauty and loveliness. There is not one thing about Christ that we can think of, that will not be set before them in the strongest light on that brilliant day. The wicked will see Jesus "coming in clouds with great power and glory." (Mark 13:26) They will see his outward glory, which is far, far greater than we can possibly imagine now. You know the wicked will be thoroughly convinced of all who Christ is. They will be convinced about His omniscience, as they see all their sins replayed and evaluated. They will know first-hand Christ's justice, as their sentences are announced. His authority will be made utterly convincing when every knee will bow, and every tongue confess Jesus as Lord. (Phil 2:10,11) The divine majesty will be impressed upon them in quite an effective way, as the wicked are poured into hell itself, and enter into their final state of suffering and death (Rev 20:14,15) When that happens, all their knowledge of God, as true and as powerful as it may be, will be worth nothing, and less than nothing, because they will not see Christ's beauty.

Therefore, it is this seeing the loveliness of Christ that makes the difference between the saving grace of the Holy Spirit, and the experiences of demons. This sight or sense is what makes true Christian experience different from everything else. The faith of God's elect people is based on this. When a person sees the excellence of the gospel, he senses the beauty and loveliness of the divine scheme of salvation. His mind is convinced that it is of God, and he believes it with all his heart. As the apostle Paul says in 2 Cor 4:34, "even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." That is to say, as was explained before, unbelievers can see that there is a gospel, and understand the facts about it, but they do not see its light. The light of the gospel is the glory of Christ, his holiness and beauty. Right after this we read,

2 Cor 4:6 "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

Clearly, it is this divine light, shining into our hearts, that enables us to see the beauty of the gospel and have a saving belief in Christ. This supernatural light shows us the superlative beauty and loveliness of Jesus, and convinces us of His sufficiency as our Saviour. Only such a glorious, majestic Saviour can be our Mediator, standing between guilty, hell-deserving sinners such as ourselves, and an infinitely holy God. This supernatural light gives us a sense of Christ that convinces us in a way nothing else ever could.

When a most wicked sinner is caused to see Christ's divine loveliness, he no longer speculates why God should be interested in him, to save him. Before, he could not understand how the blood of Christ could pay the penalty for sins. But now he can see the preciousness of Christ's blood, and how it is worthy to be accepted as the ransom for the worst of sins. Now the soul can recognize that he is accepted by God, not because of who he is, but because of the value God puts on the blood, obedience, and intercession of Christ. Seeing this value and worth gives the poor guilty soul rest which cannot be found in any sermon or booklet.

When a person comes to see the proper foundation of faith and trust with his own eyes, this is saving faith.

"For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life." John 6:40  
"I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me." John 17:6-8

It is this sight of the divine beauty of Christ that captivates the wills and draws the hearts of men. A sight of the outward greatness of God in His glory may overwhelm men, and be more than they can endure. This will be seen on the day of judgment, when the wicked will be brought before God. They will be overwhelmed, yes, but the hostility of the heart will remain in full strength and the opposition of the will continue. But on the other hand, a single ray of the moral and spiritual glory of God and of the supreme loveliness of Christ shone into the heart overcomes all hostility. The soul is inclined to love God as if by an omnipotent power, so that now not only the understanding, but the whole being receives and embraces the loving Saviour.

This sense of the beauty of Christ is the beginning of true saving faith in the life of a true convert. This is quite different from any vague feeling that Christ loves him or died for him. These sort of fuzzy feelings can cause a sort of love and joy, because the person feels a gratitude for escaping the punishment of their sin. In actual fact, these feelings are based on self-love, and not on a love for Christ at all. It is a sad thing that so many people are deluded by this false faith. On the other hand, a glimpse of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ causes in the heart a supreme genuine love for God. This is because the divine light shows the excellent loveliness of God's nature. A love based on this is far, far above anything coming from self-love, which demons can have as well as men. The true love of God which comes from this sight of His beauty causes a spiritual and holy joy in the soul; a joy in God, and exulting in Him. There is no rejoicing in ourselves, but rather in God alone.

The sight of the beauty of divine things will cause true desires after the things of God. These desires are different from the longings of demons, which happen because the demons know their doom awaits them, and they wish it could somehow be otherwise. The desires that come from this sight of Christ's beauty are natural free desires, like a baby desiring milk. Because these desires are so different from their counterfeits, they help to distinguish genuine experiences of God's grace from the false.

False spiritual experiences have a tendency to cause pride, which is the devil's special sin. "He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil." (1 Tim 3:6) Pride is the inevitable result of false spiritual experiences, even though they are often covered with a disguise of great humility. False experience is enamored with self and grows on self. It lives by showing itself in one way or another. A person can have great love for God, and be proud of the greatness of his love. He can be very humble, and very proud indeed of his humility. But the emotions and experiences that come from God's grace are exactly opposite. God's true working in the heart causes humility. They do not cause any kind of showiness or self-exaltation. That sense of the awesome, holy, glorious beauty of Christ kills pride and humbles the soul. The light of God's loveliness, and that alone, shows the soul its own ugliness. When a person really grasps this, he inevitably begins a process of making God bigger and bigger, and himself smaller and smaller.

Another result of God's grace working in the heart is that the person will hate every evil and respond to God with a holy heart and life. False experiences may cause a certain amount of zeal, and even a great deal of what is commonly called religion. However it is not a zeal for good works. Their religion is not a service of God, but rather a service of self. This is how the apostle James puts it himself in this very context,

"You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that-and shudder. You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless ?" James 2:19-20

In other words, deeds, or good works, are evidence of a genuine experience of God's grace in the heart. "We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (1 John 2:34) When the heart has been ravished by the beauty of Christ, how else can it respond?

## The sight of Christ's beauty- God's greatest gift!

How excellent is that inner goodness and true religion that comes from this sight of the beauty of Christ! Here you have the most wonderful experiences of saints and angels in heaven. Here you have the best experience of Jesus Christ Himself. Even though we are mere creatures, it is a sort of participation in God's own beauty.

"Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature." 2 Pet 1:4  
"God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness." Heb 12:10

Because of the power of this divine working, there is a mutual indwelling of God and His people. "God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him." (1 John 4:16)

This special relationship has to make the person involved as happy and as blessed as any creature in existence. This is a special gift of God, which he gives only to his special favorites. Gold, silver, diamonds, and earthly kingdoms are given by God to people who the Bible calls dogs and pigs. But this great gift of beholding Christ's beauty, is the special blessing of God to His dearest children. Flesh and blood cannot give this gift: only God can bestow it. This was the special gift which Christ died to obtain for his elect. It is the highest token of his everlasting love, the best fruit of his labours, and the most precious purchase of his blood.

By this gift, more than anything else, the saints shine as lights in the world. This gift, more than anything else, is their comfort. It is impossible that the soul who possesses this gift should ever perish. This is the gift of eternal life. It is eternal life begun: those who have it can never die. It is the dawning of the light of glory. It comes from heaven, it has a heavenly quality, and it will take its bearer to heaven. Those who have this gift may wander in the wilderness or be tossed by waves on the ocean, but they will arrive in heaven at last. There the heavenly spark will be made perfect and increased. In heaven the souls of the saints will be transformed into a bright and pure flame, and they will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Amen.

# Why Some Seekers Are Not Saved

by Charles Spurgeon

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## Introduction

“Behold the Lord ‘s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.”-Isaiah. 59:1, 2.

THERE are some people who are not saved, though we should have expected that they would have been converted long ago. Our text explains the reason, so, without any preface, let us come to it at once.

## The Fact Confessed!

The people of whom I am specially thinking just now have been hears of the gospel, and diligent hearers, too. Their seat is seldom vacant, and they are not among those who go to sleep during the sermon. They do not enjoy the Sunday after the fashion of the countryman, who said that he liked that day best because he could go to church, put up his feet, fall asleep, and think of nothing at all. The people to whom I am referring really listen to what the preacher has to say; they are attentive, and they seek to retain in their memories the truths he preaches. They even talk when they are at home of the striking passages, if such there be, in what they have heard. You would suppose that such persons would get a blessing from the gospel; yet they do not. They have now been for years listening to an earnest minister, they would not like to hear one who was not earnest.

They have grown to be somewhat discriminating in their taste; they know what is the gospel, and. they would not care to be present at a service in which the gospel was not clearly set forth; yet, for all this, they are not saved. They stand out in the shower, yet they are not wet. They are like Gideon’s fleece, perfectly dry when all the ground was saturated with the dew. This is a strange circumstance; but, alas! by no means an uncommon one. We should not have thought that there could be such people, but we are compelled to believe that there are, for we frequently stumble across them, people who are often sitting under the sound of the gospel, yet who never hear it with the ears of their heart. The light shines upon their eyeballs, yet they do not see it, for thick scales seem to be there to hide from them the beams of the sun.

You will be perhaps still more surprised when I add that there are some people who go beyond hearing, and yet are not saved. They have become men of prayer after a fashion; are they not described in the chapter I read to you?

“Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinances of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice, they take delight in approaching to God.”

These people are in such a state of mind that, if they went to their business without the repetition of a form of prayer, they would be uneasy through the whole day. What is more, it is not merely a form of prayer; in some cases, there is a measure of life, and desire, and earnestness in their devotions. Only this morning, one of them sighed when the sermon was over, and he said, “Oh, that I could be a friend of God!” And a few Sunday nights ago, the one of whom I am speaking, when he reached his home, fell on his knees in his own private room, and asked God to bless the word to his soul. This same thing happened to him ten or even twenty years ago, he has often been stirred up, and driven to his knees in prayer; yet he has gone no further, but still remains to his own consciousness an undecided, hesitating person, on the borders of the kingdom, yet not in the kingdom, almost persuaded, yet not fully persuaded to be a Christian. You know, dear hearers, and I hardly need tell you that a man who is almost honest is a rogue, and the man who is almost a Christian is an unchristian person.

There was a man who was almost saved in a fire, but he was burnt; there was another who was almost healed of a disease, but he died; there was one who was almost reprieved, but he was hanged; and there are many in hell who were almost saved.

I am not talking now at a venture; I know that, with some of my most hopeful hearers, it is just as I have been describing it; they do hear the gospel, and they do pray to God, yet they have not gone beyond those outward exercises, they have not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and they have not received him into their hearts as their own personal Savior.

I know also that these people are greatly disappointed with themselves; not altogether so, for they know to a great extent where the blame lies, but yet they had hoped better things of themselves. If anyone had told them, ten, twelve, or twenty years ago, that they would be where they now are, each one of them would have said,

“I hope that will not be the case with me; I trust that, long before the time you mention, I shall have cast in my lot with the people of God, and shall have been saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.”

They are still hoping, but their hope is curdling into doubt, and their doubt is souring into despair; and I am very fearful lest that despair should lead them into still greater sin.

I want to speak specially to these friends; I shall do it with much kindness of heart towards them, but I wish to do it also with equal faithfulness, praying all the while that what I say may help them to escape from their present unsatisfactory and unsafe position.

## The Imputation Implied and Met

It is suggested to some that, inasmuch as they are not saved though they have put themselves in the way of saving ordinances, and though they have sought salvation, perhaps salvation is not so easily to be had as it used to be, perhaps Christ cannot save them as he has saved others.

Notice the first word of our text: “Behold.” This is like our nota bene; mark well, turn your eye this way, “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear.”  
You are called upon to mark this, distinctly to see it, and to entertain no doubt about it. If you are not saved, it is not because God is unable to save you, nor is it because he is unwilling to hear your prayers. Do listen to this word, for it is God himself who speaks it. He knows whether his hand is palsied, or whether his ear is deaf; and he himself declares that his hand is not shortened that it cannot save, and that his ear is not heavy that it cannot hear. If you have any doubt about this fact, I recommend you to prove it for yourselves; come by faith to Jesus, and see whether he will save you. We sang just now,-”Venture on him, venture wholly,” and if you? think that it is a venture, if you fancy that, peradventure, the blood of Christ cannot cleanse you, or the Spirit of God cannot renew you, come and put the matter to the test. Dare now to cast yourself at Jesus feet, and say, “I believe that thou canst save me, and I trust thee to be my Savior.” If he does not save thee, if he cannot do so, thou hast at least made the trial; but I do beseech thee to listen to this text, do not close thine ear or thy heart to its message, “Behold, behold, behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear.” This passage proves that the power to wave remains with God unimpaired.  
Just as of old he forgave great sinners through the atoning sacrifice of his well-beloved Son, so is he able to forgive great sinners now. He forgave the dying thief, and he can forgive you. All manner of sin and of blasphemy have been forgiven unto men, and all manner of sin and of blasphemy can be forgiven unto you. Though you had spent a lifetime in drunkenness, or unchastity, or dishonesty, or any other form of evil, though you should have grown grey in the service of sin and Satan,-

“There is a fountain flll’d with blood, Drawn from Immanuel’s veins And sinners, plunged beneath that flood, still, still, Lose all their guilty stains.”

There is the same power with God to forgive sin as there used to be, for the blood of Jesus is as powerful to cleanse as ever it was. Note also that there is the same power of the Holy Spirit to change your nature as ever there was. He who turned Saul of Tarsus from an enemy into an apostle can do just the same with you. Of old, conversion was likened to the raising of the dead; and he who has quickened many a dead soul can quicken your dead soul, and raise you from the dead. It was also called a new creation, and he who made all things new in other men can make all things new in you.

Look ye, sirs, if you think that God cannot forgive sin nowadays as he did in the olden times, I stand here as a living witness to the contrary, for I know that he has pardoned me. It always has surprised me, but I do not think that ever in my life I so mush wondered at being a child of God as I wonder now. Thirty- seven years ago, I was baptized into the sacred name, and I adored the grace of God then; but not as much as I do now. What I owe to that grace, it is not possible for me to express. Every time I preach? to you, I feel unworthy of my sacred office, and I would fain run from it if I dared; but woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel. Yet I bear witness to this fact, that the grace of God, which was able to save me, is able to save you. Here, give me your hand, you trembler, give me your hand! I wish that I could go round the galleries, and down below there in the area, and get a hold of your hands; and say to each one of you,

“My brother, my sister, the Lord can save you, he can save you; I am a witness that he can save you because he has saved me. His hand is not shortened, that it cannot save.”

But I need not speak of myself only; if it were proper, I could ask hundreds, ay, thousands, of persons who are present this evening at this service, to stand up, and bear witness that the Lord saved them, and that they firmly believe, after what has been wrought in them, that no case is beyond the reach of almighty grace. Come along with you, then; do not east blame upon God, as though your not being saved was the result of want of power on the part of God the Father, God the Son, or God the Holy Ghost, for it is not so.

You say that it must be the want of will, then; but it is not, for the Lord’s willingness to hear remains the same as ever. You are called upon in the text to behold that his ear is not heavy, that it cannot hear. You know that there are none so deaf as those that will not hear; and if God resolved not to hear your prayers, then he would be indeed the possessor of a heavy ear.  
But he has not resolved to refuse your prayer; you may be unwilling to pray, but God is not unwilling to hear. “If thou seek him, he will be found of thee.” “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near;” “for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” If thou wilt come in God’s way, and cast thyself at Christ’s feet, and cry for mercy for his sake, thou shalt have it as surely as there is a God in heaven. Ho knoweth that I lie not when I offer to be bondsman for my Master that he will keep his promise,

“Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved;”

and that “whosoever” must include you. Call upon his name, and prove for yourself the truth of the promise.

Perhaps someone asks the question, “If what you tell me is true, why is it that I who am really hearing, and. seeking, and praying am not saved?” Now I want to try and find that out.?

## The Accusation Pressed and Explained

If you will permit me, I will call upon you as a physician might. There is something the matter with you, and you want to know what it is. I shall probably have to probe a little, and perhaps have to go pretty deep, and if you really desire to receive a blessing, if there is anything, which I say that fits your case, will you kindly take it home? Even if it should seem very personal, and should make you feel cross, I cannot help that. You know that good blisters are not pleasant things, yet they may be very necessary. I want, if I can, to find out why it is that you have not obtained peace with God. The clue which guides me in my search is in the second verse of my text, “Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.”

Now hearken. Your accusation against God may be turned against you. You thought that God’s hand was shortened, that it could not save; but it is your hand that is shortened, for you have not laid hold upon Christ. You have not taken your sins to him to be put away, you have not turned to God with full purpose of heart, you are shorthanded, but the Lord is not.  
You said that God’s ear was heavy. Nay, nay, nay, it is our ear that is heavy; you have not heard what God the Lord has been saying to you, you have not been obedient to the heavenly message. All the mischief lies with yourself, not with God; and at the last, if you are not saved, the blame will not rest upon the Savior, but upon yourself. This is the doctrine that we preach; if a man be saved, all the honor is to be given to Christ; but if a man be lost, all the blame is to be laid upon himself. You will find all true theology summed up in these two short sentences, salvation is all of the grace of God, damnation is all of the will of man.

The real reason why you have not found peace, you who have sought it, is sin; not your sins in the abstract, for,

“though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

No sin, whatever it is, shall ruin any man if he shall come to Christ for mercy. Though you are black as hell’s midnight through iniquity, yet if you will come to Christ, he is ready to cleanse you. It is sin, after all, that lieth at the door, and blocks your way to the Savior.

First, it may be sin unconfessed. Permit me to ask whether you have made before God a full and complete confession of your sin. I do not insist that you should go into the details of every sin; that would be impossible, but there must be no cloaking or attempting to hide any sin from God. There must be no wish to excuse yourself, or to make out that what might be sin in others was less sinful in you. The Romanist tries to get help in confession by going to his priest, and the priest puts many questions to him to help his memory. We observe no such practice as that, for we believe it to be ruinous to the priest and mischievous to the man; but we do ask you to make confession to God, for remember that it is written,

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.”

Recollect how the prodigal said, “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight.”

Have you said that? That is the beginning of the saved life, the acknowledgment of your former evil ways, the humble and truthful confession that you deserve the wrath of God on account of your sin, the putting of yourself into the dock, as one who pleads guilty, and who could not speak against God even if he took you at your word, and condemned you there and then. You must take that position; you must not expect pardon till you plead guilty. Only acknowledge thy transgression, and then mayest thou lay hold on Christ as thy Savior, and believe in him for perfect pardon. It may be that you have never had peace with God because you have not made a confession of your sin in plain, distinct terms. It is no good to mince matters with God; he knows all about you. Your secret sins-the sins your wife does not know, and that no one knows but yourself,-they are all known to him. Go and whisper them into the great Father’s ear, with many a tear of deep regret that you should have offended so grievously against him. If you do not so, unconfessed sin will be a barrier between your soul and God.

But, next, sin is a very great hindrance to grace when it is sin unforsaken. Some men know they are doing wrong, yet they will not quit it. They confess sin, yet still go on with it. They are half resolved to part with it, but they never really do so. They know that it is the right eye that offends, but they dare not pluck it out; and that it is the right hand that offends, but they will not cut it off. They are dilatory about this work, and they still go on in sin. I appeal to your own conscience, can you expect God to pardon your sin while you continue in it? Can you think of the blessed Son of God coming to the world to be a minister of sin? That heart must be wicked to an awful extreme which will dare to say,

“God is merciful, therefore I will continue in sin. We are saved by faith alone, therefore I will believe in Christ, and go on in my sin.”

Why, man, you are perverting the gospel of Christ to your own destruction! You are making for yourself a deathbed? which will be very terrible, since you are finding a way to hell hard by that wicket gate which lets men into the road to heaven. I pray you, do not desecrate the very cross of Christ by hanging yourself upon it! There are some who do even that. You must forsake your sins if you would be saved.  
Christ has come to save his people from their sins, not in their sins. Drunkard, you cannot keep your cup and yet go to heaven. I speak plainly. You who are accustomed to lie cannot have a lying tongue and a saved soul. If any of you cheat in business, do not talk to me about your faith in Christ. If you can lie, and cheat, and act unfairly, you are of your father, the devil, and he will have you as surely as you live unless you repent, and turn from your evil ways. There is no real salvation except salvation from sinning, so your sin must be quitted. I put this question to any man here who is a hearer, and a seeker, and yet who does not find peace,-Is there not some sin that you have yet to abandon? If there be, God help you, by his mighty grace, to get rid of it at once!

There may be also some sin that has been forsaken, but it is still loved. Sin hankered after is a great barrier to grace. When the cow’s calf is taken away, how she bellows after it! And there is many a man who has had his sin taken away from him, yet he still longs after it. He does not sin with his hand or his foot, but he sins with his heart, his soul goes a-lusting after his iniquities. Now, while it is so, while sin still lies in the heart, can you expect to have peace with God? No, you must have the evil out, not from the house only, but from the heart. You must have done with it, not with the hand only, but with the very desire of your spirit. “Oh!” say you, “that is hard work.” It is harder work than you can accomplish; and in order to do it you must be born again. This truth should drive you to Christ that he may give you this new life by his Holy Spirit. But, mark you, if it is not your desire to give up the love of sin, you will never find salvation while you are thus hankering after evil.

There are some who are hindered from finding peace, I do not doubt, through sin of which they are not aware. “Oh!” say you, “that is rather a puzzling statement.” Well, there is many a man who is living in sin without being aware that it is sin, and that may keep him back from finding peace with God. I have to add this also, that many men do not want to find out too much. There are great numbers of people who do not want to learn too much about their sin. You know that light breaks in upon us by degrees; if we sin in the dark, that sin is not so grossly guilty and serious as sin in the light. But if we are in that darkness willfully, and we do not wish to have it? removed, then we shall be guilty indeed. If I commit a crime, and then say, “I did not know that I was breaking the law,” the judge says, “I cannot help your ignorance; you broke the law, and you must bear the penalty.”

But supposing I have a book at home that tells me all about the requirements of the law, and I still say to the judge, “I did not know what the law forbade,” then he would answer, “But you ought to have known.  
You have committed a double offense, as you have not studied the law. It was put into your house with a command that you should study it, and you are therefore doubly guilty, for you have refused to pay sufficient respect to the law to learn what it says.” I fear that some of you people are not conscious of your sin because you do not want to know it. Where ignorance is bliss, you think it folly to be wise; but it would not be folly to be wise unto salvation. Some of you are losing comfort, losing years of usefulness, losing all certainty about heaven, because you will not search the Scriptures, and you do not desire to know what evil thing it is in you which separates between you and your God. O men and women, do not lie under such a charge as this! Say,

“I will know the worst of my case. If I have to probe as with a lancet, I will find out what the mischief is. My prayer shall be, ‘Lord, let me know the very worst of my case, that I may afterwards find that sure salvation which will stand the test even of the day of judgment itself!’“

I would further suggest that there may be some who are really seeking to believe, but they do not find peace because of some sin of omission. Does that open a window anywhere for any one of you? It is not so much that you are doing wrong as that you are not doing right. You are forgetting some positive duty, and it is that which separates between you and your God. I have had some very curious experiences which I may never tell so that the persons about whom I relate them will ever be known. There was one which happened so long ago that I may tell it without fear. A man, through reading my sermons, was convinced of sin. He sought the Savior, but he found no peace. He was a long time in darkness, and at last it was suggested to him that perhaps he found no peace with God because of some wrongdoing that remained unforgiven. It appeared that, some years before, he had robbed a person who was not aware of the theft; he had taken a large sum of money, and he could never rest till that amount had been returned. I never saw the man who had been robbed, and I had to rack my brain to find a way by which I could return that large sum to him without giving him any clue as to who it was that took it. I managed the? business, and I have the receipt for the money, and I have never heard another word about it; but he who was in heaviness of heart is now a joyful Christian man, as I firmly believe, though I have never seen him. The money he had taken from the other man lay upon his conscience, and when the stolen sum had been restored to its rightful owner, God granted peace to the one who had made restitution. It may be that there is someone else who has something that does not belong to him; if so, let him also make restitution. If any of you have been fraudulent bankrupts, try to make up that twenty shillings in the pound, which you ought to have paid. Christ did not come into the world to let you live as a rogue, and then sneak into heaven at last. No, he would make you an honest man at once; and when he has done so, there will he another obstacle to your finding joy and peace removed out of the way.

Now let us aim once more at the target; I am trying to find out why it is that some seeking sinners cannot find peace. Do you not think that some fail to find peace because they have an ugly temper? Some people are born with nasty tempers; they are a poor inheritance for anybody. I heard one say that he was sorry that he had lost his temper. I was uncommonly glad to hear that he had lost it, but I regretted that he found it again so soon. There are persons who are at variance with their mother or their father; and it is very sad when husbands and wives are at strife with one another; perhaps some such are listening to me now. You are praying, you say, and you wonder that God does not have mercy on you; and yet there is strife in the household! Or it may be that your poor girl ran away from home, and if she were to come back to-night, you would shut the door in her face, would you not? You are so good and respectable, that you could not harbour your own child! Yet you expect God to take pity upon you, do you? Or you parted from your husband in a pet, and you have never gone back to him, and you want to find peace with God. Peace with God? Get peace with man before you talk about finding peace with God. You brothers and sisters have had a quarrel, and have made up your minds that you will never forgive one another. O sirs, let me be very plain with yen, if you cannot be at peace with your fellow men, you cannot hope to be at peace with God! The Lord bids you leave your offering at the altar,-he must not be insulted with it,-first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and seek peace with thy God. Malice in the heart is altogether inconsistent with grace, and it must be cast out. I know two brothers who will not speak to one another; yet one of them professes to be a Christian, and the other says he wants to be one. What will God do with both of them? I cannot tell what to do with either of them, I am sure. A part of salvation is to save us f rein an evil hateful spirit, and to make us love God and love our fellowmen also. Perhaps that is the reason why some of you can find no peace, because you have been indulging an evil temper. And do you not think, once more, that there are some who find no peace because of an intellectual sin? There are sins of intellect quite as surely as there are sins of ignorance. Some men know a great deal too much to go to heaven; that is to say, they think that they know better than their Bibles, and better than their God! Their dear mother now in heaven,-oh, she was a poor, simple-minded creature! Their father, stern in his integrity,-oh, he is a bigot! The preacher who proclaims the gospel with all his heart and soul, and brings many to Christ,-he is a man behind his times; he has no” culture.” Bah! what fools! I cannot use a milder word to describe some of you. I only wish that the compliment I have thus paid you were true in the best sense, for if you were fools, you would enter into heaven, but because you are so wise, you are more likely to miss the way. God has oftentimes chosen those who think nothing of themselves, and are poor and needy, while the great ones who are proudly wise, disdain the road that lends to Paradise. Oh, be not too great to enter heaven! Be converted, and become as little children, else ye shall in no wise enter therein.

I am going to close my discourse, yet I do not want to say the last thing that comes into my mind. I have been describing a great many reasons why some people do not find peace with God; but sometimes there are reasons that I have not mentioned. One of these is the commission of gross or secret sin. Oh, the things that a man who cares for the souls of his fellows has to see and mourn over in this world! It must be fifteen or sixteen years ago that I was called to visit a dying man. I had seen him before when he was ill and in distress of mind, and I had tried to bring him to the Savior, and to comfort him. He attended the Tabernacle constantly, and I could not make out why he did not find rest and peace. ‘I often tried to remove various obstacles which I thought were in his way, but I never found out why he had no peace till after he was dead. Then I understood it; I cannot tell you all that there was in it, it is sufficient to say that he was living in known sin of the saddest kind. Kind, generous, loving, all you could wish him to be; but, alas! there was another household and another family found afterwards; and I could understand that, while he lived so, there could be no peace between him and God. I hardly like to say it, but I may be? addressing somebody who is in a similar condition tonight. My dear souls, do not try to live in sin and yet to be Christians! Do not pretend to hope in God while you are indulging secret vice; it cannot be so. You must either give up your sins or give up all hope of heaven. Men and women, this is an evil age, full of impurity; and it behoves the minister of God, when he is dealing with men’s souls, to speak very plainly, and I am forced to put the truth to you thus. Nobody knows of your sin; you have never been found out; yet it may be that you are living in the constant commission of some secret sin. By the love you bear to your own souls, and by your desire to find Christ, I beseech you to flee from the evil thing, escape for your life, flee from the wrath to conic, and then lay hold on eternal life, for there is salvation in Christ, there is life for a look at him, but that life consists in great measure in being healed of sin; and you cannot continue a foul life and yet be washed in the Savior’s blood. It is a contradiction in terms, and a contradiction in fact. As I shall meet you, my hearers, at the bar of God,-and as a dying man who may never speak to you again, I thought that I would put this truth in such a way that, if I went home to bed to die, I should not have the blood of any one of you resting upon my skirts,-I beseech you, by eternity, by heaven, by hell,-and there is a hell, let the smooth-tongued liars of this age say what they will,-by heaven, by hell, and by your own immortality, fly to Christ, give up your sin, and he saved by believing in Jesus even now!

God grant it! Amen and Amen.

* Uplifting and motivational

[](http://www.christians.com/node/177)

Oswald Smith

November 8, 1889 to January 25, 1986 (97), Evangelist

Oswald Jeffrey Smith is the founder of The People's Church in Toronto, Canada.

## Relationships

* http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/reubentorrey_main.mini.jpgIt was through one of [Reuben Torrey's](http://www.christians.com/reubentorrey/main) evangelistic meetings where Oswald Smith was converted.

# Oswald Smith

* [At A Glance](http://www.christians.com/oswaldsmith/main)
* [Testimony](http://www.christians.com/oswaldsmith/main)
* [**Biography**](http://www.christians.com/oswaldsmith/main)
* [Works](http://www.christians.com/oswaldsmith/main)

Historical Timeline

http://simile.mit.edu/timeline/api/images/copyright-vertical.png



1850

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Oswald J. Smith is one of the most versatile Christian leaders in the history of the Christian church. Perhaps never has one man done so many different things well. At age 13, his Sunday school teacher said, "Any of you boys might be a minister." He thought in that direction from that time on.



On December 8, 1910, he surrendered completely to God. His diary states - "The great struggle is over, I surrendered completely to God. I now trust that He will send me out to the foreign field. I do not care if my life is hidden away, unknown by the civilized world, as long as it is known to Him."



The People's Church was founded in1928 by Oswald J. Smith. In their website, they mention the church's vision of “Taking Christ to the Nations” -- a vision that undoubtedly originated from their founder.

[«](http://www.christians.com/oswaldsmith/main#prev) [1](http://www.christians.com/oswaldsmith/main#1) [2](http://www.christians.com/oswaldsmith/main#2) [3](http://www.christians.com/oswaldsmith/main#3) [»](http://www.christians.com/oswaldsmith/main#next)

The Life of Dr. Oswald Smith

Dr. Oswald Smith was born in a farmhouse on the outskirts of Odessa, Ont., Nov. 8th, 1889. His father was a telegraph operator; thus his childhood days were spent in railway stations. The time spent in Mount Albert, Ont., a small, quiet country town, where he used to live for a while, has never been forgotten by him. After he had risen to fame, he returned there to meditate and to enjoy its pastoral scenery.

In 1906, a great evangelistic campaign was being conducted by the then famed Dr. R. A. Torrey in Massey Hall, Toronto. Though Oswald had never been at an evangelistic campaign before in his life drawn he was to it. During that campaign he was converted.

Soon after, he felt drawn to the preaching of the gospel. Yet, he had no idea how to go about entering into the ministry. "At both Embro and Mt. Albert my desire to preach had grown stronger day by day. I felt as though I could not wait for the time to come. So desperate was I that I made a very special plan. I said to myself, `I will go far from home. I will go so far away that no one will know me. I will go ten miles away, at least. And I will. find a little country church and ask the minister to let me preach, and if I fail I will then know that I am not called, and will return home a wiser boy.' You see, I had no one to advise me, no one to tell me what to do." Shortly after, Oswald Smith read a brief announcement about Toronto Bible College, which resulted in his attending the evening classes for one term. It was not until 1912 that he graduated from that institution. Last year (1968), he was chosen as the Toronto Bible College "Alumnus of the Year." Dr. Billy Graham, and the well-known evangelical journalist Miss Jane Scott, who graduated from Toronto Bible College in 1915, were present for that great occasion.

Dr. Smith's spiritual pilgrimage started in the Presbyterian church where he applied for a mission field under this denomination. However, he was considered too young for this difficult work. He applied to the Upper Canada Society and went as colporteur to Muskoka. In 1908, Oswald Smith , was given the opportunity to preach, despite his lack of theological and Biblical training. How his thrilled he was! Finally his hour had come! He relates, "In a corner of my room that night I knelt in prayer with my forehead touching the floor, and pled for guidance. I did not have a sermon for I had forgotten every one I had made up in bed. What was I to say? I remembered listening to a sermon in Toronto in Beverley Street Baptist Church by the Rev. Elmore Harris, D.D., one of the editors of the Scofield reference Bible, on Ephesians 1:3, a text that no one should take until he has been in the ministry 25 years at least, and since I had a good memory I was able to recall much of which I had heard. So I decided to use it." Though Dr. Smith started his ministry soon alter his conversion, he did not commence, strictly speaking, his theological studies until 1910. All in all, his academic training consists, of two years in Toronto Bible College, three years in McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, and special studies in Knox College, Toronto. He also had evening classes in Toronto Bible College, and one year in Manitoba College, As student, he also gained a great variety of practical experience in mission work which influenced his later ministry. His academic degrees are as follows: In 1936, Oswald Smith was given the degree of Doctor of Divinity (honorary) by Ashbury College. In 1940, he received the Doctor of Literature degree (honorary) from Bob Jones University. In 1946, he received the degree of Doctor of Laws (honorary) from Houghton College. He is a Life Member of the Royal Geographical Society of London, a member of The Eugene Field Society, the Royal Society of Literature of the United Kingdom, and the American Society of Composers and Authors.

On April 30th, 1915, Dr. Smith was ordained into the ministry of the Gospel in the South Chicago Presbyterian Church, which he served as "Acting Pastor" while he was a student at McCormick Theological Seminary. In May, he left for Toronto, where he became Associate Pastor of Dale Presbyterian Church, a large church, seating capacity of 1,800, located at the corner of Queen Street and Bellwoods Avenue. The edifice was built by Rev. J. D. Morrow, one of the most remarkable ministers in Toronto at that time. Dr. Smith writes about him:

"Mr. Morrow was the first man in Toronto, if not in Canada, to go without a hat, He had vowed that he would not wear a hat until he got enough money to put a roof on his church. And he kept his vow. He wore his hair long and bushy at the back and was a familiar figure on the streets of Toronto. Everybody knew him. The policemen were his friends. Each Monday evening he sat in court, watching for an opportunity to take charge ,of someone who had erred, whom he might  
  
bring home and help. All the street car conductors were acquainted with him. One time he borrowed a "Pay as you enter" box from the Street Car company, and for months he and I took turns standing by it at Yonge and Shuter streets, collecting funds for his church. Sometimes he got animals from the zoo, including bears, and took them into his pulpit to attract children. And they came in multitudes. Moreover, he was a gifted evangelist and a most effective gospel preacher. He knew how to put on a bright, evangelistic service, and thus attract crowds. The way he told stories, actually acting them out on the platform, sang his own mother songs, and pled for decisions, always brought tears to the eyes. Many decided for Christ under his ministry. He was very active and energetic. And he was most generous. He loved the common people and never felt more at home than when among the poor. To provide for the destitute was his greatest delight. His critics were many, especially in ecclesiastical circles. He died young. Had he lived he might have become one of the world's greatest evangelists. Never will I forget the night he first appeared with his hair cut. 'He had been made Chaplain of the Sportsman's Battalion, the 180th, and was dressed in the uniform of a Captain. For a long time he hesitated behind the curtain. Finally he told me to go first. I stepped out and he followed. In a moment the great congregation burst into applause. When the time came for him to speak he took as his text, `So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God,' and preached with all his old-time fire, pausing in the midst of his sermon to sing a verse of his favourite song, `Where is my Wandering Boy Tonight?' Pleading again, and then singing the second verse, as the choir, led by `Sandy' Grant, came in softly on the chorus, he made his appeal. Handkerchiefs were used freely throughout the congregation. A woman wept aloud. In the gallery a man bowed his head and sobbed as though his heart would break. Oh, what power!"

In 1916, Dr. Smith was placed in full charge of Dale, as Rev. Morrow had to leave for the Front. However, all was not well in the church. There was much strife in the choir, and a great deal of trouble was caused by church officials who were lodge members. The situation became so bad that it became impossible for him to stay and to effectively carry out his ministry. He was judged by the congregation as being too fundamentalistic. The revival meetings he conducted had become a source of offence. Many also objected to the gospel hymns which he had the people sing and the many prayer meetings being conducted. Though Dr. Smith left the Presbyterian church, he never left officially the Presbyterian ministry. He says "On November 5th, 1918, my diary records the fact that I was officially received into the Presbytery of Toronto, and given my full standing as a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Canada, from which I have never resigned, although my work ever since leaving Dale has been, for the most part, outside the denomination."

Dr. Smith for some months supplied the pulpit of Beulah Tabernacle, Charles Street, Toronto. His actions betray that the charge made in Dale of being "too fundamentalist" was not unfounded. His actions, after he left Dale, prove that he had no concept of the covenant, no Reformed understanding of the doctrine of the church. His Christian faith was then and still is the strong individualistic type.

After Dr. Smith left Beulah, he traveled considerably and did independent evangelistic work. On the first Sunday of January, 1921, he was installed as Pastor of the Alliance Tabernacle. This gospel church greatly increased under his ministry. The methods rejected by Dale Presbyterian were now effectively used to increase the membership of the Tabernacle. It was 1921 which also marked the beginning of world-wide ministry. Dr. Smith has extensively traveled in every continent for the Gospel's sake. In 1926, he resigned to become the Superintendent of the Christian and Missionary Alliance for Eastern Canada. His manner of departure from the Alliance Tabernacle was rather sad. The reason for his resignation is difficult to understand for a Reformed Christian, but it can indeed happen, and it still does happen, in congregational governed churches. Dr. Smith writes,

"…on June 20th, 1926, I preached my farewell sermon, with a heart rent and torn, turned away from my God-given task. The work that had become dearer than life itself, the child of my prayers and tears, born in the travail of my soul, was taken over by others. For a time the great crowds continued to attend, so solid had been the foundation upon which the work has been built. Never had there been the least sign of a split of any kind, for there were no difficulties. I had been maneuvered out when the work was at its very peak and all was well. The last missionary offering was $34,000.00, an amount never equaled since. Finally, people began to leave, the crowds disappeared and the enthusiasm waned, never to be revived. But perhaps it would be better for the present, at least, if I were to draw a veil over the Gethsemane of those months of torture and despair. I had lost all, or so it seemed, yet God had not forgotten me.'."

Dr. Smith went for a year's ministry to Los Angeles and after that left again for Toronto. In August, 1928, he resigned as a member of the New York Board of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, and joined the World-Wide Christian Couriers, and under its auspices was launched what is now "The Peoples Church." The place for the first meeting was Massey Hall, and the date, September 9th, 1928. The work was first called The Cosmopolitan Tabernacle." March 30th, 1930, the congregation was moved to the old St. James Square Presbyterian Church, 42 Gerrard Street East, where it was known as the Toronto Gospel Tabernacle. On October 1st, 1933, the name was changed to Peoples Church. On July 1st, 1934, The Peoples Church moved to what used to be then Central Methodist Church. In 1936, this building was bought for $75.000; $20.000 of which was donated by Mr. William G, Jaffray, owner and publisher of The Globe, Canada's national newspaper. In 1961, the Peoples Church moved to Sheppard Avenue East. The old church, now a parking - lot, was sold, for $650.000, a handsome profit, considering the original sum paid. The new church is a very modern and splendid structure, costing $1,000,000. The auditorium seats 2.000, at least; it features a grandpiano, an electric organ and a large platform for the choir, soloists and minister. There are many class rooms for Sunday School, meeting halls, offices, and a shipping and receiving room.

One of the unique features in Peoples Church is its missionary outreach. In 1929, Peoples Church Missionary Society was founded. Until 1935, it operated as an independent society which sent out and support missionaries outreach in the world. Faith missionary societies recruit their workers from many evangelical denominations. They are an important missionary arm of evangelical and fundamentalistic movements in the U.S.A. and Canada. In Canada alone, there are more than 80 missionary societies. Dr. Smith's reason for working with Faith missions was and is: "We have worked with Faith Missions because they are absolutely free of modernism and higher criticism. They are true to the Word of God. Their vision is to evangelize the unreached millions of earth and bring back the King. They do not major on institutional, educational and medical work. Their reliance is on God rather than on the church, and they practice self denial and sacrifice."

In 1930, $42,891 was contributed to Foreign Missions, and in 1968, $341,504.84. These monies are being used for the partial support of approximately 350 missionaries around the world. Dr. Oswald Smith's remarkable career includes also the writing of hymns. One of the better known of his products is "Then Jesus Came." This hymn was written in "The 1939 and put to the music by Dr. On H. Rodeheaver. This song has become a great favourite and has been sung by Bev. Shea in Billy Graham's Hour of Decision programme.

"When Jesus comes the tempter's power is broken,  
  
When Jesus comes, the tears are wiped away;  
  
He takes the gloom and fills the life with Glory,  
  
For all is changed when Jesus comes to stay."

The Peoples Church is an out "standing fundamentalist" church. In a way she is an example of what old-fashioned fundamentalism used to be, yet she goes beyond that. She combines the weaknesses and strength of fundamentalism of the past, yet she has gone beyond the original intentions of fundamentalism. Original fundamentalism was neither extreme individualistic nor did it major on the pre-millennial, imminent return of Jesus Christ (Christ's return and then the 1,000 year reign of Christ on earth.) Peoples Church is individualistic to the extreme and the doctrine of the second coming of Christ is stressed beyond all proportion. "The Peoples Church is an independent work, standing pre-eminently for the conversion of souls, the edification of believers, and world-wide evangelism; emphasizing especially the four great essentials: Salvation, the Deeper Life, Foreign Missions, and our Lord's Return; endeavouring by every means to get the message to the Christless masses, at home and abroad in the shortest time possible. We believe in an unmutilated Bible; salvation through the blood of Christ; entire separation from the world; victory over all known sin through the indwelling Spirit; rugged consecration to sacrificial service; practical faith in the sufficiency of Christ for spiritual, temporal and physical needs, purifying hope of the Lord’s return; and a burning missionary zeal for the bringing the back of the King through world evangelism. What does Dr. smith mean with the church? He believes the church to be a group of born again believers. “By the word ‘Church’ we do not refer to the institution known as “Roman Catholicism,” nor do we mean “the building in which we worship. ‘Church’, in the Bible is never used in reference to anything save ‘believers in Christ’. Sometimes the word ‘bride’ or ‘body’ is used. It never includes merely professing Christians; it is rather the men and women who have been purchased by the blood of Christ and brought into living union with Him, its Head, by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit."

God deals only with "individuals" . . . . He is choosing individual members who are to make up His church." The church did not exist in the Old Testament. The church, according to Dr. Smith, did not exist until the first coming of Jesus Christ. We live now in the period called the "Church-age." A sharp distinction is made between the church and the kingdom. Christ is not yet King.

He will become King when the millennium is ushered in. "Thus the Kingdom is yet to be established." At the missionary conference last year, there hung on the right hand side of the church auditorium a huge banner, which read, "First World Evangelization: Then The Reign of Christ." "God's ideal has always been an absolute monarchy, but an absolute monarchy with Christ on the throne. When that time comes the world will be governed in justice and as never before in all its history."

This theology denies consequently the Lordship of Jesus Christ in this present age. It has also little patience for social concern. There are no appeals made for "Benevolence or Home Missions." (21) Now I am the first one to say that Foreign Missions is of vital importance. A church must evangelize and send out missionaries, lest she disobeys her Lord. However, Foreign Missions should not crowd out the total program of the church and her concern for social needs. We cannot leave the ills of society untouched, believing that the second coming of Christ will solve every problem, every heartache. Of course, each Christian ought to long for Christ's second coming. A Christian knows that the second coming of Christ is the blessed hope. However, each Christian must also "occupy" until Christ comes again.

In 1926, Dr. Smith gave eight addresses in the Alliance Tabernacle under the heading "Is the Antichrist at hand?" For these addresses, which are not sermons, as they do not expound Scripture, Dr. Smith had gathered material from the fields of demonology, astrology, politics and religion. From these varied fields, and the Bible, Dr. Smith made some very remarkable predictions about the future. He was quite sure that the Great Tribulation, the revival of the Roman Empire, the reign of the Antichrist and the battle of Armageddon was to take place "before the year 1933." His book proves how careful one must be in expounding prophecy. Dr. Smith is still alive, but the man he believed would be the antichrist is dead. He was quite sure that Musasolini fitted in Revelation. "Thousands of eyes are turned just now toward Mussolini, the Prime Minister of Italy. Mussolini may not be the Emperor himself, but if not, he is certainly a remarkable fore-shadowing of the one whom the Bible predicts will reign. It is a well known fact that Mussolini's avowed intention is the revival of the Roman Empire."

In his third address, Dr. Smith refers to Mother Shipton's Prophecies to prove his sincere belief that 1926 was a crucial year in the light of prophecy. Mother Shipton's Prophecies were written nearly 500 years ago. She was born in Norfolk, England and she died at Clifton, Yorkshire, 1449 A.D. Dr. Smith did not believe that she prophecied, but rather interpreted prophecies of Scripture. The last two verses of her prophetic poem were considered of crucial importance by Dr. Smith.

"In nineteen hundred twenty-six,  
  
Build houses light of straw and sticks,  
  
For then shall mighty wars be planned,  
  
And fire and sword shall sweep the land,  
  
But those who live the century through,  
  
In fear and trembling this will do:  
  
Flee to the mountains and the dens,  
  
To bog and forest and wild fens-  
  
For storms will rage and oceans roar,  
  
When Gabriel stands on sea and shore;  
  
And, as he blows his wondrous horn,  
  
Old worlds shall die and new be born."

From the then current history, Dr. Smith tried to prove the validity of Mother Shipton's remarkable claim that 1926 would be crucial. (6) All in all, his ability to interpret prophecy does not match his organizational talents. The years 1926 and 1933 are now but dates in history books. How careful one must be in dealing with the prophetic passages of Scripture!

Dr. Oswald Smith made a lasting impact upon the history of the Canadian Protestant church. He and his church, where Dr. Paul Smith, his son, is now pastor also are the driving force behind the work of Faith Missions. Their sacrificial work has benefited independent workers and small missionary societies. Dr. Oswald Smith is indeed a remarkable man who founded a unique church.

Introduction

Oswald J. Smith is one of the most versatile Christian leaders in the history of the Christian church. Perhaps never has one man done so many different things well. It all centered in Toronto, Ontario, where Smith pastored from 1915 to 1959. He raised some $14,000,000.00 for foreign missions, more than any other pastor in history. Half of this was from his own church.

Smith was a country boy and the eldest of ten children of Benjamin and Alice Smith. He had five brothers and four sisters. Smith was born at home above the train station. His father was a telegraph operator for the Canadian Pacific Railway. The family moved from Odessa to Walkerville, to Woodstock, and finally to Emro. Delicate in health most of his life, he was not expected to live to manhood. He truduged one and a half miles to school and attended the local church and Sunday school.

At age 13, his Sunday school teacher said, "Any of you boys might be a minister." He thought in that direction from that time on. His conversion at age 16 was the result of the Torrey-Alexander evangelistic team. He had been reading about the Torrey crusade in Toronto which the newspapers were describing. The reports of 3,000 gathering only 90 miles away challenged him to take a trip to Toronto. Attending the Massey Hall services for a few days, he was saved at the seventh service - one for boys and young men only, held January 28, 1906. Torrey preached on Isaiah 53:5.

Young Smith soon decided that Toronto was the place to get a job. For a while, he identified with a group of Christians called the Hornerites. Soon he spoke to a couple of youth groups in Mount Albert where his family had now moved, as well as speaking at the Beverly Street Baptist Church in Toronto. He began to attend Toronto Bible College evening school. This helped fire him up for mission work, and he applied to the Presbyterian Church for a mission field appointment. They rejected the desires of this brash 18-year-old. He then began to sell Bibles and was very successful in this venture. Then came another chance to preach - at the Severn Methodist Church - plus two more services in nearby circuit churches the same day. He then got a call from the Bible Society in Vancouver, so he was off on a train journey of six days to western Canada. In September of 1908, he began his work at Prince Rupert Island, working his way up the coast, selling Bibles and making contacts for the local pastors, making calls in remote lumber camps and homes. He soon ended up at Port Essington some 30 miles away. For the next few months, Smith sold Bibles and preached to the Indians.

He met a Methodist missionary, G.H. Raley, who wanted Smith as his associate to minister during the winter to the Indians at Hartley Bay. Smith got his supplies, which were $20 worth of food, a small cook stove, an axe, a hammer and nails, two quilts, a blanket, plus fifteen jars of fruit and jelly. Arriving at the village, he found it almost covered by deep snow and as bleak and barren as he had ever seen. Stoic Indians met him. That winter was the most difficult time of his life. Soaking clothes and nights of bitter cold followed as Smith fought with his stove in a desperate effort to keep the green wood burning and the small quarters warm. This expeience drove him closer to the Lord and also gave him an empathy with missionaries and their problems for years to come. He started a Sunday school, preached twice on Sundays and four times during the week, plus taught the Indian children at school. By April, 1909, he resumed his work selling Bibles, up and down the coast of British Columbia, plus preaching wherever he could.

Feeling the need for additional training, he went to the Manitoba College in Winnipeg in the fall of 1909. Returning home to Mount Albert for the Christmas holidays, his parents and friends heard him preach for the first time. This was quite a contrast to his previous holiday season, when he was with a few Indians in the wilds of British Columbia. Feeling a spiritual lack at the Manitoba school, he entered Toronto Bible College in the fall of 1910. By late November, Smith was chosen, along with five other students, to be one of the speakers at the Students' Public Meeting. His subject was "A Call to the Foreign Field," for his interest in missions was now beginning to grow. On December 8, 1910, he surrendered completely to God. His diary states:

The great struggle is over, I surrendered completely to God. I now trust that He will send me out to the foreign field. I do not care if my life is hidden away, unknown by the civilized world, as long as it is known to Him.

At age 21, in January of 1911, he decided to hold a revival in Toronto - his first extended campaign. He used the Missionary Tabernacle, prepared 3,000 posters, and prepared his messages. Five were saved, and on Friday night Jennie Tyrrell sang. Five years of courtship and engagement followed. Soon J. Wilbur Chapman and Charles Alexander held a large crusade in Massey Hall, where Smith served as an usher and then as a counselor. Then in mid-summer 1911, he took a position with the Pocket Testament League of Canada to become their first traveling secretary, which gave him exposure throughout various areas in Ontario.

Then in November he became pastor of the Belwood (Ontario) Congregational Church. A second church at Garafraxa used his services simultaneously. Graduating from Toronto Bible College, he went off to Chicago in the fall of 1912 to begin further studies at McCormick Theological Seminary - a strong Presbyterian school in those days. In February of 1913, he assumed the pastorship of the Millard Avenue Presbyterian Church on Chicago's southwest side. He continued until May, then decided he would minister amongst the hills of Kentucky. He was assigned to a place called Cawood, a very small hamlet consisting of a combined store - post office and one house - as home base. Again, like British Columbia, it was a lonely ministry. Out of these experiences came some of his finest poems, which set the tone for many of his writings in later years. Towards the end of the summer, revival broke out at a place called Turtle Creek. His next year at McCormick Seminary (1913-14) saw him pastor the South Chicago Presbyterian Church also. His engagement to Miss Tyrrell was broken by mutual agreement in March, 1914.

He had begun to write verse in 1906 at age 17, and on September 5, 1914, he saw his first collection of hymns published. D.B. Towner had provided the music. Three days later, he wrote a well-known hymn, Deeper and Deeper. On April 29, 1915, he graduated from McCormick Theological Seminary, and on the following night, he was ordained in the church where he pastored. That day he spent in prayer, and he became convinced of two things - his work would be worldwide in coverage and Toronto would be his home base. He would leave Chicago. The congregation begged him to stay, but he felt impressed to take an associate pastor's position at the Dale Presbyterian Church in Toronto, where J.D. Morrow pastored.

June 6, 1915, began a lifetime of ministry in Toronto. Smith served with vigor at this work, and was impressed with one Daisy Billings, who was the senior deaconness of the church. By the spring of 1916, he was physically exhausted and had to take a complete rest. He went to Clifton Springs, New York, for an extended vacation. On September 12, 1916, he married Daisy Billings in a ceremony at the church by their pastor J.D. Morrow. Some 2,000 attended. Dale Presbyterian Church became the center of evangelism. Smith was learning fast from Morrow and soon was doing considerable preaching there. Morrow decided to become a chaplain in 1916, and Smith was made the pastor of this, the second largest Presbyterian church in Canada. In September of 1917, a real revival came to the church, which prompted Smith to write "A Revival Hymn". Morrow returned only briefly, but with failing health, he moved on to California in 1921, where he later died.

Smith's strong stand began to cause a concern amongst the liberal element, as has happened so often in history. Liberals were irritated by the revival meetings, the use of gospel hymns, the prayer meetings, the $600 raised for missions. The liberals succeeded in mounting so much pressure that, in October of 1918, Smith terminated his ministry. The Smiths' first son, Glen, was born June 22, 1917. A call was given to return to British Columbia under the Shantymen's Christian Association. Settling his family following their arrival on April 1, 1919, he began to preach to a needy and forgotten section of Canada's society.

However, a vision of Toronto and its masses burned in his soul, so he returned later in the year and served in various Christian causes until it was God's time to open up the right doors. On February 4, 1920, his only daughter Hope was born. Smith spent part of this summer in Kentucky again.

Smith, now 30 years of age, decided it was time for action. Renting the West End YMCA, he started his own services in October of 1920, calling the work the Gospel Tabernacle. Sixty-four people showed up in the 750-seat auditorium for the first service. Three months later this new work merged with the Parkdale Christian and Missionary Alliance Church, and Smith became the pastor of the new work in January of 1921. On June 1, 1921, their third child, Paul, was born. (Paul later would succeed his father as pastor of the famed People's Church.) A tent meeting to attract attention did just that when Smith had a "Bring Your Own Chair" shower on Sunday, July 3. The tent was filled with every kind of kitchen chair imaginable. A new church building was soon needed. For $40,000 they built an 80-by-130-foot auditorium seating 1,800. Paul Rader dedicated it on May 14, 1922, and the new work was called the Alliance Tabernacle.

He packed the auditorium by giving the people something they couldn't get any other place - variety. The best evangelists and singers in North America were constantly streaming across his platform. Establishing this kind of program made it easier for him to be gone weeks and months at a time later, because the people were used to different men filling the pulpit. He was now getting calls for many ministries elsewhere. The Alliance Tabernacle of New York called him to succeed A.B. Simpson, but he declined. One of the speakers at his church was William Fetler of the Russian Missionary Society, who had a burden for the Russian origin populace of the Baltic countries, who were ripe for the Gospel. Smith sailed on July 2, 1924, on his first of many trips outside the continent. Smith and Fetler had great meetings, with many of the auditoriums seating over 2,000 in such places as Latvia and Poland.

Back in Toronto with additional influence, the church grew until at times 1,000 would be turned away from a service. Smith pioneered soul-winning in Toronto. Gospel singing, intense evangelistic crusades, with a teaching ministry on Wednesday and Friday nights, continued to inspire the Christians throughout the area. Smith resigned in 1926 and did a year's worth of evangelistic efforts. In April, 1927, he accepted a call to the Gospel Tabernacle of Los Angeles, California. But Toronto continued to be in his heart. Even though he was drawing crowds of up to 2,200 and his church offered to build a 3,000-seat auditorium if he remained, he left in April, 1928, to go "back home."

Most people start at the bottom and work up, but not Smith. He rented Massey Hall and, on September 9, 1928, at this first service, he faced an audience of nearly 2,000 people. The Cosmopolitan Tabernacle was born, the crowds grew and so did the number of converts. On January 13, 1929, he was off to the Baltic countries for his second trip, now at the invitation of Paul Rader. He visited many countries this time. In Latvia over 2,000 were saved and one night a crowd of 1,300 sang his song Saved, which was the first time he had heard one of his songs in a foreign tongue.

He returned to Massey Hall, then on March 30, 1930, they moved to a permanent address - the empty 1,500-seat St. James Square Presbyterian Church on Gerrard Street East. It was now called the Toronto Gospel Tabernacle. He put the church on radio and kicked off the new work with a missionary convention. Soon it grew and he decided to move once again to the empty Central Methodist Church on July 1, 1934, and once again took on a new name - The Peoples Church, 100 Bloor Street East, a name that became famous from that time on.

Smith was now pastoring the largest church in Canada, and was often quoted in the media. Music was at its best, the Back Home Hour broadcast followed the evening service, the missionary conventions, the evangelistic crusades all helped bring in the crowds. The annual missionary conference going often for a full month was to eventually get $300,000 annually in faith promise offerings - a technique Smith widely and successfully utilized. The convention was loaded with mottos and displays from various missionaries. A large thermometer told the congregation how they were doing toward their goal.

Evangelism was emphasized. Soon, nearly 500 were saved each year, besides those from the radio broadcast. Eldon B. Lehman was an early musical director and had a choir of 135 voices and an orchestra of 40 pieces. Sometimes the evening crowds would be higher than the morning. Curtailing newspaper advertising for several years did not hold the crowds back. They had a $40,000 pipe organ that took too much space, so they sold it and built a second gallery. A 1944 evangelism crusade was moved to Massey Hall, and eventually to Maple Leaf Gardens. Over 11,000 people attended two Sunday nights.

On January 1, 1959, Smith turned over the reins of pastoring to his son Paul, while still enjoying such titles as founder, missionary pastor, pastor emeritus. It was in 1963 that the church was sold for $650,000 and a new church was built in the suburbs of Willowdale, where he resided. The original investment in the former church was only $75,000, so that in essence Smith and his associates were given a brand new church worth $575,000 absolutely free. How can anyone else get something like this? Smith replied, "All you have to do is give $5,000,000.00 to foreign missions over a 25-year period and God will give you a $500,000.00 church."

Smith's hymn writing had been an outlet for his feelings and emotions in hours of deepest depression and heartache. "Jesus Only" and "Christ Is Coming Back Again" were some of the early songs. One of his songs, "Saved", written in 1917, was the first of his hymns to gain universal attention. More than 1,200 hymn-poems followed, with musical settings by Ackley, Stebbins, Harkness, Towner, and other famed composers, with C.M. Alexander as publisher.

After Towner and Alexander died there was a lull un til he met B.D. Ackley in 1930. Hymn after hymn, Smith wrote and sent to him. Ackley provided music that fit the words and they began to be published by the Rodeheaver-Hall-Mack Company. From 1931 to 1946, there were 73 hymns that the two worked on together and that were successfully published. They became favorites overnight, and people everywhere were singing them.

Smith brought well-known Christian songs to the public year after year: In 1931, "Joy in Serving Jesus"; 1932, "The Saviour Can Solve Every Problem"; 1933, "A Revival Hymn"; 1934, "The Glory of His Presence"; 1935, "Take Thou O Lord"; 1936, "His Love Is All My Plea"; 1937; "God Understands"; 1938, "The Song of the Soul Set Free"; 1939, "The Need of the World Is Jesus"; 1940, "Then Jesus Came"; 1941, "A Wedding Prayer"; 1942, "Surrender".

His 1,200 hymns and poems made him one of the most widely used song writers. A few of the stories behind the hymns: "The Glory of His Presence", written in 1934 in the middle of the night; "God Understands" came as a result of Smith's youngest sister, Ruth, and her husband, Cliff Bicker's, plans to come home from Peru on their first furlough from missionary work. Just before leaving, Bicker was killed in an automobile accident. Then "Jesus Came" was written in 1939 in Philadelphia. Homer Rodeheaver had asked for a song depicting the change in men when Jesus came. He soon had a new solo to sing. A.H. Ackley gave Smith the music for "The Song of the Soul Set Free" and soon had the words for this widely used choir number.

To sum it up, seems as though you are describing the work of several men: As a pastor, Smith had ministered in Toronto since 1915. His congregation numbered about 3,500. About 2,000 attended the services, often three times each Sunday.

As an evangelist, he preached in the greatest churches in the world, and held some of the largest campaigns ever held in many places of the world.

As a missionary statesman, he led his church in a program that by the mid 1970s netted over $700,000.00 annually - the figure grew every year for foreign missions, more than any church on the face of the earth. This helped to support 350 missionaries from 35 faith missionary societies in 40 countries of the world. He stimulated this kind of program via the missionary convention route in scores of churches.

As an author, he published some 35 books which have sold over a million copies. The only other author to surpass this volume in the history of his publishing company - Marshall, Morgan and Scott of England is G. Campbell Morgan. His books, "The Passion for Souls" and "The Cry of the World", are the most challenging and practical books on missions ever written. Other titles are: "The Man God Blesses", "The Work God Blesses", "The Revival We Need", and scores more, published in 128 languages.

As an editor, he published a magazine, The People's Magazine, for 36 years, which enjoyed a worldwide circulation.

As a radio preacher, his church services were carried by as many as 42 stations at a time. In later years, he conducted "Radio Missionary Conventions" in major cities across the United States and Canada, challenging Christians and raising funds for the World Literature Crusade movement, of which he was honorary president.

As a world traveler, he toured 72 countries. His first major overseas tour was in 1924 when he visited nine countries in Europe. Tours after that included: 1929, England, France, Belgium, Monaco, Italy, Austria, Germany, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Spain, Poland, Switzerland; 1932, England, France, Spain, Egypt, Palestine, India, Ceylon, the Malay Peninsula, the Dutch East Indies, French Somaliland, and Ethiopia; 1936, England, France, Spain, Germany, Poland, Latvia, Sweden, Den- mark, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Greece, Yu- goslavia, Hungary, Austria, Belgium, and Scotland; 1938, Ha- waii, Samoa, Fiji, Australia, the Solomon Islands, and New Zealand; 1941, Jamaica; 1946, England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales; 1948, Ireland, England, Switzerland, Holland, Belgium, France, Italy, Germany, Iceland, and back to Jamaica; 1949, Scotland, Ireland, England, and Iceland; 1950, England, Bel- gium, Norway, Scotland, Germany, and Denmark; 1955, Azores, Portugal, Senega, Liberia, the Gold Coast, Congo, Rhodesia, South Africa, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, Egypt, Italy, France, England, Scotland, and Newfoundland. Over 7,000 were converted in South Africa. Another tour in 1957 to Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Peru, Equador, Colombia, and Panama, consisted of the largest united evangelistic campaigns in the history of South America, and saw some 4,500 conversions. Here the 67-year-old Oswald J. Smith preached to crowds averaging 15,000 nightly at the Luna Park indoor fight arena in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Three times over 20,000 attended. Three hundred churches participated and over 1,500 decisions were registered here.

Another tour took place in 1959, covering Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, England, Ireland, and Scotland. During this trip, he was received in Buckingham Palace. Then, later in the year, Smith went to Japan; to Hong Kong, preaching to 3,000 nightly; and to Hawaii.

In 1960, it was on to Alaska and then to Japan, where 1,000 decisions for Christ were made in the 2,200-seat Kyoritz Hall auditorium campaign in Tokyo. In 1961, Smith visited Hawaii, Fiji, and Australia, where over 1,000 young people volunteered for foreign service. Later in the year it was England, Germany, Italy, Kenya, Rhodesia, South Africa, and Sudan. In 1962, he visited Iceland, and in 1963, Ireland, England, and Wales.

Smith nearly died on three of his trips because of poor health, which as stated earlier plagued him all his life. Why such energy and talent given so unreservedly to Christ? Smith replied with a motto he originated that has become world-famous: "Why should anyone hear the Gospel twice before everyone has heard it once?"

On November 1, 1972, his beloved Daisy went to heaven after 56 years of marriage. Smith had preached his first sermon in a small Methodist church in the village of Muskoka in 1908. Nearly three quarters of a century and some 12,000 sermons later, he preached his last sermon at the Peoples Church in December, 1981 - at the age of 92. Bedridden for the last months of his life, he died at the age of 96. His funeral was Thursday, January 30, 1986, at the Peoples Church in Toronto. It featured the singing of George Beverly Shea and the preaching of Billy Graham.

He slipped away to be with the Lord, and Oswald J. Smith experienced what he wrote:

I have seen Him, I have known Him,  
  
For He deigns to walk with me;  
  
And the glory of His presence  
  
Will be mine eternally.  
  
O the glory of His presence,  
  
O the beauty of His face,  
  
I am His and His forever,  
  
He has won me by His grace.

Some of Dr. Oswald J. Smith's favorite missionary mottoes allegedly originated by him were the following: *"You must go or send a substitute."* *"If God wills the evangelization of the world, and you refuse to support missions, then you are opposed to the will of God."* *"Attempt great things for God, expect great things from God."* *"Why should anyone hear the Gospel twice before everyone has heard it once?"* *"Give according to your income lest God make your income according to your giving."* *"Now let me burn out for Christ."* *"The church which ceases to be evangelistic will soon cease to be evangelical."* *"This generation can only reach this generation."* *"The light that shines farthest shines brightest nearest home."* *"Not how much of my money will I give to God, but, how much of God's money will I keep for myself."* *"The supreme task of the Church is the evangelization of the world."*

[](http://www.christians.com/node/177)

Oswald Smith

November 8, 1889 to January 25, 1986 (97), Evangelist

Oswald Jeffrey Smith is the founder of The People's Church in Toronto, Canada.

## Relationships

* http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/reubentorrey_main.mini.jpgIt was through one of [Reuben Torrey's](http://www.christians.com/reubentorrey/main) evangelistic meetings where Oswald Smith was converted.

# Oswald Smith

* [At A Glance](http://www.christians.com/oswaldsmith/main)
* [**Testimony**](http://www.christians.com/oswaldsmith/main)
* [Biography](http://www.christians.com/oswaldsmith/main)
* [Works](http://www.christians.com/oswaldsmith/main)

Historical Timeline

http://simile.mit.edu/timeline/api/images/copyright-vertical.png



1850

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Oswald J. Smith is one of the most versatile Christian leaders in the history of the Christian church. Perhaps never has one man done so many different things well. At age 13, his Sunday school teacher said, "Any of you boys might be a minister." He thought in that direction from that time on.



On December 8, 1910, he surrendered completely to God. His diary states - "The great struggle is over, I surrendered completely to God. I now trust that He will send me out to the foreign field. I do not care if my life is hidden away, unknown by the civilized world, as long as it is known to Him."



The People's Church was founded in1928 by Oswald J. Smith. In their website, they mention the church's vision of “Taking Christ to the Nations” -- a vision that undoubtedly originated from their founder.

[«](http://www.christians.com/oswaldsmith/main#prev) [1](http://www.christians.com/oswaldsmith/main#1) [2](http://www.christians.com/oswaldsmith/main#2) [3](http://www.christians.com/oswaldsmith/main#3) [»](http://www.christians.com/oswaldsmith/main#next)

The Life of Dr. Oswald Smith

Dr. Oswald Smith was born in a farmhouse on the outskirts of Odessa, Ont., Nov. 8th, 1889. His father was a telegraph operator; thus his childhood days were spent in railway stations. The time spent in Mount Albert, Ont., a small, quiet country town, where he used to live for a while, has never been forgotten by him. After he had risen to fame, he returned there to meditate and to enjoy its pastoral scenery.

In 1906, a great evangelistic campaign was being conducted by the then famed Dr. R. A. Torrey in Massey Hall, Toronto. Though Oswald had never been at an evangelistic campaign before in his life drawn he was to it. During that campaign he was converted.

Soon after, he felt drawn to the preaching of the gospel. Yet, he had no idea how to go about entering into the ministry. "At both Embro and Mt. Albert my desire to preach had grown stronger day by day. I felt as though I could not wait for the time to come. So desperate was I that I made a very special plan. I said to myself, `I will go far from home. I will go so far away that no one will know me. I will go ten miles away, at least. And I will. find a little country church and ask the minister to let me preach, and if I fail I will then know that I am not called, and will return home a wiser boy.' You see, I had no one to advise me, no one to tell me what to do." Shortly after, Oswald Smith read a brief announcement about Toronto Bible College, which resulted in his attending the evening classes for one term. It was not until 1912 that he graduated from that institution. Last year (1968), he was chosen as the Toronto Bible College "Alumnus of the Year." Dr. Billy Graham, and the well-known evangelical journalist Miss Jane Scott, who graduated from Toronto Bible College in 1915, were present for that great occasion.

Dr. Smith's spiritual pilgrimage started in the Presbyterian church where he applied for a mission field under this denomination. However, he was considered too young for this difficult work. He applied to the Upper Canada Society and went as colporteur to Muskoka. In 1908, Oswald Smith , was given the opportunity to preach, despite his lack of theological and Biblical training. How his thrilled he was! Finally his hour had come! He relates, "In a corner of my room that night I knelt in prayer with my forehead touching the floor, and pled for guidance. I did not have a sermon for I had forgotten every one I had made up in bed. What was I to say? I remembered listening to a sermon in Toronto in Beverley Street Baptist Church by the Rev. Elmore Harris, D.D., one of the editors of the Scofield reference Bible, on Ephesians 1:3, a text that no one should take until he has been in the ministry 25 years at least, and since I had a good memory I was able to recall much of which I had heard. So I decided to use it." Though Dr. Smith started his ministry soon alter his conversion, he did not commence, strictly speaking, his theological studies until 1910. All in all, his academic training consists, of two years in Toronto Bible College, three years in McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, and special studies in Knox College, Toronto. He also had evening classes in Toronto Bible College, and one year in Manitoba College, As student, he also gained a great variety of practical experience in mission work which influenced his later ministry. His academic degrees are as follows: In 1936, Oswald Smith was given the degree of Doctor of Divinity (honorary) by Ashbury College. In 1940, he received the Doctor of Literature degree (honorary) from Bob Jones University. In 1946, he received the degree of Doctor of Laws (honorary) from Houghton College. He is a Life Member of the Royal Geographical Society of London, a member of The Eugene Field Society, the Royal Society of Literature of the United Kingdom, and the American Society of Composers and Authors.

On April 30th, 1915, Dr. Smith was ordained into the ministry of the Gospel in the South Chicago Presbyterian Church, which he served as "Acting Pastor" while he was a student at McCormick Theological Seminary. In May, he left for Toronto, where he became Associate Pastor of Dale Presbyterian Church, a large church, seating capacity of 1,800, located at the corner of Queen Street and Bellwoods Avenue. The edifice was built by Rev. J. D. Morrow, one of the most remarkable ministers in Toronto at that time. Dr. Smith writes about him:

"Mr. Morrow was the first man in Toronto, if not in Canada, to go without a hat, He had vowed that he would not wear a hat until he got enough money to put a roof on his church. And he kept his vow. He wore his hair long and bushy at the back and was a familiar figure on the streets of Toronto. Everybody knew him. The policemen were his friends. Each Monday evening he sat in court, watching for an opportunity to take charge ,of someone who had erred, whom he might  
  
bring home and help. All the street car conductors were acquainted with him. One time he borrowed a "Pay as you enter" box from the Street Car company, and for months he and I took turns standing by it at Yonge and Shuter streets, collecting funds for his church. Sometimes he got animals from the zoo, including bears, and took them into his pulpit to attract children. And they came in multitudes. Moreover, he was a gifted evangelist and a most effective gospel preacher. He knew how to put on a bright, evangelistic service, and thus attract crowds. The way he told stories, actually acting them out on the platform, sang his own mother songs, and pled for decisions, always brought tears to the eyes. Many decided for Christ under his ministry. He was very active and energetic. And he was most generous. He loved the common people and never felt more at home than when among the poor. To provide for the destitute was his greatest delight. His critics were many, especially in ecclesiastical circles. He died young. Had he lived he might have become one of the world's greatest evangelists. Never will I forget the night he first appeared with his hair cut. 'He had been made Chaplain of the Sportsman's Battalion, the 180th, and was dressed in the uniform of a Captain. For a long time he hesitated behind the curtain. Finally he told me to go first. I stepped out and he followed. In a moment the great congregation burst into applause. When the time came for him to speak he took as his text, `So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God,' and preached with all his old-time fire, pausing in the midst of his sermon to sing a verse of his favourite song, `Where is my Wandering Boy Tonight?' Pleading again, and then singing the second verse, as the choir, led by `Sandy' Grant, came in softly on the chorus, he made his appeal. Handkerchiefs were used freely throughout the congregation. A woman wept aloud. In the gallery a man bowed his head and sobbed as though his heart would break. Oh, what power!"

In 1916, Dr. Smith was placed in full charge of Dale, as Rev. Morrow had to leave for the Front. However, all was not well in the church. There was much strife in the choir, and a great deal of trouble was caused by church officials who were lodge members. The situation became so bad that it became impossible for him to stay and to effectively carry out his ministry. He was judged by the congregation as being too fundamentalistic. The revival meetings he conducted had become a source of offence. Many also objected to the gospel hymns which he had the people sing and the many prayer meetings being conducted. Though Dr. Smith left the Presbyterian church, he never left officially the Presbyterian ministry. He says "On November 5th, 1918, my diary records the fact that I was officially received into the Presbytery of Toronto, and given my full standing as a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Canada, from which I have never resigned, although my work ever since leaving Dale has been, for the most part, outside the denomination."

Dr. Smith for some months supplied the pulpit of Beulah Tabernacle, Charles Street, Toronto. His actions betray that the charge made in Dale of being "too fundamentalist" was not unfounded. His actions, after he left Dale, prove that he had no concept of the covenant, no Reformed understanding of the doctrine of the church. His Christian faith was then and still is the strong individualistic type.

After Dr. Smith left Beulah, he traveled considerably and did independent evangelistic work. On the first Sunday of January, 1921, he was installed as Pastor of the Alliance Tabernacle. This gospel church greatly increased under his ministry. The methods rejected by Dale Presbyterian were now effectively used to increase the membership of the Tabernacle. It was 1921 which also marked the beginning of world-wide ministry. Dr. Smith has extensively traveled in every continent for the Gospel's sake. In 1926, he resigned to become the Superintendent of the Christian and Missionary Alliance for Eastern Canada. His manner of departure from the Alliance Tabernacle was rather sad. The reason for his resignation is difficult to understand for a Reformed Christian, but it can indeed happen, and it still does happen, in congregational governed churches. Dr. Smith writes,

"…on June 20th, 1926, I preached my farewell sermon, with a heart rent and torn, turned away from my God-given task. The work that had become dearer than life itself, the child of my prayers and tears, born in the travail of my soul, was taken over by others. For a time the great crowds continued to attend, so solid had been the foundation upon which the work has been built. Never had there been the least sign of a split of any kind, for there were no difficulties. I had been maneuvered out when the work was at its very peak and all was well. The last missionary offering was $34,000.00, an amount never equaled since. Finally, people began to leave, the crowds disappeared and the enthusiasm waned, never to be revived. But perhaps it would be better for the present, at least, if I were to draw a veil over the Gethsemane of those months of torture and despair. I had lost all, or so it seemed, yet God had not forgotten me.'."

Dr. Smith went for a year's ministry to Los Angeles and after that left again for Toronto. In August, 1928, he resigned as a member of the New York Board of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, and joined the World-Wide Christian Couriers, and under its auspices was launched what is now "The Peoples Church." The place for the first meeting was Massey Hall, and the date, September 9th, 1928. The work was first called The Cosmopolitan Tabernacle." March 30th, 1930, the congregation was moved to the old St. James Square Presbyterian Church, 42 Gerrard Street East, where it was known as the Toronto Gospel Tabernacle. On October 1st, 1933, the name was changed to Peoples Church. On July 1st, 1934, The Peoples Church moved to what used to be then Central Methodist Church. In 1936, this building was bought for $75.000; $20.000 of which was donated by Mr. William G, Jaffray, owner and publisher of The Globe, Canada's national newspaper. In 1961, the Peoples Church moved to Sheppard Avenue East. The old church, now a parking - lot, was sold, for $650.000, a handsome profit, considering the original sum paid. The new church is a very modern and splendid structure, costing $1,000,000. The auditorium seats 2.000, at least; it features a grandpiano, an electric organ and a large platform for the choir, soloists and minister. There are many class rooms for Sunday School, meeting halls, offices, and a shipping and receiving room.

One of the unique features in Peoples Church is its missionary outreach. In 1929, Peoples Church Missionary Society was founded. Until 1935, it operated as an independent society which sent out and support missionaries outreach in the world. Faith missionary societies recruit their workers from many evangelical denominations. They are an important missionary arm of evangelical and fundamentalistic movements in the U.S.A. and Canada. In Canada alone, there are more than 80 missionary societies. Dr. Smith's reason for working with Faith missions was and is: "We have worked with Faith Missions because they are absolutely free of modernism and higher criticism. They are true to the Word of God. Their vision is to evangelize the unreached millions of earth and bring back the King. They do not major on institutional, educational and medical work. Their reliance is on God rather than on the church, and they practice self denial and sacrifice."

In 1930, $42,891 was contributed to Foreign Missions, and in 1968, $341,504.84. These monies are being used for the partial support of approximately 350 missionaries around the world. Dr. Oswald Smith's remarkable career includes also the writing of hymns. One of the better known of his products is "Then Jesus Came." This hymn was written in "The 1939 and put to the music by Dr. On H. Rodeheaver. This song has become a great favourite and has been sung by Bev. Shea in Billy Graham's Hour of Decision programme.

"When Jesus comes the tempter's power is broken,  
  
When Jesus comes, the tears are wiped away;  
  
He takes the gloom and fills the life with Glory,  
  
For all is changed when Jesus comes to stay."

The Peoples Church is an out "standing fundamentalist" church. In a way she is an example of what old-fashioned fundamentalism used to be, yet she goes beyond that. She combines the weaknesses and strength of fundamentalism of the past, yet she has gone beyond the original intentions of fundamentalism. Original fundamentalism was neither extreme individualistic nor did it major on the pre-millennial, imminent return of Jesus Christ (Christ's return and then the 1,000 year reign of Christ on earth.) Peoples Church is individualistic to the extreme and the doctrine of the second coming of Christ is stressed beyond all proportion. "The Peoples Church is an independent work, standing pre-eminently for the conversion of souls, the edification of believers, and world-wide evangelism; emphasizing especially the four great essentials: Salvation, the Deeper Life, Foreign Missions, and our Lord's Return; endeavouring by every means to get the message to the Christless masses, at home and abroad in the shortest time possible. We believe in an unmutilated Bible; salvation through the blood of Christ; entire separation from the world; victory over all known sin through the indwelling Spirit; rugged consecration to sacrificial service; practical faith in the sufficiency of Christ for spiritual, temporal and physical needs, purifying hope of the Lord’s return; and a burning missionary zeal for the bringing the back of the King through world evangelism. What does Dr. smith mean with the church? He believes the church to be a group of born again believers. “By the word ‘Church’ we do not refer to the institution known as “Roman Catholicism,” nor do we mean “the building in which we worship. ‘Church’, in the Bible is never used in reference to anything save ‘believers in Christ’. Sometimes the word ‘bride’ or ‘body’ is used. It never includes merely professing Christians; it is rather the men and women who have been purchased by the blood of Christ and brought into living union with Him, its Head, by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit."

God deals only with "individuals" . . . . He is choosing individual members who are to make up His church." The church did not exist in the Old Testament. The church, according to Dr. Smith, did not exist until the first coming of Jesus Christ. We live now in the period called the "Church-age." A sharp distinction is made between the church and the kingdom. Christ is not yet King.

He will become King when the millennium is ushered in. "Thus the Kingdom is yet to be established." At the missionary conference last year, there hung on the right hand side of the church auditorium a huge banner, which read, "First World Evangelization: Then The Reign of Christ." "God's ideal has always been an absolute monarchy, but an absolute monarchy with Christ on the throne. When that time comes the world will be governed in justice and as never before in all its history."

This theology denies consequently the Lordship of Jesus Christ in this present age. It has also little patience for social concern. There are no appeals made for "Benevolence or Home Missions." (21) Now I am the first one to say that Foreign Missions is of vital importance. A church must evangelize and send out missionaries, lest she disobeys her Lord. However, Foreign Missions should not crowd out the total program of the church and her concern for social needs. We cannot leave the ills of society untouched, believing that the second coming of Christ will solve every problem, every heartache. Of course, each Christian ought to long for Christ's second coming. A Christian knows that the second coming of Christ is the blessed hope. However, each Christian must also "occupy" until Christ comes again.

In 1926, Dr. Smith gave eight addresses in the Alliance Tabernacle under the heading "Is the Antichrist at hand?" For these addresses, which are not sermons, as they do not expound Scripture, Dr. Smith had gathered material from the fields of demonology, astrology, politics and religion. From these varied fields, and the Bible, Dr. Smith made some very remarkable predictions about the future. He was quite sure that the Great Tribulation, the revival of the Roman Empire, the reign of the Antichrist and the battle of Armageddon was to take place "before the year 1933." His book proves how careful one must be in expounding prophecy. Dr. Smith is still alive, but the man he believed would be the antichrist is dead. He was quite sure that Musasolini fitted in Revelation. "Thousands of eyes are turned just now toward Mussolini, the Prime Minister of Italy. Mussolini may not be the Emperor himself, but if not, he is certainly a remarkable fore-shadowing of the one whom the Bible predicts will reign. It is a well known fact that Mussolini's avowed intention is the revival of the Roman Empire."

In his third address, Dr. Smith refers to Mother Shipton's Prophecies to prove his sincere belief that 1926 was a crucial year in the light of prophecy. Mother Shipton's Prophecies were written nearly 500 years ago. She was born in Norfolk, England and she died at Clifton, Yorkshire, 1449 A.D. Dr. Smith did not believe that she prophecied, but rather interpreted prophecies of Scripture. The last two verses of her prophetic poem were considered of crucial importance by Dr. Smith.

"In nineteen hundred twenty-six,  
Build houses light of straw and sticks,  
For then shall mighty wars be planned,  
And fire and sword shall sweep the land,  
But those who live the century through,  
In fear and trembling this will do:  
Flee to the mountains and the dens,  
To bog and forest and wild fens-  
For storms will rage and oceans roar,  
When Gabriel stands on sea and shore;  
And, as he blows his wondrous horn,  
Old worlds shall die and new be born."

From the then current history, Dr. Smith tried to prove the validity of Mother Shipton's remarkable claim that 1926 would be crucial. (6) All in all, his ability to interpret prophecy does not match his organizational talents. The years 1926 and 1933 are now but dates in history books. How careful one must be in dealing with the prophetic passages of Scripture!

Dr. Oswald Smith made a lasting impact upon the history of the Canadian Protestant church. He and his church, where Dr. Paul Smith, his son, is now pastor also are the driving force behind the work of Faith Missions. Their sacrificial work has benefited independent workers and small missionary societies. Dr. Oswald Smith is indeed a remarkable man who founded a unique church.

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John Knox

January 1, 1510 to November 24, 1572 (62), Church Father

John Knox is considered to be the greatest Reformer in the history of Scotland.

## Relationships

* John Knox met [John Calvin](http://www.christians.com/johncalvin/main) in Geneva, from whom he gained experience and knowledge of Reformed theology.

# John Knox

* [At A Glance](http://www.christians.com/johnknox/main)
* [Testimony](http://www.christians.com/johnknox/main)
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Historical Timeline

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1470

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John Knox was a Scottish clergyman and leader of the Protestant Reformation who is considered the founder of the Presbyterian denomination. He was educated at the University of St Andrews and worked as a notary-priest. Influenced by early church reformers such as George Wishart, he joined the movement to reform the Scottish church.



Knox did not record when or how he was converted to the Protestant faith, but perhaps the key formative influence on Knox was George Wishart. After Wishart was executed, Cardinal Beaton was murdered on 29 May 1546, within his residence, the Castle of St Andrews, by a gang of five persons in revenge for Wishart's execution. The assassins seized the castle and eventually their families and friends took refuge with them, about a hundred and fifty men in all. John Knox, a fugitive himself, sought refuge in the castle as well.



John Knox was appointed the chaplain in the castle of St. Andrews but it did not last long as on 29 June 1547, 21 French galleys approached St Andrews under the command of Leone Strozzi, prior of Capua. The French besieged the castle and forced the surrender of the garrison on 31 July. The Protestant nobles and others, including Knox, were taken prisoner and forced to row in the French galleys.



On 1 August, the Scottish Parliament met to settle religious issues. Knox and five other ministers were called upon to draw up a new confession of faith. Within four days, the Scots Confession was presented to Parliament, voted upon, and approved. A week later, the Parliament passed three acts in one day: the first abolished the jurisdiction of the pope in Scotland, the second condemned all doctrine and practice contrary to the reformed faith, and the third forbade the celebration of Mass in Scotland.

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The Life of John Knox

John Knox was born in a street named "Giffordgate" in the Scottish town of Haddington in East Lothian, some time in 1514. His father, William Knox, was a merchant or craftsman, but little is known about his mother, who was probably one of the Sinclairs of Northrig. He had a brother, William, who later became a successful merchant too. Knox's parents died in unknown circumstances when the boys were still young, and they were taken in by a wealthy family who enabled Knox to leave home at the age of 15 and go and study in St Andrews in Fife. Although Knox had already been exposed to the growing wave of Protestantism, he became a priest when he left university, as had been decided for him. However, the seed of Knox's conversion had already been sown, and he was further impressed by the travelling preacher, George Wishart whom he befriended. In 1546, when Wishart was tried for heresy and burnt at the stake by Cardinal David Beaton, Knox went into hiding. Cardinal Beaton was murdered and the Castle of St Andrews besieged by the murderers, and Knox was encouraged to take on the role of preacher too. His fluency, sarcasm and directness earned him popularity, and he set about denouncing the corruption of the Roman Catholic Church, using the Scriptures as his source. By July 1547, the French fleet summoned by the Scottish Queen Regent, Mary of Guise (Mary, Queen of Scots' mother) came to the rescue and retook possession of St Andrews Castle. Beaton's murderers were captured and sent away as galley slaves, including John Knox. Knox used his time in the French galleys to strengthen his new faith until his eventual release. Back in London, the Privy Council saw in him an opportunity to spread Protestantism and sent him to preach in Berwick-upon-Tweed. There, in the parish church of St Mary, he attracted crowds of recent converts, curious Catholics and Scots, who crossed the border illegally to listen to him.

One of the issues dear to Knox concerned the doctrine of transubstantiation. According to Catholics, the bread and wine consecrated during the Mass physically changed into the body and blood of Christ. The reformers did not agree with that, nor with the use of incense, bells, solemn music and colourful vestments during Mass. Latin should be done away with and the word Mass itself should be replaced by Communion or Lord's Supper. Whether people should kneel or sit while receiving the bread and wine later proved to be an irreconcilable bone of contention between Knox and other fellow Protestants. Knox's popularity took him to Newcastle in 1551 and to the court of Edward VI after the death of the Duke of Somerset. Refusing the bishopric of Rochester, Knox returned to Newcastle where his sermons became increasingly politicised. He made himself a few powerful enemies by accusing statesmen of undermining the Protestant Church.

The title page of The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women from an eighteenth century editionKnox's misogyny is legendary. Behind this blatant hatred however, lay a more complex persona. His relationship with Elizabeth Bowes has long raised some eyebrows. About ten years older than Knox, Elizabeth was married to Richard Bowes, Captain of Norham Castle, when she was only 16 and bore him numerous children. Although a devout Catholic, she became increasingly troubled and converted to the new faith. She was first introduced to Knox when she went to listen to him in Berwick in 1549. Elizabeth had particular difficulty with the Protestant doctrine of predestination, and sent Knox long and mournful letters requesting his advice. The relationship probably remained that of preacher and parishioner, although the tone of Knox's letters throws a definite doubt on that. Whatever the case, it seems that Richard Bowes was not overly perturbed by his wife's friendship with Knox. Elizabeth may have played more the role of mother than mistress to Knox, and she decided that he should find himself a wife. Her choice was her own fifth daughter, Marjorie, an educated girl of 16 or 17. There is no doubt that Knox, an impoverished man of 35, saw this as a golden opportunity, which is probably why her father was reluctant to give his consent. Knox and Marjorie were betrothed but Richard Bowes refused to complete the marriage contract and hand over the dowry. By that time, King Edward was seriously ill and the prospect of his half-sister, the Catholic Mary Tudor, succeeding him must have made Richard Bowes even more unwilling to have a renegade priest for son-in-law. Knox commuted between the southern counties and Berwick, keeping an active correspondence with Elizabeth. On the accession of Mary Tudor, Knox thought it prudent to flee to the safety of France, not without guilt for having forsaken his congregation. The politically tainted sermons now began to take the shape of open incitation to rebellion in Knox's mind. Still unsure of himself, he travelled to Geneva to consult the leading Protestant authority, John Calvin.

The Auditoire de Calvin where Knox preached while in Geneva.Although Calvin echoed Knox's opinion of women, believing that a female monarch was a punishment from God for the sins of mankind, he fell short of recommending disobedience. Disappointed, Knox continued his tour of the Swiss theologians until he had gathered enough justification for his new line of attack. Back in the French town of Dieppe, he started publishing various anonymous tracts advocating resistance to Mary I, which were smuggled across into England. In late July 1554, Knox returned to Geneva with the intention of studying, but was quickly prompted by Calvin to go to Frankfurt in Germany, where a group of English Protestant exiles had chosen him to be their pastor. He took his duties in the autumn of 1554 at the Church of the White Ladies but only to find himself embroiled in academic disputes over which form the service should take. A huge rift developed between the Protestants who supported the Common Book of Prayer and those who did not. Eventually, Knox gave up and returned to the peace of Geneva, but only a few months later he was called back to Scotland by the Scottish Protestants who needed a leader to secure the Reformation. Knox was not keen to go but Elizabeth Bowes managed to change his mind and he arrived in Edinburgh in September 1555. His arrival provoked a great deal of interest, and he divided his time between preaching and meeting up with influential public figures throughout Scotland. Besides attacking the Catholic practice of fasting during Lent, he also proclaimed that tithes should no longer be paid to the Church, as the proceeds were not spent on the poor. Mary of Guise, fearing a riot, sheltered Knox from prosecution. Knox saw this as an opportunity to show the Queen Regent the error of her Catholic ways, and he sent her a letter to this effect. Mary of Guise was not impressed by this agitator who dared lecture her as well and said to James Beaton, Archbishop of Glasgow: "Please you, my Lord, to read a pasquil (satire)". Knox never forgave her for that remark.

Soon, Knox was once more called to Geneva to be the leader of the congregation of exiles there. He readily accepted, sending Elizabeth and Marjorie (whom he had recently married in Edinburgh) ahead. He joined them in Dieppe accompanied by a servant and a student, and reached Geneva in September 1556. He was reunited with some of his colleagues from Frankfurt and could once more resume his preaching at leisure. Elizabeth became his housekeeper and Marjorie his secretary. Their first son, Nathaniel, was born.

Another friend of Knox's then arrived from London, Anna Locke. Anna was some fifteen years younger than Knox, and like Elizabeth, thirsted for Knox's spiritual guidance in the form of long and frequent letters. Again, the language and tone of the letters raise suspicions, but Anna's husband was quite happy to let her travel to the safer Geneva. Knox continued to keep in contact with her from wherever he was throughout the years.

In May 1557, Knox was once more dragged away from his congregation by the Protestant nobility, but only to find that he had made a wasted journey to Dieppe. Furious, he stayed on for a while, expressing his concerns about the ambiguous attitude of the Lords who, motivated by self-interest, had accepted the marriage of the young Mary Stuart to the French Dauphin, François, and the influence of the Duke of Châtelherault. Back in Geneva three months later, he began writing his most popular works "History of the Scottish Reformation" and the infamous "First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women". In the latter, he attempts to demonstrate the inferiority of women and rambles on about his favourite subject of women and the state, openly attacking the rule of Mary I of England. Knox conveniently avoided mentioning this work to Calvin, in the knowledge that he would never approve such revolutionary ideas. Mary Tudor's response to the First Blast was to ban imports of seditious and heretical books into England, while Protestants at home and abroad were shocked at the tone Knox was taking. Calvin dissociated himself completely from it and banned its sale in Geneva. Knox also found it necessary to publish various other tracts against Mary of Guise, relishing the loss of her husband and two baby sons, which he proclaimed, was God's punishment for her sins. Knox had become an extremist, inciting people to violence against their ruler.

Knox preaching to the Scottish nobles. As depicted in a painting by David WilkieWhen Elizabeth I succeeded Mary in 1558, she was also infuriated by Knox's insubordination and views against female rulers as a whole. She refused to grant Knox a safe conduct through her realm when he was recalled to Scotland at the end of the year. Knox complained in vain and had to undertake the journey by sea instead, landing at Leith in May 1559. Marjorie, who had given birth to their second son Eleazer, stayed behind in Switzerland. Knox found Scotland in a state of turmoil. Mary of Guise no longer believed that the Protestants' demands were motivated by genuine religious reasons but rather by a political agenda. She intended to have the dissident preachers outlawed and banished at Stirling, but Knox and the Lords marched on Perth. There, on 11 May 1559 from the pulpit of St John's Kirk, Knox preached a violent sermon against idolatry, which later led to the widespread destruction of the contents of the same church and local friaries. Knox was jubilant but later dissociated himself from the damage caused by attributing it to the "rascal multitude". Mary of Guise was forced into peace negotiations with the Scottish nobility but Knox still continued to vociferate against her and incite the mob to violence. So much so that Mary of Guise was compelled to seek French help while the Lords opened up negotiations with England, replacing the tactless Knox with Maitland of Lethington as their emissary. Elizabeth remained wary and unwilling to be seen to be supporting rebels against their ruler but eventually, English forces arrived in Scotland and the siege of Leith followed. Reunited with Elizabeth Bowes and Marjorie, Knox continued to spit his venom from St Andrews. Mary of Guise had retired to the safety of Edinburgh Castle and was seriously ill with dropsy. This did not stop Knox who, alleging that she had gloated at the sight of English corpses hung on the walls of Leith from the windows of Edinburgh Castle (which anyone who has ever been to Edinburgh will know is impossible), said: "within a few days thereafter, began her belly and loathsome legs to swell, and so continued till God did execute his judgment upon her." On 7 June 1560 Mary of Guise succumbed to her illness and the Treaty of Edinburgh was signed.

By 10 July 1560, Parliament passed a series of Acts which would make Scotland an officially Protestant country. The First Book of Discipline, on which Knox and other ministers had been working since the previous spring, contained detailed proposals concerning the policy and discipline of the Church of Scotland. These wide-ranging proposals were passed on 27 January 1561, but it would be a long time before these were fully implemented. Knox turned down the post of superintendent and was given comfortable lodgings in Trunk Close off the High Street, together with the highest salary payable to a minister. In November 1560 Marjorie died, leaving Knox depressed and struggling to cope with his two sons. Mary of Guise might be dead and Scotland a reformed country but the French danger was still present in his mind. The French Dauphin had refused to ratify the Treaty of Edinburgh and there were rumours that the French were planning to send more forces to Scotland. Knox was relieved when he heard of the Dauphin's death in December 1560, but saw the return of the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots with great foreboding. He was deeply suspicious of her from the very beginning and always refused to treat her as a fellow human being. His negative attitude towards her would grow into a most obsessive and unchristian hatred. Mary, who had just lost both her mother and husband at short interval, had no sympathy for this evil man who had made her mother's life hell, and put his despicable views to paper in the First Blast. She wanted him banished from Scotland, and her half-brother Lord James, knew that there was no way she would set foot in Scotland unless he obtained some sort of written apology from Knox. Knox, who did not know the meaning of humility and forgiveness, refused to apologise but pretended that the First Blast had been written with Mary I in mind and no one else. This of course did not prevent him from saying about Mary when she first returned: "The very face of heaven the time of her arrival did manifestly speak what comfort was brought unto this country with her, to wit, sorrow, dolour, darkness and all impiety." Although Mary always showed great tolerance towards the new religion and went out of her way to compromise with the Protestants, Knox was incapable of showing this level of understanding and conciliation.

Within days of her return, he was denouncing the Mass which she was attending in private in the Chapel of Holyroodhouse, and spewed his hatred from the pulpit of St Giles at every opportunity. Nothing which Mary said or did obtained his approval, but few of the Lords agreed with his outright condemnation. Mary subjected herself to five interviews with Knox, without positive outcome. For all his hatred of women, Knox found it impossible to cope on his own and, on 25 March 1564, he caused scandal by marrying Margaret Stewart, the 16-year old daughter of his friend Lord Ochiltree, and niece of the Duke of Châtelherault. Again, Knox had shown where his preferences lay: youth and social standing. As for his two sons, they were sent to be educated in England with their Bowes relatives. During the seven years of Mary's rule, Knox managed to fall out with just about everybody, including Lord James Stuart, Earl of Moray and half-brother of the Queen.

St Giles' Cathedral in Edinburgh, where Knox served as minister from 1560 to 1572.The General Assembly even convened a special meeting in an attempt to tone down Knox's attacks against Mary, but it broke down in disarray with nothing achieved. He disliked Darnley and hated Riccio, and openly approved of the murder of the latter, cautiously leaving for Ayrshire to avoid prosecution. After the birth of Mary's son in 1566, Knox went to England to visit his sons, and back in Scotland after Darnley's murder, lost no time in demanding that Mary be put to death for her sins. Even after Mary's forced abdication, Knox continued to preach against her five times a week, and his paranoia persisted even after her flight to England. "We look daily for the arrival of the Duke and his Frenchmen, sent to restore Satan to his kingdom in the person of his dearest lieutenant.", he wrote. Knox was disappointed by Elizabeth's lax handling of Mary and constantly feared a plot to assassinate the Regent Moray or Mary's son, the little King James VI. More than ever, he wanted Mary dead: "If ye strike not at the roots, the branches that appear to be broken will bud again (and that more quickly than any man can believe) with greater force than we would wish." When Moray was eventually murdered, Knox reduced the congregation to tears by praising his virtues at his funeral.

During all these events, Knox had been leading a content and comfortable life with his young bride, who had given him two daughters, Martha in 1565 and Margaret in 1567. Like Marjorie, she was an educated and devoted wife who helped him with his paperwork and entertained his many guests. She bore him a third daughter Elizabeth in 1570. In the autumn of 1570, Knox suffered a stroke but continued to demand Mary's death, rendering him unpopular with the more moderate Protestants. A former friend of his, Kirkcaldy of Grange, had switched over to the Queen's party, and on 30 April 1571, issued a proclamation ordering all supporters of the King's party to leave Edinburgh within six hours. Knox refused at first but was finally persuaded to go in May 1571, and left with his secretary Richard Bannatyne and his family. In St Andrews, he went on ranting and raving from the pulpit despite his old age and ill health, attracting both admiration and dislike from the academic community. On 31 July 1572, the King and the Queen's parties signed a truce and Knox returned to Edinburgh, where he resumed his preaching and lecturing from St Giles Cathedral. He finally died of pneumonia on 24 November 1572 at his home in Trunk Close. He was buried in the former cemetery behind St Giles.

Early Years

Both the birthplace and the birthdate of John Knox is unknown, but scholars have pointed to Giffordgate, a suburb of the town of Haddington as his place of birth and 1513 or 1514 as the year. His father was William Knox, who fought at Flodden, and had his home in the county of Haddington. His mother's name was Sinclair. He received the elements of a liberal education in Haddington, which early possessed an excellent grammar-school. From there he proceeded either to the University of Glasgow or to St. Andrews, where he is stated by Beza to have studied under the celebrated John Major, a native, like Knox, and one of the greatest scholars of his time. Major was at Glasgow in 1522 and at St. Andrews in 1531. How long Knox remained at college is uncertain. He was ordained to the priesthood at some date prior to 1540, when his status as a priest is first mentioned.

Rather than taking up parochial duties in a parish, he became tutor to two sons of Hugh Douglas of Longniddry. He also taught the son of John Cockburn of Ormiston. Both of them and Knox himself, had embraced the new religious ideas of the Reformation which were sweeping Europe.

Conversion to Protestantism

John Knox first publicly professed the Protestant faith about the end of 1545. His mind had in all probability been directed to that faith for some time before the change was avowed. The immediate instrument of his actual conversion was probably George Wishart, who, after a period of banishment, returned to his native country in 1544, to perish, within two years, at the stake, as the last and most illustrious of the victims of Cardinal Beaton. Among other places where he preached the Reformed doctrines Wishart had come to East Lothian in Dec., 1545, and there he made Knox's acquaintance.

John Knox was first called to the Protestant ministry at St. Andrews, which was throughout his life intimately associated with the Reformer's career. There appears to have been no regular ordination. Of course, he had been already ordained as a priest in the Church of Rome. A detailed account of the whole proceedings connected with his call to the ministry, together with a report of the first sermon he delivered in St. Andrews, will be found in Konx’s most famous book, “The History of the Reformation in Scotland”.

Confinement

While residing in the castle of St.Andrews, a stronghold and place of refuge for many Protestants, in July of 1547, the castle was seized by outside forces and John Knox became a French galley-slave for nineteen months. There he experienced hardships and miseries which are said to have permanently injured his health.

On his release, which took place early in 1549, through the intervention, apparently, of the English government, Knox found that in the existing state of the country, he could be of little use in his beloved Scotland. For nearly ten years, he submitted to voluntary exile, like many of the worthiest of his countrymen in those troublous times. All these years, however, he devoted himself to ministerial labors in connection with the Reformed Church. His duty was provided for him in England, for the space of about five years as a minister of the English Church.

Travels

From England, after the death of Edward, Knox proceeded to the continent, traveling for a time from place to place in some uncertainty. In Sept. 1554, while living at Geneva, he accepted in accordance with Calvin's counsel a call to the English Church at Frankfurt. Here controversies in connection with vestments, ceremonies, and the use of the English prayer-book met him He later returned to Geneva, where he was invited to become minister of the refugee English congregation. In August of 1555, Knox set out for Scotland, where he remained for nine months preaching Evangelical doctrine in various parts of the country, and persuading those who favored the Reformation to cease from attendance at mass, and to join with himself in the celebration of the Lord's Supper according to a Reformed ritual.

In May, 1556, he was cited to appear before the hierarchy in Edinburgh, and he boldly responded to the summons; but the bishops found it expedient not to proceed with the trial. In July an urgent call from his congregation at Geneva, along, probably, with the desire to prevent the renewal of persecution in Scotland, caused him to resume his Genevan ministry. His marriage to Marjorie Bowes, daughter of Richard Bowes, captain of Norham Castle, had meanwhile taken place, and his wife along with her mother accompanied him to Geneva, where they arrived in September.

The church in which he preached there (called the Eglise de Notre Dame la Neuve) had been granted, at Calvin's solicitation, for the use of the English and Italian congregations by the municipal authorities. Knox's life in Geneva was busy. In addition to preaching and clerical work he added a large correspondence; and he was constantly engaged in literary work. His publications at Geneva included his First Blast Against the Monstrous Rule of Women; and his long and elaborate treatise on predestination published 1560 was composed in Geneva.

Scottish Reformation

On 1 August, the Scottish Parliament met to settle religious issues. Knox and five other ministers were called upon to draw up a new confession of faith. Within four days, the Scots Confession was presented to Parliament, voted upon, and approved. A week later, the Parliament passed three acts in one day: the first abolished the jurisdiction of the pope in Scotland, the second condemned all doctrine and practice contrary to the reformed faith, and the third forbade the celebration of Mass in Scotland. Before the dissolution of Parliament, Knox and the other ministers were given the task of organizing the newly reformed church or the Kirk. They would work for several months on the Book of Discipline, the document describing the organization of the new church. During this period, Knox's wife, Marjorie, died in December 1560, leaving Knox to care for their two sons, aged three and a half and two years old. John Calvin, who had lost his own wife in 1549, wrote a letter of condolence.

Parliament reconvened on 15 January 1561 to consider the Book of Discipline. The Kirk was to be run on democratic lines. Each congregation was free to choose or reject their own pastor; but once he was chosen, they could not fire him. Each parish was to be self-supporting, as far as possible. The bishops were replaced by ten to twelve "superintendents". The plan included a system of national education based on universality as a fundamental principle. Certain areas of law were placed under ecclesiastical authority. The Parliament did not approve the plan, however, mainly for reasons of finance. The Kirk was to be financed out of the patrimony of the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland. Much of this was now in the hands of the nobles, who were reluctant to give up their possessions. A final decision on the plan was delayed because of the impending return of Mary Stuart, the queen of Scotland.

Knox's life from the time of his return to Scotland in 1559 is a part of the history of his country. When the Reformed Protestant religion was formally ratified by law in Scotland in 1560 he was appointed minister of the Church of St. Giles, then the main church of Edinburgh. He was at this time in the fullness of his powers, as is manifest abundantly in the style of his “History of the Reformation”, a work which appears to have been begun about 1559, and completed in the course of the next six or seven years. Knox’s “History”, if sometimes rough and even coarse in language, is written with a force and vigor not surpassed by any of his other writings, of all which it may be said that whatever their faults, they are works of true genius, and well worthy in their character of the great leader and statesman who wrote them.

Death

After inducting his successor, Lawson of Aberdeen, as minister of St Giles' on 9 November, Knox returned to his home for the last time. With his friends and some of the greatest Scottish nobles around him, he asked for the Bible to be read aloud. On his last day, 24 November 1572, his young wife read from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. A testimony to Knox was pronounced at his grave in the churchyard of St Giles' by James Douglas, 4th Earl of Morton and newly-elected regent of Scotland:

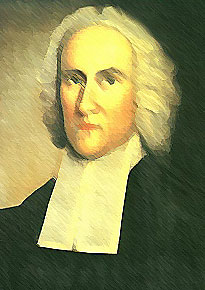
Here lies one who neither flattered nor feared any flesh.

He was buried in St Giles' graveyard. Due to modern constructions, there is no marked grave or tombstone for Knox other than a small golden plaque on the ground next to the church.

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"You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that and shudder." James 2:19

# How To Know If You Are A Real Christian

by Jonathan Edwards

* [**Knowledge...**](http://www.christians.com/jonathanedwards/sermons/how_to_know_if_you_are_a_real_christian)
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* [Knowledge of God alone is no proof of salvation](javascript:tabs.expandit(0))
* [Religious experiences are no proof of salvation](javascript:tabs.expandit(1))
* [People are different from demons](javascript:tabs.expandit(2))
* [People can have religious feelings that demons cannot](javascript:tabs.expandit(3))
* [True Spiritual experiences have a different source](javascript:tabs.expandit(4))
* [The sight of Christ's beauty- God's greatest gift!](javascript:tabs.expandit(5))

## Knowledge of God alone is no proof of salvation

"You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that-and shudder." James 2:19

How do you know if you belong to God? We see in these words what some people depend on as an evidence of their acceptance with God. Some people think that they are all right before God if they are not as bad as some evil person. Other people point to their family history or church membership to show that God approves of them. There is an evangelism programme in common use that asks people certain questions. One of the questions is, "Suppose you were to die today. Why should God let you into his heaven?" A very common response is, "I believe in God." Apparently the apostle James knew people who said the same thing: I know I am in God's favor, because I know these religious doctrines.

Of course James admits that this knowledge is good. Not only is it good, but it is also necessary. Nobody can be a Christian who doesn't believe in God; and more than that, the One True God. This is particularly true for those who had the great advantage of actually knowing the apostle, someone who could tell them of his first-hand experience with Jesus, the Son of God. Imagine the great sin of a person, who knew James, and then refused to believe in God! Certainly this would make their damnation greater. Of course, all Christians know that this belief in the One God is only the start of good things because

"anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." Heb. 11:6

However, James is clear that although this belief a good thing, it is definitely not proof that a person is saved. What he means is this: "You say you are a Christian and you are in God's favor. You think God will let you into heaven, and the proof of it is, you believe in God. But that is no evidence at all, because the demons also believe, and they are sure to be punished in hell." The demons believe in God, you can be sure of that! They not only believe that He exists, but they believe that God is a holy God, a sin-hating God, a God of truth, who has promised judgments, and who will carry out his vengeance upon them. This is the reason the demons "shudder" or tremble- they know God more clearly than most human beings do, and they are afraid. Nevertheless, nothing in the mind of man, that devils may experience as well, is any sure sign of God's grace in our hearts.

This reasoning may be easily turned around. Suppose demons could have, or find within themselves, something of God's saving grace-proof they would go to heaven. This would prove James wrong. But how absurd! The Bible makes it clear that demons have no hope of salvation, and their believing in God does not take away their future punishment. Therefore believing in God is not proof of salvation for demons, and it is safe to say, not for people, either.

This is seen even more clearly when we think about what demons are like. They are unholy: anything that they experience, cannot be a holy experience. The devil is perfectly wicked. "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies." (John 8:44) "He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning." (1 John 3:8 ) Therefore the demons are called evil spirits, unclean spirits, powers of darkness, and so on. "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." (Eph 6:12)

So it is plain that anything in the minds of demons cannot be holy, or lead to true holiness by itself. The demons clearly know many things about God and religion, but they do not have a holy knowledge. The things they know in their minds may make impressions in their hearts- indeed we do see that the demons have very strong feelings about God; so strong, in fact, that they "shudder." But they are not holy feelings because they have nothing to do with the work of the Holy Spirit. If this is true of the experience of demons, it is also true of the experience of men.

Notice this, that it does not matter how genuine, sincere, and powerful these thoughts and feelings are. Demons, being spiritual creatures, know God in a way that men on earth cannot. Their knowledge of God's existence is more concrete than any man's knowledge could be. Because they are locked in battle with the forces of good, they have a sincerity of knowledge as well. On one occasion Jesus cast out some demons. "What do you want with us, Son of God?" they shouted. "Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?" (Mat 8:29) What could possibly be a more clear-cut experience than this? However, while their thoughts and feelings are genuine and powerful, they are not holy.

Also we can see that the holy objects of their thoughts doesn't make their thoughts and feelings holy. The demons know God exists! Matthew 8:29 shows they know more about Jesus than many people do! They are thoroughly that Jesus will judge them some day, because He is holy. But it is clear that genuine, sincere, and powerful thoughts and feelings about holy, spiritual things, is no proof of God's grace in the heart. Demons have these things, and look forward to eternal punishment in hell. If men have no more than what the demons have, they will suffer in the same way.

We may make several conclusions based on these truths. First, that no matter how much people may know about God and the Bible, it is no sure sign of salvation. The devil before his fall, was one of the bright and morning stars, a flame of fire, one excelling in strength and wisdom. (Isa. 14:12, Ezek. 28:12-19) Apparently, as one of the chief angels, Satan knew much about God. Now that he is fallen, his sin has not destroyed his memories from before. Sin does destroy the spiritual nature, but not the natural abilities, such as memory. That the fallen angels do have many natural abilities may be seen from many Bible verses, for example Eph 6:12 "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." In the same way, the Bible says that Satan is "more crafty" than other created beings. (Gen 3:1, also 2 Cor. 11:3, Acts 13:10) Therefore we can see that the Devil has always had great mental ability and is able to know much about God, the visible and invisible world, and many other things. Since his job in the beginning was to be a chief angel before God, it is only natural that understanding these things has always been of first importance to him, and that all his activities have to do with these areas of thoughts, feelings, and knowledge.

Because it was his original employment to be one of the angels before the very face of God, and sin does not destroy the memory, it is clear that Satan knows more about God than just about any other created being. After the fall, we can see from his activities as a tempter, etc., (Matt 4:3) that he has been spending his time increasing his knowledge and its practical applications. That his knowledge is great can be seen in how tricky he is when tempting people. The craftiness of his lies shows how clever he is. Surely he could not manage his deceit so well without an actual and true knowledge of the facts.

This knowledge of God and his works is from the very beginning. Satan was there from the Creation, as Job 38:47 shows: "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. . .while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?" So he must know much about the way God created the world, and how He governs all the events in the universe. Furthermore, Satan has seen how God has worked his plan of redemption in the world; and not as an innocent bystander, but as an active enemy of God's grace. He saw God work in the lives of Adam and Eve, in Noah, Abraham, and David. He must have taken a special interest in the life of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of men, the Word of God incarnate. How closely did he watch Christ? How carefully did he observe his miracles and listen to His words? This is because Satan has set himself against Christ's work, and it is to his torment and anguish that Satan has watched Christ's work unfold successfully.

Satan, then, knows much about God and God's work. He knows heaven first-hand. He knows hell also, with personal knowledge as its first resident, and has experienced its torments for all these thousands of years. He must have a great knowledge of the Bible: at the least, we can see he knew enough to try tempting our Saviour. Furthermore, he has had years of studying of the hearts of men, his battlefield where he fights against our Redeemer. What labours, exertions, and cares the Devil has used over the centuries as he has deceived men. Only a being with his knowledge and experience of God's working, and the human heart, could so imitate true religion and transform himself into an angel of light. (2 Cor 11:14)

Therefore we can see that there is no amount of knowledge of God and religion that could prove a person has been saved from their sin. A man may talk about the Bible, God, and the Trinity. He may be able to preach a sermon about Jesus Christ and everything He has done. Imagine, somebody might be able to speak about the way of salvation and the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of sinners, perhaps even enough to show others how to become Christians. All these things might build up the church and enlighten the world, yet it is not a sure proof of the saving grace of God in a person's heart.

It also may be seen that for people to merely agree with the Bible is no sure sign of salvation. James 2:19 shows that the demons really, truly, believe the truth. Just as they believe there is one God, they agree with all the truth of the Bible. The devil is not a heretic: all the articles of his faith are firmly established in the truth.

It must be understood, that when the Bible talks about believing that Jesus is the Son of God, as a proof of God's grace in the heart, the Bible means not a mere agreement with the truth, but another kind of believing.

"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." 1 John 5:1

This other kind of believing is called "the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness." (Titus 1:1) There is a spiritual holding to the truth, which will be explained later on.

The first and foremost whom I will name is the well-known George Whitefield. Though not the first in order, if we look at the date of his birth, I place him first in the order of merit, without any hesitation. Of all the spiritual heroes of a hundred years ago, none saw so soon as Whitefield what the times demanded, and none were so forward in the great work of spiritual aggression. I should think I committed an act of injustice if I placed any name before his.

George Whitefield's Humble Beginning

Whitefield was born at Gloucester in the year 1714. That venerable county-town, which was his birth-place, is connected with more than one name which ought to be dear to every lover of Protestant truth. Tyndal, one of the first and ablest translators of the English Bible, was a Gloucestershire man. Hooper, one of the greatest and best of our English reformers, was Bishop of Gloucester, and was burned at the stake for Christ's truth, within view of his own cathedral, in Queen Mary's reign. In the next century Miles Smith, Bishop of Gloucester, was one of the first to protest against the Romanizing proceedings of Laud, who was then Dean of Gloucester. In fact, he carried his Protestant feeling so far that, when Laud moved the communion-table in the cathedral to the east end, and placed it for the first time `altar-wise,' in 1616, Bishop Smith was so much offended that he refused to enter the walls of the cathedral from that day till his death. Places like Gloucester, we need not doubt, have a rich entailed inheritance of many prayers. The city where Hooper preached and prayed, and where the zealous Miles Smith protested, was the place where the greatest preacher of the gospel England has ever seen was born.

Like many other famous men, Whitefield was of humble origin, and had no rich or noble connections to help him forward in the world. His mother kept the Bell Inn at Gloucester, and appears not to have prospered in business; at any rate, she never seems to have been able to do anything for Whitefield's advancement in life. The inn itself is still standing, and is reputed to be the birth-place, not only of our greatest English preacher, but also of a well-known English prelate Henry Philpot, Bishop of Exeter.

Whitefield was part of the 'Holy Club' at Oxford University with the Wesley brothers, John and CharlesWhitefield's residence at Oxford was the great turning-point in his life. For two or three years before he went to the University his journal tells us that he had not been without religious convictions. But from the time of his entering Pembroke College these convictions fast ripened into decided Christianity. He diligently attended all means of grace within his reach. He spent his leisure time in visiting the city prison, reading to the prisoners, and trying to do good. He became acquainted with the famous John Wesley and his brother Charles, and a little band of like-minded young men, including the well-known author of Theron and Aspasio, James Hervey. These were the devoted party to whom the name `Methodists' was first applied, on account of their strict `method' of living. At one time he seems to have greedily devoured such books as Thomas Kempis, and Castanuza's Spiritual Combat, and to have been in danger of becoming a semi-papist, an ascetic, or a mystic, and of placing the whole of religion in self-denial. He says in his Journal, I always chose the worst sort of food. I fasted twice a week. My apparel was mean. I thought it unbecoming a penitent to have his hair powdered. I wore woollen gloves, a patched gown, and dirty shoes; and though I was convinced that the kingdom of God did not consist in meat and drink, yet I resolutely persisted in these voluntary acts of self-denial, because I found in them great promotion of the spiritual life.' Out of all this darkness he was gradually delivered, partly by the advice of one or two experienced Christians, and partly by reading such books as Scougal's Life of God in the Soul of Man, Law's Serious Call, Baxter's Call to the Unconverted, Alleine's Alarm to Unconverted Sinners, and Matthew Henry's Commentary. `Above all,' he says, `my mind being now more opened and enlarged, I began to read the Holy Scriptures upon my knees, laying aside all other books, and praying over, if possible, every line and word. This proved meat indeed and drink indeed to my soul. I daily received fresh life, light, and power from above. I got more true knowledge from reading the Book of God in one month than I could ever have acquired from all the writings of men.' Once taught to understand the glorious liberty of Christ's gospel, Whitefield never turned again to asceticism, legalism, mysticism, or strange views of Christian perfection. The experience received by bitter conflict was most valuable to him. The doctrines of free grace, once thoroughly grasped, took deep root in his heart, and became, as it were, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. Of all the little band of Oxford methodists, none seem to have got hold so soon of clear views of Christ's gospel as he did, and none kept it so unwaveringly to the end.  
Uplifting and motivational Almost immediately after his ordination, Whitefield went to Oxford and took his degree as Bachelor of Arts. He then commenced his regular ministerial life by undertaking temporary duty at the Tower Chapel, London, for two months. While engaged there he preached continually in many London churches; and among others, in the parish churches of Islington, Bishopsgate, St Dunstan's, St Margaret's, Westminster, and Bow, Cheapside. From the very first he obtained a degree of popularity such as no preacher, before or since, has probably ever reached. Whether on week-days or Sundays, wherever he preached, the churches were crowded, and an immense sensation was produced. The plain truth is, that a really eloquent, extempore preacher, preaching the pure gospel with most uncommon gifts of voice and manner, was at that time an entire novelty in London. The congregations were taken by surprise and carried by storm.

* Preaching in Public
* The step which at this juncture gave a turn to the whole current of Whitefield's ministry was his adoption of the system of open air preaching. Seeing that thousands everywhere would attend no place of worship, spent their Sundays in idleness or sin, and were not to be reached by sermons within walls, he resolved, in the spirit of holy aggression, to go out after them `into the highways and hedges,' on his Master's principle, and `compel them to come in.' His first attempt to do this was among the colliers at Kingswood near Bristol, in February, 1739. After much prayer he one day went to Hannam Mount, and standing upon a hill began to preach to about a hundred colliers upon Matthew 5:1-3. The thing soon became known. The number of hearers rapidly increased, till the congregation amounted to many thousands. His own account of the behaviour of these neglected colliers, who had never been in a church in their lives, is deeply affecting: `Having,' he writes to a friend, `no righteousness of their own to renounce, they were glad to hear of a Jesus who was a friend to publicans, and came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. The first discovery of their being affected was the sight of the white gutters made by their tears, which plentifully fell down their black cheeks as they came out of their coal-pits. Hundreds of them were soon brought under deep conviction, which, as the event proved, happily ended in a sound and thorough conversion. The change was visible to all, though numbers chose to impute it to anything rather than the finger of God. As the scene was quite new, it often occasioned many inward conflicts. Sometimes, when twenty thousand people were before me, I had not in my own apprehension a word to say either to God or them. But I was never totally deserted, and frequently (for to deny it would be lying against God) was so assisted that I knew by happy experience what our Lord meant by saying, "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." The open firmament above me, the prospect of the adjacent fields, with the sight of thousands, some in coaches, some on horseback, and some in the trees, and at times all affected and in tears, was almost too much for, and quite overcame me.'
* Two months after this Whitefield began the practice of open-air preaching in London, on April 27, 1739. The circumstances under which this happened were curious. He had gone to Islington to preach for the vicar, his friend Mr. Stonehouse. In the midst of the prayer the churchwardens came to him and demanded his licence for preaching in the diocese of London. Whitefield, of course, had not got this licence any more than any clergyman not regularly officiating in the diocese has at this day. The upshot of the matter was, that being forbidden by the churchwardens to preach in the pulpit, he went outside after the communion-service, and preached in the churchyard. "And," says he, "God was pleased to assist me in preaching, and so wonderfully to affect the hearers, that I believe we could have gone singing hymns to prison. Let not the adversaries say, I have thrust myself out of their synagogues. No; they have thrust me out."
* Benjamin Franklin once attended a revival meeting in Philadelphia and was greatly impressed with Whitefield's ability to deliver a message to such a large audience.From that day forward he became a constant field-preacher, whenever weather and the season of the year made it possible. Two days afterwards on Sunday, April 29th, he records: "I preached in Moorfields to an exceeding great multitude. Being weakened by my morning's preaching, I refreshed myself in the afternoon by a little sleep, and at five went and preached at Kennington Common, about two miles from London, when no less that thirty thousand people were supposed to be present." Henceforth, wherever there were large open spaces round London, wherever there were large bands of idle, godless, Sabbath-breaking people gathered together, in Hackney Fields, Mary-le-bonne Fields, May Fair, Smithfield, Blackheath, Moorfields, and Kennington Common, there went Whitefield and lifted up his voice for Christ.
* The gospel so proclaimed was listened to and greedily received by hundreds who never dreamed of going to a place of worship. The cause of pure religion was advanced, and souls were plucked from the hand of Satan, like brands from the burning. But it was going much too fast for the Church of those days. The clergy, with a few honourable exceptions, refused entirely to countenance this strange preacher. In the true spirit of the dog in the manger, they neither liked to go after the semi-heathen masses of population themselves, nor liked any one else to do the work for them. The consequence was, that the ministrations of Whitefield in the pulpits of the Church of England from this time almost entirely ceased. He loved the Church in which he had been ordained; he gloried in her Articles; he used her Prayer-book with pleasure. But the Church did not love him, and so lost the use of his services. The plain truth is, that the Church of England of that day was not ready for a man like Whitefield. The Church was too much asleep to understand him, and was vexed at a man who would not keep still and let the devil alone.
* The facts of Whitefield's history from this period to the day of his death are almost entirely of one complexion. One year was just like another; and to attempt to follow him would be only going repeatedly over the same ground. From 1739 to the year of his death, 1770, a period of thirty-one years, his life was one uniform employment. He was eminently a man of one thing, and always about his Master's business. From Sunday mornings to Saturday nights, from the 1st of January to the 31st of December, excepting when laid aside by illness, he was almost incessantly preaching Christ and going about the world entreating men to repent and come to Christ and be saved. There was hardly a considerable town in England, Scotland, or Wales, that he did not visit as an evangelist. When churches were opened to him he gladly preached in churches; when only chapels could be obtained, he cheerfully preached in chapels. When churches and chapels alike were closed, or were too small to contain his hearers, he was ready and willing to preach in the open air. For thirty-one years he laboured in this way, always proclaiming the same glorious gospel, and always, as far as man's eye can judge, with immense effect. In one single Whitsuntide week, after preaching in Moorfields, he received one thousand letters from people under spiritual concern, and admitted to the Lord's table three hundred and fifty persons. In the thirty-four years of his ministry it is reckoned that he preached publicly eighteen thousand times.
* His journeyings were prodigious, when the roads and conveyances of his time are considered. He was familiar with `perils in the wilderness and perils in the seas', if ever man was in modern times. He visited Scotland fourteen times, and was nowhere more acceptable or useful than he was in that Bible-loving country. He crossed the Atlantic seven times, backward and forward, in miserable slow sailing ships, and arrested the attention of thousands in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. He went over to Ireland twice, and on one occasion was almost murdered by an ignorant Popish mob in Dublin. As to England and Wales, he traversed every country in them, from the Isle of Wight to Berwick-on-Tweed, and from the Land's End to the North Foreland.
* His regular ministerial work in London for the winter season, when field-preaching was necessarily suspended, was something prodigious. His weekly engagements at the Tabernacle in Tottenham Court Road, which was built for him when the pulpits of the Established Church were closed, comprised the following work: Every Sunday morning, he administered the Lord's Supper to several hundred communicants at half-past six. After this he read prayers, and preached both morning and afternoon. Then he preached again in the evening at half-past five, and concluded by addressing a large society of widows, married people, young men and spinsters, all sitting separately in the area of the Tabernacle, with exhortations suitable to their respective stations. On Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday mornings, he preached regularly at six. On Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday evenings, he delivered lectures. This, it will be observed, made thirteen sermons a week! And all this time he was carrying on a large correspondence with people in almost every part of the world.
* That any human frame could so long endure the labours that Whitefield went through does indeed seem wonderful. That his life was not cut short by violence, to which he was frequently exposed, is no less wonderful. But he was immortal till his work was done. He died at last very suddenly at Newbury Port, in North America, on Sunday, September 29th, 1770, at the comparatively early age of fifty-six. He was once married to a widow named James, of Abergavenny, who died before him. If we may judge from the little mention made of his wife in his letters, his marriage does not seem to have contributed much to his happiness. He left no children, but he left a name far better than that of sons and daughters. Never perhaps was there a man of whom it could be so truly said that he spent and was spent for Christ than George Whitefield.
* The circumstances and particulars of this great evangelist's end are so deeply interesting, that I shall make no excuse for dwelling on them. It was an end in striking harmony with the tenor of his life. As he had lived for more than thirty years, so he died, preaching to the very last. He literally almost died in harness. `Sudden death', he had often said, `is sudden glory. Whether right or not, I cannot help wishing that I may go off in the same manner. To me it would be worse than death to live to be nursed, and to see friends weeping about me.' He had the desire of his heart granted. He was cut down in a single night by a spasmodic fit of asthma, almost before his friends knew that he was ill.
* Dedicated Until Death
* On the morning of Saturday, September 28th, the day before he died, Whitefield set out on horseback from Portsmouth in New Hampshire, in order to fulfil an engagement to preach at Newbury Port on Sunday. On the way, unfortunately, he was earnestly importuned to preach at a place called Exeter, and though feeling very ill, he had not the heart to refuse. A friend remarked before he preached that he looked more uneasy than usual, and said to him, "Sir, you are more fit to go to bed than to preach." To this Whitefield replied: "True, sir"; and then turning aside, he clasped his hands together, and looking up, said: "Lord Jesus, I am weary in thy work, but not of thy work. If I have not yet finished my course, let me go and speak for thee once more in the fields, seal thy truth, and come home and die." He then went and preached to a very great multitude in the fields from the text 2 Corinthians 13:5, for the space of nearly two hours. It was his last sermon, and a fitting conclusion to his whole career.
* Whitefield's Tabernacle is a Congregational church which originally met in the Second Kingswood School which was built in the first half of the 18th century.An eye-witness has given the following striking account of this closing scene of Whitefield's life: "He rose from his seat, and stood erect. His appearance alone was a powerful sermon. The thinness of his visage, the paleness of his countenance, the evident struggling of the heavenly spark in a decayed body for utterance, were all deeply interesting; the spirit was willing, but the flesh was dying. In this situation he remained several minutes, unable to speak. He then said: "I will wait for the gracious assistance of God, for He will, I am certain, assist me once more to speak in his name." He then delivered perhaps one of his best sermons. The latter part contained the following passage: "I go; I go to a rest prepared: my sun has given light to many, but now it is about to set--no, to rise to the zenith of immortal glory. I have outlived many on earth, but they cannot outlive me in heaven. Many shall outlive me on earth and live when this body is no more, but there--oh, thought divine!--I shall be in a world where time, age, sickness, and sorrow are unknown. My body fails, but my spirit expands. How willingly would I live for ever to preach Christ. But I die to be with him. How brief--comparatively brief has been my life compared to the vast labours which I see before me yet to be accomplished. But if I leave now, while so few care about heavenly things, the God of peace will surely visit you."
* After the sermon was over, Whitefield dined with a friend, and then rode on to Newbury Port, though greatly fatigued. On arriving there he supped early, and retired to bed. Tradition says, that as he went up-stairs, with a lighted candle in his hand, he could not resist the inclination to turn around at the head of the stair, and speak to the friends who were assembled to meet him. As he spoke the fire kindled within him, and before he could conclude, the candle which he held in has hand had actually burned down to the socket. He retired to his bedroom, to come out no more alive. A violent fit of spasmodic asthma seized him soon after he got into bed, and before six o'clock the next morning the great preacher was dead. If ever man was ready for his change, Whitefield was that man. When his time came, he had nothing to do but die. Where he died there he was buried, in a vault beneath the pulpit of the church where he had engaged to preach; His sepulchre is shown to this very day; and nothing makes the little town where he died so famous as the fact that it contains the bones of George Whitefield.

[](http://www.christians.com/node/20)

[George Whitefield](http://www.christians.com/georgewhitefield/main)

"Verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." - Matthew 18:3

# Marks of a True Conversion

by George Whitefield

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## Introduction

"Verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."—Matthew 18:3

I suppose I may take it for granted, that all of you, among whom I am now about to preach the kingdom of God, are fully convinced, that it is appointed for all men once to die, and that ye all really believe that after death comes the judgment, and that the consequences of that judgment will be, that ye must be doomed to dwell in the blackness of darkness, or ascend to dwell with the blessed God, for ever and ever. I may take it for granted also, that whatever your practice in common life may be, there is not one, though ever so profligate and abandoned, but hopes to go to that place, which the scriptures call Heaven, when he dies. And, I think, if I know any thing of mine own heart, my heart's desire, as well as my prayer to God, for you all, is, that I may see you sitting down in the kingdom of our heavenly Father. But then, though we all hope to go to heaven when we die, yet, if we may judge by people's lives, and our Lord says, "that by their fruits we may know them," I am afraid it will be found, that thousands, and ten thousands, who hope to go to this blessed place after death, are not now in the way to it while they live. Though we call ourselves Christians, and would consider it as an affront put upon us, for any one to doubt whether we were Christians or not; yet there are a great many, who bear the name of Christ, that yet do not so much as know what real Christianity is. Hence it is, that if you ask a great many, upon what their hopes of heaven are founded, they will tell you, that they belong to this, or that, or the other denomination, and part of Christians, into which Christendom is now unhappily divided. If you ask others, upon what foundation they have built their hope of heaven, they will tell you, that they have been baptized, that their fathers and mothers, presented them to the Lord Jesus Christ in their infancy; and though, instead of fighting under Christ's banner, they have been fighting against him, almost ever since they were baptized, yet because they have been admitted to church, and their names are in the Register book of the parish, therefore they will make us believe, that their names are also written in the book of life. But a great many, who will not build their hopes of salvation upon such a sorry rotten foundation as this, yet if they are, what we generally call, negatively good people; if they live so as their neighbors cannot say that they do anybody harm, they do not doubt but they shall be happy when they die; nay, I have found many such die, as the scripture speaks, "without any hands in their death." And if a person is what the world calls an honest moral man, if he does justly, and, what the world calls, love a little mercy, is not and then good-natured, reacheth out his hand to the poor, receives the sacrament once or twice a year, and is outwardly sober and honest; the world looks upon such an one as a Christian indeed, and doubtless we are to judge charitably of every such person. There are many likewise, who go on in a round of duties, a model of performances, that think they shall go to heaven; but if you examine them, though they have a Christ in their heads, they have no Christ in their hearts.

The Lord Jesus Christ knew this full well; he knew how desperately wicked and deceitful men's hearts were; he knew very well how many would go to hell even by the very gates of heaven, how many would climb up even to the door, and go so near as to knock at it, and yet after all be dismissed with a "verily I know you not." The Lord, therefore, plainly tells us, what great change must be wrought in us, and what must be done for us, before we can have any well grounded hopes of entering into the kingdom of heaven. Hence, he tells Nicodemus,

"that unless a man be born again, and from above, and unless a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

And of all the solemn declarations of our Lord, I mean with respect to this, perhaps the words of the text are one of the most solemn,

"except, (says Christ) ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

The words, if you look back to the context, are plainly directed to the disciples; for we are told, "that at the same time came the disciples unto Jesus." And I think it is plain from many parts of Scripture, that these disciples, to whom our Lord addressed himself at this time, were in some degree converted before. If we take the words strictly, they are applicable only to those, that have already gotten some, though but weak, faith in Christ. Our Lord means, that though they had already tasted the grace of God, yet there was so much of the old man, so much indwelling sin, and corruption, yet remaining in their hearts, that unless they were more converted than they were, unless a greater change past upon their souls, and sanctification was still carried on, they could give but very little evidence of their belonging to his kingdom, which was not to be set up in outward grandeur, as they supposed, but was to be a spiritual kingdom, begun here, but completed in the kingdom of God hereafter. But though the words had a peculiar reference to our Lord's disciples; yet as our Lord makes such a declaration as this in other places of Scripture, especially in the discourse to Nicodemus, I believe the words may be justly applied to saints and sinners; and as I suppose there are two sorts of people here, some who know Christ, and some of you that do not know him, some that are converted, and some that are strangers to conversion, I shall endeavor so to speak, that if God shall be pleased to assist me, and to give you an hearing ear and an obedient heart, both saints and sinners may have their portion.

FIRST, I shall endeavor to show you in what respects we are to understand this assertion of our Lord's, "that we must be converted and become like little children." I shall then,

SECONDLY, Speak to those who profess a little of this child-like temper,

And LASTLY, shall speak to you, who have no reason to think that this change has ever past upon your souls. And I shall endeavor to show you, what we are to understand by our Lord's saying, "Except ye be converted and become as little children." But I think, before I speak to this point, it may be proper to premise one or two particulars.

1.) I think, that the words plainly imply, that before you or I can have any well-grounded, scriptural hope, of being happy in a future state, there must be some great, some notable, and amazing change pass upon our souls. I believe, there is not one adult person in the congregation, but will readily confess, that a great change hath past upon their bodies, since they came first into the world, and were infants dandled upon their mother's knees. It is true, ye have no more members than ye had then, but how are these altered! Though you are in one respect the same ye were, for the number of your limbs, and as to the shape of your body, yet if a person that knew you when ye were in your cradle, had been absent from you for some years, and saw you when grown up, then thousand to one if he would know you at all, ye are so altered, so different from what ye were, when ye were little ones. And as the words plainly imply, that there has a great change past upon our bodies since we were children, so before we can go to heaven, there must as great a change pass upon our souls. Our souls considered in a physical sense are still the same, there is to be no philosophical change wrought on them. But then, as for our temper, habit and conduct, we must be so changed and altered, that those who knew us the other day, when in a state of sin, and before we knew Christ, and are acquainted with us now, must see such an alteration, that they may stand as much amazed at it, as a person at the alteration wrought on any person he has not seen for twenty years from his infancy.

2.) But I think it proper to premise something farther, because this text is the grand strong-hold of Arminians, and others. They learn of the devil to bring texts to propagate bad principles: when the devil had a mind to tempt Jesus Christ, because Christ quoted scripture, therefore Satan did so too. And such persons, that their doctrine and bad principles may go down the better, would fain persuade unwary and unstable souls, that they are founded upon the word of God. Though the doctrine of original sin, is a doctrine written in such legible characters in the word of God, that he who runs may read it; and though, I think, everything without us, and everything within us, plainly proclaims that we are fallen creatures; though the very heathens, who had no other light, but the dim light of unassisted reason, complained of this, for they felt the wound, and discovered the disease, but were ignorant of the cause of it; yet there are too many persons of those who have been baptized in the name of Christ, that dare to speak against the doctrine of original sin, and are angry with those ill-natured ministers, who paint man in such black colors. Say they, "It cannot be that children come into the world with the guild of Adam's sin lying upon them." Why? Desire them to prove it from Scripture, and they will urge this very text, our Lord tells us,

"Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Now their argument runs thus, "It is implied in the words of the text, that little children are innocent, and that they come into the world like a mere blank piece of white paper, otherwise our Lord must argue absurdly, for he could never pretend to say, that we must be converted, and be made like wicked creatures; that would be no conversion." But, my dear friends, this is to make Jesus Christ speak what he never intended, and what cannot be deduced from his words. That little children are guilty, I mean, that they are conceived and born in sin, is plain from the whole tenor of the book of God. David was a man after God's own heart, yet, says he, "I was conceived in sin." Jeremiah speaking of every one's heart, says, "the heart of man is deceitful and desperately wicked above all things." God's servants unanimously declare, (and Paul cites it from one of them)

"that we are altogether now become abominable, altogether gone out of the way of original righteousness, there is not one of us that doeth good (by nature), no not one."

And I appeal to any of you that are mothers and fathers, if ye do not discern original sin or corruption in your children, as soon as they come into the world; and as they grow up, if ye do not discover self-will, and an aversion to goodness. What is the reason your children are so averse to instruction, but because they bring enmity into the world with them, against a good and gracious God? So then, it is plain from scripture and fact, that children are born in sin, and consequently that they are children of wrath. And for my part, I think, that the death of every child is a plain proof of original sin; sickness and death came into the world by sin, and it seems not consistent with God's goodness and justice, to let a little child be sick or die, unless Adam's first sin was imputed to him. If any charge God with injustice for imputing Adam's sin to a little child, behold we have gotten a second Adam, to bring our children to him. Therefore, when our Lord says, "unless ye are converted, and become as little children," we are not to understand, as though our Lord would insinuate, that little children are perfectly innocent; but in a comparative, and as I shall show you by and by, in a rational sense. Little children are innocent, compare them with grown people; but take them as they are, and as they come into the world, they have hearts that are sensual, and minds which are carnal. And I mention this with the greatest concern, because I verily believe, unless parents are convinced of this, they will never take proper care of their children's education. If parents were convinced, that children's hearts were so bad as they are, you would never be fond of letting them go to balls, assemblies, and plays, the natural tendency of which is to debauch their minds, and make them the children of the devil. If parents were convinced of this, I believe they would pray more, when they bring their children to be baptized, and would not make it a mere matter of form. And I believe, if they really were convinced, that their children were conceived in sin, they would always put up that petition, before their children came into the world, which I have heard that a good woman always did put up, "Lord Jesus, let me never bear a child for hell or the devil." O! is it not to be feared, that thousands of children will appear, at the great day, before God, and in presence of angels and men will say, Father and mother, next to the wickedness of mine own heart, I owe my damnation to your bad education of me.

## As Little Children

Having premised these two particulars, I now proceed to show in what sense we are really to understand the words, that we must be converted and become like little children. The Evangelist tell us,

"that the disciples at this time came unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

These disciples had imbibed the common prevailing notion, that the Lord Jesus Christ was to be a temporal prince; they dreamed of nothing but being ministers of state, of sitting on Christ' right hand in his kingdom, and lording it over God's people; they thought themselves qualified for state offices, as generally ignorant people are apt to conceive of themselves. Well, say they, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Which of us shall have the chief management of public affairs? A pretty question for a few poor fishermen, who scarcely knew how to drag their nets to shore, much less how to govern a kingdom. Our Lord, therefore, in the 2nd verse, to mortify them, calls a little child, and sets him in the midst of them. This action was as much as if our Lord had said, "Poor creatures! Your imaginations are very towering; you dispute who shall be greatest in the kingdom of heaven; I will make this little child preach to you, or I will preach to you by him. Verily I say unto you, (I who am truth itself, I know in what manner my subjects are to enter into my kingdom; I say unto you, ye are so far from being in a right temper for my kingdom, that) except ye be converted, and become as this little child, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven, (unless ye are, comparatively speaking, as loose to the world, as loose to crowns, scepters, and kingdoms, and earthly things, as this poor little child I have in my hand) ye shall not enter into my kingdom." So that what our Lord is speaking of, is not the innocency of little children, if you consider the relation they stand in to God, and as they are in themselves, when brought into the world; but what our Lord means is, that as to ambition and lust after the world, we must in this sense become as little children. Is there never a little boy or girl in this congregation? Ask a poor little child, that can just speak, about a crown, scepter, or kingdom, the poor creature has no notion about it: give a little boy or girl a small thing to play with, it will leave the world to other people. Now in this sense we must be converted, and become as little children; that is, we must be as loose to the world, comparatively speaking, as a little child.

Do not mistake me, I am not going to persuade you to shut up your shops, or leave your business; I am not going to persuade you, that if ye will be Christians, ye must turn hermits, and retire out of the world; ye cannot leave your wicked hearts behind you, when you leave the world; for I find when I am alone, my wicked heart has followed me, go where I will. No, the religion of Jesus is a social religion. But though Jesus Christ does not call us to go out of the world, shut up our shops, and leave our children to be provided for by miracles; yet this must be said to the honor Christianity, if we are really converted, we shall be loose from the world. Though we are engaged in it, and are obliged to work for our children; though we are obliged to follow trades and merchandise, and to be serviceable to the commonwealth, yet if we are real Christians, we shall be loose to the world; though I will not pretend to say that all real Christians have attained to the same degree of spiritual-mindedness. This is the primary meaning of these words, that we must be converted and become as little children; nevertheless, I suppose the words are to be understood in other senses.

When our Lord says, we must be converted and become as little children, I suppose he means also, that we must be sensible of our weakness, comparatively speaking, as a little child. Every one looks upon a little child, as a poor weak creature; as one that ought to go to school and learn some new lesson every day; and as simple and artless; one without guile, having not learned the abominable art, called dissimulation. Now in all these senses, I believe we are to understand the words of the text. \_ Are little children sensible of their weakness? Must they be led by the hand? Must we take hold of them or they will fall? So, if we are converted, if the grace of God be really in our hearts, my dear friends, however we may have thought of ourselves once, whatever were our former high exalted imaginations; yet we shall now be sensible of our weakness; we shall no more say, "We are rich and increased with goods, and lack nothing;" we shall be inwardly poor; we shall feel "that we are poor, miserable, blind, and naked." And as a little child gives up its hand to be guided by a parent or a nurse, so those who are truly converted, and are real Christians, will give up the heart, their understandings, their wills, their affections, to be guided by the word, providence, and the Spirit of the Lord. Hence it is, that the Apostle, speaking of the sons of God, says,

"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are (and to be sure he means they only are) the sons of God."

And as little children look upon themselves to be ignorant creatures, so those that are converted, do look upon themselves as ignorant too. Hence it is, that John, speaking to Christians, calls them little children; "I have written unto you, little children." And Christ's flock is called a little flock, not only because little in number, but also because those who are members of his flock, are indeed little in their own eyes. Hence that great man, that great apostle of the Gentiles, that spiritual father of so many thousands of souls, that man, who in the opinion of Dr. Goodwin, "fits nearest the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ, in glory," that chosen vessel, the Apostle Paul, when he speaks of himself, says,

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

Perhaps some of you, when you read these words, will be apt to think that Paul did not speak true, that he did not really feel what he said; because you judge Paul's heart by your own proud hearts: but the more ye get of the grace of God, and the more ye are partakers of the divine life, the more will ye see your own meanness and vileness, and be less in your own eyes. Hence it is, that Mr. Flavel, in his book called, HUSBANDRY SPIRITUALIZED, compares young Christians to green corn; which before it is ripe, shoots up very high, but there is little solidity in it: whereas, an old Christian is like ripe corn; it doth not lift up its head so much, but then it is more weighty, and fit to be cut down, and put into the farmer's barn. Young Christians are also like little rivulets; ye know rivulets are shallow, yet make great noise; but an old Christian, he makes not much noise, he goes on sweetly, like a deep river sliding into the ocean.

And as a little child is looked upon as an harmless creature, and generally speaks true; so, if we are converted, and become as little children, we shall be guileless as well as harmless. What said the dear Redeemer when he saw Nathaniel? As though it was a rare sight he gazed upon, and would have others gaze upon it; "Behold an Israelite indeed:" Why so? "In whom is no guile." Do not mistake me; I am not saying, that Christians ought not to be prudent; they ought exceedingly to pray to God for prudence, otherwise they may follow the delusions of the devil, and by their imprudence give wrong touches to the ark of God. It was the lamentation of a great man, "God has given me many gifts, but God has not given me prudence." Therefore, when I say, a Christian must be guileless, I do not mean, he should expose himself, and lie open to every one's assault: we should pray for the wisdom of the serpent, though we shall generally learn this wisdom by our blunders and imprudence: and we must make some advance in Christianity, before we know our imprudence. A person really converted, can say, as it is reported of a philosopher, "I wish there was a window in my breast, that every one may see the uprightness of my heart and intentions:" And though there is too much of the old man in us, yet, if we are really converted, there will be in us no allowed guile, we shall be harmless. And that is the reason why the poor Christian is too often imposed upon; he judgeth other people by himself; having an honest heart, he thinks every one as honest as himself, and therefore is a prey to every one. I might enlarge upon each of these points, it is a copious and important truth; but I do not intend to multiply many marks and heads.

## Are you Converted?

And therefore, as I have something to say by way of personal application, give me leave therefore, with the utmost tenderness, and at the same time with faithfulness, to call upon you, my dear friends. My text is introduced in an awful manner, "Verily I say unto you;" and what Jesus said then, he says now to you, to me, and to as many as sit under a preached gospel, and to as many as the Lord our God shall call. Let me exhort you to see whether ye are converted; whether such a great and almighty change has passed upon any of your souls. As I told you before, so I tell you again, ye all hope to go to heaven, and I pray God Almighty ye may be all there: when I see such a congregation as this, if my heart is in a proper frame, I feel myself ready to lay down my life, to be instrumental only to save one soul. It makes my heart bleed within me, it makes me sometimes most unwilling to preach, lest that word that I hope will do good, may increase the damnation of any, and perhaps of a great part of the auditory, through their own unbelief. Give me leave to deal faithfully with your souls. I have your dead warrant in my hand: Christ has said it, Jesus will stand to it, it is like the laws of the Medes and Persians, it altereth not. Hark, O man! Hark, O woman! He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Lord Jesus Christ says, "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Though this is Saturday night, and ye are now preparing for the Sabbath, for what you know, you may yet never live to see the Sabbath. You have had awful proofs of this lately; a woman died but yesterday, a man died the day before, another was killed by something that fell from a house, and it may be in twenty-four hours more, many of you may be carried into an unalterable state. Now then, for God's sake, for your own souls sake, if ye have a mind to dwell with God, and cannot bear the thought of dwelling in everlasting burning, before I go any further, silently put up one prayer, or say Amen to the prayer I would put in your mouths; "Lord, search me and try me, Lord, examine my heart, and let my conscience speak; O let me know whether I am converted or not!" What say ye, my dear hearers? What say ye, my fellow-sinners? What say ye, my guilty brethren? Has God by his blessed Spirit wrought such a change in your hearts? I do not ask you, whether God has made you angels? That I know will never be; I only ask you, Whether ye have any well-grounded hope to think that God has made you new creatures in Christ Jesus? So renewed and changed your natures, that you can say, I humbly hope, that as to the habitual temper and tendency of my mind, that my heart is free from wickedness; I have a husband, I have a wife, I have also children, I keep a shop, I mind my business; but I love these creatures for God' sake, and do every thing for Christ: and if God was now to call me away, according to the habitual temper of my mind, I can say, Lord, I am ready; and however I love the creatures, I hope I can say, Whom have I in heaven but thee? Whom have I in heaven, O my God and my dear Redeemer, that I desire in comparison of thee? Can you thank God for the creatures, and say at the same time, these are not my Christ? I speak in plain language, you know my way of preaching: I do not want to play the orator, I do not want to be counted a scholar; I want to speak so as I may reach poor people's hearts. What say ye, my dear hearers? Are ye sensible of your weakness? Do ye feel that ye are poor, miserable, blind, and naked by nature? Do ye give up your hearts, your affections, your wills, your understanding to be guided by the Spirit of God, as a little child gives up its hand to be guided by its parent? Are ye little in your own eyes? Do ye think meanly of yourselves? And do you want to learn something new every day? I mention these marks, because I am apt to believe they are more adapted to a great many of your capacities. A great many of you have not that showing of affection ye sometimes had, therefore ye are for giving up all your evidences, and making way for the devil's coming into your heart. You are not brought up to the mount as ye used to be, therefore ye conclude ye have no grace at all. But if the Lord Jesus Christ has emptied thee, and humbled thee, if he is giving thee to se and know that thou art nothing; though thou are not growing upward, thou art growing downward; and though thou hast not so much joy, yet thy heart is emptying to be more abundantly replenished by and by. Can any of you follow me? Then, give God thanks, and take the comfort of it.

## God's Children

If thou art thus converted, and become a little child, I welcome thee, in the name of the Lord Jesus, into God's dear family; I welcome thee, in the name of the dear Redeemer, into the company of God's children. O ye dear souls, though the world sees nothing in you, though there be no outward difference between you and others, yet I look upon you in another light, even as so many kings sons and daughters: all hail! In the name of God, I wish every one of you joy from my soul, ye sons and daughters of the King of kings. Will not you henceforth exercise a child-like temper? Will not such a thought melt down your hearts, when I tell you, that the great God, who might have frowned you to hell for your secret sins, that nobody knew of but God and your own souls, and who might have damned you times without number, hath cast the mantle of his love over you; his voice hath been, Let that man, that woman live, for I have found a ransom. O will ye not cry out, Why me, Lord? Was King George to send for any of your children, and were you to hear they were to be his adopted sons, how highly honored would you think your children to be? What great condescension was it for Pharaoh's daughter to take up Moses, a poor child exposed in an ark of bulrushes, and bred him up for her child? But what is that happiness in comparison of thine, who was the other day a child of the devil, but now by converting grace art become a child of God? Are ye converted? Are ye become like little children? Then what must ye do? My dear hearers, be obedient to God, remember God is your father; and as every one of you must know what a dreadful cross it is to have a wicked, disobedient child; if ye do not want your children to be disobedient to you, for Christ's sake be not disobedient to your heavenly parent. If God be your father, obey him: if God be your father, serve him; love him with all your heart, love him with all your might, with all your soul, and with all your strength. If God be your father, fly from everything that may displease him; and walk worthy of that God, who has called you to his kingdom and glory. If ye are converted and become like little children, then behave as little children: they long for the breast, and with it will be contented. Are ye new-born babes? Then desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. I do not want that Arminian husks should go down with you; ye are kings sons and daughters, and have a more refined taste; you must have the doctrines of grace; and blessed be God that you dwell in a country, where the sincere word is so plainly preached. Are ye children? Then grow in grace, and in the knowledge of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Have any of you children that do not grow? Do not ye lament these children, and cry over them; do not ye say, my child will never be fit for anything in the world? Well, doth it grieve you to see a child that will not grow; how much must it grieve the heart of Christ to see you grow so little? Will ye be always children? Will ye be always learning the first principles of Christianity, and never press forward toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus? God forbid. Let the language of your heart be, "Lord Jesus help me to grow, help me to learn more, learn me to live so as my progress may be known to all!"

Are ye God's children? Are ye converted, and become like little children? Then deal with God as your little children do with you; as soon as ever they want any thing, or if any body hurt them, I appeal to yourselves if they do not directly run to their parent. Well, are ye God's children? Doth the devil trouble you? Doth the world trouble you? Go tell your father of it, go directly and complain to God. Perhaps you may say, I cannot utter fine words: but do any of you expect fine words from your children? If they come crying, and can speak but half words, do not your hearts yearn over them? And has not God unspeakably more pity to you? If ye can only make signs to him;

"As a father pitieth his children, so will the Lord pity them that fear him."

I pray you therefore be gold with your Father, saying, "Abba, Father," Satan troubles me, the world troubles me, my own mother's children are angry with me; heavenly Father, plead my cause! The Lord will then speak for you some way or other.

Are ye converted, and become as little children, have ye entered into God's family? Then assure yourselves, that your heavenly father will chasten you now and then: "for what son is there whom the father chasteneth not: if ye are without chastisement, of which all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons." It is recorded of bishop Latimer, that in the house where he came to lodge, he overheard the master of the house say, I thank God I never had a cross in my life: O said he, then I will not stay here. I believe there is not a child of God, when in a good frame, but has prayed for great humility; they have prayed for great faith, they have prayed for great love, they have prayed for all the graces of the Spirit: Do ye know, when ye put us these prayers, that ye did also say, Lord send us great trials: for how is it possible to know ye have great faith, humility and love, unless God put you into great trials, that ye may know whether ye have them or not. I mention this, because a great many of the children of God (I am sure it has been a temptation to me many times, when I have been under God's smarting rod) when they have great trials, think God is giving them over. If therefore ye are God's children; if ye are converted and become as little children; do not expect that God will be like a foolish parent; no, he is a jealous God, he loves his child too well to spare his rod. How did he correct Miriam? How did he correct Moses? How hath God in all ages corrected his dearest children? Therefore if ye are converted, and become as little children, if God hath taken away a child, or your substance, if God suffers friends to forsake you, and if you are forsaken as it were both by God and man, say, Lord I thank thee! I am a perverse child, or God would not strike me so often and so hard. Do not blame your heavenly Father, but blame yourselves; he is a loving God, and a tender Father, "he is afflicted in all our afflictions:" therefore when God spake to Moses, he spake out of the bush, as much as to say,

"Moses, this bush represents my people; as this bush is burning with fire, so are my children to burn with affliction; but I am in the bush; if the bush burns, I will burn with it, I will be with them in the furnace, I will be with them in the water, and though the water come over them, it shall not overflow them."

Are ye God's children? Are ye converted and become as little children? Then will ye not long to go home and see your Father? O happy they that have gotten home before you; happy they that are up yonder, happy they who have ascended above this field of conflict. I know not what you may think of it, but since I heard that some, whose hearts God was pleased to work upon, are gone to glory, I am sometimes filled with grief, that God is not pleased to let me go home too. How can you see so much coldness among God's people? How can ye see God's people like the moon, waxing and waning? Who can but desire to be forever with the Lord? Thanks be to God, the time is soon coming; thanks be to God, he will come and will not tarry. Do not be impatient, God in his own time will fetch you home. And though ye may be brought to short allowance now, though some of you may be narrow in your circumstances, yet do not repine; a God, and the gospel of Christ, with brown bread, are great riches. In thy Father's house there is bread enough and to spare; though thou are now tormented, yet by and by thou shalt be comforted; the angels will look upon it as an honor to convey thee to Abraham's bosom, though thou are but a Lazarus here. By the frame of my heart, I am much inclined to speak comfortably to God's people.

But I only mention one thing more, and that is, if ye are converted, and become as little children, then for God's sake take care of doing what children often do; they are too apt to quarrel one with another. O love one another; "he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him." Joseph knew that his brethren were in danger of falling out, therefore when he left them, says he, "fall not out by the way." Ye are all children of the same Father, ye are all going to the same place; why should ye differ? The world has enough against us, the devil has enough against us, without our quarreling with each other; O walk in love. If I could preach no more, if I was not able to hold out to the end of my sermon, I would say as John did, when he was grown old and could not preach, "Little children, love one another:" if ye are God's children, then love one another. There is nothing grieves me more, than the differences amongst God's people. O hasten that time, when we shall either go to heaven, or never quarrel any more!

# Marks of a True Conversion

by George Whitefield

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## Introduction

"Verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."—Matthew 18:3

I suppose I may take it for granted, that all of you, among whom I am now about to preach the kingdom of God, are fully convinced, that it is appointed for all men once to die, and that ye all really believe that after death comes the judgment, and that the consequences of that judgment will be, that ye must be doomed to dwell in the blackness of darkness, or ascend to dwell with the blessed God, for ever and ever. I may take it for granted also, that whatever your practice in common life may be, there is not one, though ever so profligate and abandoned, but hopes to go to that place, which the scriptures call Heaven, when he dies. And, I think, if I know any thing of mine own heart, my heart's desire, as well as my prayer to God, for you all, is, that I may see you sitting down in the kingdom of our heavenly Father. But then, though we all hope to go to heaven when we die, yet, if we may judge by people's lives, and our Lord says, "that by their fruits we may know them," I am afraid it will be found, that thousands, and ten thousands, who hope to go to this blessed place after death, are not now in the way to it while they live. Though we call ourselves Christians, and would consider it as an affront put upon us, for any one to doubt whether we were Christians or not; yet there are a great many, who bear the name of Christ, that yet do not so much as know what real Christianity is. Hence it is, that if you ask a great many, upon what their hopes of heaven are founded, they will tell you, that they belong to this, or that, or the other denomination, and part of Christians, into which Christendom is now unhappily divided. If you ask others, upon what foundation they have built their hope of heaven, they will tell you, that they have been baptized, that their fathers and mothers, presented them to the Lord Jesus Christ in their infancy; and though, instead of fighting under Christ's banner, they have been fighting against him, almost ever since they were baptized, yet because they have been admitted to church, and their names are in the Register book of the parish, therefore they will make us believe, that their names are also written in the book of life. But a great many, who will not build their hopes of salvation upon such a sorry rotten foundation as this, yet if they are, what we generally call, negatively good people; if they live so as their neighbors cannot say that they do anybody harm, they do not doubt but they shall be happy when they die; nay, I have found many such die, as the scripture speaks, "without any hands in their death." And if a person is what the world calls an honest moral man, if he does justly, and, what the world calls, love a little mercy, is not and then good-natured, reacheth out his hand to the poor, receives the sacrament once or twice a year, and is outwardly sober and honest; the world looks upon such an one as a Christian indeed, and doubtless we are to judge charitably of every such person. There are many likewise, who go on in a round of duties, a model of performances, that think they shall go to heaven; but if you examine them, though they have a Christ in their heads, they have no Christ in their hearts.

The Lord Jesus Christ knew this full well; he knew how desperately wicked and deceitful men's hearts were; he knew very well how many would go to hell even by the very gates of heaven, how many would climb up even to the door, and go so near as to knock at it, and yet after all be dismissed with a "verily I know you not." The Lord, therefore, plainly tells us, what great change must be wrought in us, and what must be done for us, before we can have any well grounded hopes of entering into the kingdom of heaven. Hence, he tells Nicodemus,

"that unless a man be born again, and from above, and unless a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

And of all the solemn declarations of our Lord, I mean with respect to this, perhaps the words of the text are one of the most solemn,

"except, (says Christ) ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

The words, if you look back to the context, are plainly directed to the disciples; for we are told, "that at the same time came the disciples unto Jesus." And I think it is plain from many parts of Scripture, that these disciples, to whom our Lord addressed himself at this time, were in some degree converted before. If we take the words strictly, they are applicable only to those, that have already gotten some, though but weak, faith in Christ. Our Lord means, that though they had already tasted the grace of God, yet there was so much of the old man, so much indwelling sin, and corruption, yet remaining in their hearts, that unless they were more converted than they were, unless a greater change past upon their souls, and sanctification was still carried on, they could give but very little evidence of their belonging to his kingdom, which was not to be set up in outward grandeur, as they supposed, but was to be a spiritual kingdom, begun here, but completed in the kingdom of God hereafter. But though the words had a peculiar reference to our Lord's disciples; yet as our Lord makes such a declaration as this in other places of Scripture, especially in the discourse to Nicodemus, I believe the words may be justly applied to saints and sinners; and as I suppose there are two sorts of people here, some who know Christ, and some of you that do not know him, some that are converted, and some that are strangers to conversion, I shall endeavor so to speak, that if God shall be pleased to assist me, and to give you an hearing ear and an obedient heart, both saints and sinners may have their portion.

FIRST, I shall endeavor to show you in what respects we are to understand this assertion of our Lord's, "that we must be converted and become like little children." I shall then,

SECONDLY, Speak to those who profess a little of this child-like temper,

And LASTLY, shall speak to you, who have no reason to think that this change has ever past upon your souls. And I shall endeavor to show you, what we are to understand by our Lord's saying, "Except ye be converted and become as little children." But I think, before I speak to this point, it may be proper to premise one or two particulars.

1.) I think, that the words plainly imply, that before you or I can have any well-grounded, scriptural hope, of being happy in a future state, there must be some great, some notable, and amazing change pass upon our souls. I believe, there is not one adult person in the congregation, but will readily confess, that a great change hath past upon their bodies, since they came first into the world, and were infants dandled upon their mother's knees. It is true, ye have no more members than ye had then, but how are these altered! Though you are in one respect the same ye were, for the number of your limbs, and as to the shape of your body, yet if a person that knew you when ye were in your cradle, had been absent from you for some years, and saw you when grown up, then thousand to one if he would know you at all, ye are so altered, so different from what ye were, when ye were little ones. And as the words plainly imply, that there has a great change past upon our bodies since we were children, so before we can go to heaven, there must as great a change pass upon our souls. Our souls considered in a physical sense are still the same, there is to be no philosophical change wrought on them. But then, as for our temper, habit and conduct, we must be so changed and altered, that those who knew us the other day, when in a state of sin, and before we knew Christ, and are acquainted with us now, must see such an alteration, that they may stand as much amazed at it, as a person at the alteration wrought on any person he has not seen for twenty years from his infancy.

2.) But I think it proper to premise something farther, because this text is the grand strong-hold of Arminians, and others. They learn of the devil to bring texts to propagate bad principles: when the devil had a mind to tempt Jesus Christ, because Christ quoted scripture, therefore Satan did so too. And such persons, that their doctrine and bad principles may go down the better, would fain persuade unwary and unstable souls, that they are founded upon the word of God. Though the doctrine of original sin, is a doctrine written in such legible characters in the word of God, that he who runs may read it; and though, I think, everything without us, and everything within us, plainly proclaims that we are fallen creatures; though the very heathens, who had no other light, but the dim light of unassisted reason, complained of this, for they felt the wound, and discovered the disease, but were ignorant of the cause of it; yet there are too many persons of those who have been baptized in the name of Christ, that dare to speak against the doctrine of original sin, and are angry with those ill-natured ministers, who paint man in such black colors. Say they, "It cannot be that children come into the world with the guild of Adam's sin lying upon them." Why? Desire them to prove it from Scripture, and they will urge this very text, our Lord tells us,

"Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Now their argument runs thus, "It is implied in the words of the text, that little children are innocent, and that they come into the world like a mere blank piece of white paper, otherwise our Lord must argue absurdly, for he could never pretend to say, that we must be converted, and be made like wicked creatures; that would be no conversion." But, my dear friends, this is to make Jesus Christ speak what he never intended, and what cannot be deduced from his words. That little children are guilty, I mean, that they are conceived and born in sin, is plain from the whole tenor of the book of God. David was a man after God's own heart, yet, says he, "I was conceived in sin." Jeremiah speaking of every one's heart, says, "the heart of man is deceitful and desperately wicked above all things." God's servants unanimously declare, (and Paul cites it from one of them)

"that we are altogether now become abominable, altogether gone out of the way of original righteousness, there is not one of us that doeth good (by nature), no not one."

And I appeal to any of you that are mothers and fathers, if ye do not discern original sin or corruption in your children, as soon as they come into the world; and as they grow up, if ye do not discover self-will, and an aversion to goodness. What is the reason your children are so averse to instruction, but because they bring enmity into the world with them, against a good and gracious God? So then, it is plain from scripture and fact, that children are born in sin, and consequently that they are children of wrath. And for my part, I think, that the death of every child is a plain proof of original sin; sickness and death came into the world by sin, and it seems not consistent with God's goodness and justice, to let a little child be sick or die, unless Adam's first sin was imputed to him. If any charge God with injustice for imputing Adam's sin to a little child, behold we have gotten a second Adam, to bring our children to him. Therefore, when our Lord says, "unless ye are converted, and become as little children," we are not to understand, as though our Lord would insinuate, that little children are perfectly innocent; but in a comparative, and as I shall show you by and by, in a rational sense. Little children are innocent, compare them with grown people; but take them as they are, and as they come into the world, they have hearts that are sensual, and minds which are carnal. And I mention this with the greatest concern, because I verily believe, unless parents are convinced of this, they will never take proper care of their children's education. If parents were convinced, that children's hearts were so bad as they are, you would never be fond of letting them go to balls, assemblies, and plays, the natural tendency of which is to debauch their minds, and make them the children of the devil. If parents were convinced of this, I believe they would pray more, when they bring their children to be baptized, and would not make it a mere matter of form. And I believe, if they really were convinced, that their children were conceived in sin, they would always put up that petition, before their children came into the world, which I have heard that a good woman always did put up, "Lord Jesus, let me never bear a child for hell or the devil." O! is it not to be feared, that thousands of children will appear, at the great day, before God, and in presence of angels and men will say, Father and mother, next to the wickedness of mine own heart, I owe my damnation to your bad education of me.

1  |  [2](http://www.christians.com/georgewhitefield/sermons/marks_of_a_true_conversion?navtabs=1))  |  [3](http://www.christians.com/georgewhitefield/sermons/marks_of_a_true_conversion?navtabs=2))  |  [4](http://www.christians.com/georgewhitefield/sermons/marks_of_a_true_conversion?navtabs=3))  |  [5](http://www.christians.com/georgewhitefield/sermons/marks_of_a_true_conversion?navtabs=4))  |  [Next](http://www.christians.com/georgewhitefield/sermons/marks_of_a_true_conversion?navtabs=1)) »

## As Little Children

Having premised these two particulars, I now proceed to show in what sense we are really to understand the words, that we must be converted and become like little children. The Evangelist tell us,

"that the disciples at this time came unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

These disciples had imbibed the common prevailing notion, that the Lord Jesus Christ was to be a temporal prince; they dreamed of nothing but being ministers of state, of sitting on Christ' right hand in his kingdom, and lording it over God's people; they thought themselves qualified for state offices, as generally ignorant people are apt to conceive of themselves. Well, say they, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Which of us shall have the chief management of public affairs? A pretty question for a few poor fishermen, who scarcely knew how to drag their nets to shore, much less how to govern a kingdom. Our Lord, therefore, in the 2nd verse, to mortify them, calls a little child, and sets him in the midst of them. This action was as much as if our Lord had said, "Poor creatures! Your imaginations are very towering; you dispute who shall be greatest in the kingdom of heaven; I will make this little child preach to you, or I will preach to you by him. Verily I say unto you, (I who am truth itself, I know in what manner my subjects are to enter into my kingdom; I say unto you, ye are so far from being in a right temper for my kingdom, that) except ye be converted, and become as this little child, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven, (unless ye are, comparatively speaking, as loose to the world, as loose to crowns, scepters, and kingdoms, and earthly things, as this poor little child I have in my hand) ye shall not enter into my kingdom." So that what our Lord is speaking of, is not the innocency of little children, if you consider the relation they stand in to God, and as they are in themselves, when brought into the world; but what our Lord means is, that as to ambition and lust after the world, we must in this sense become as little children. Is there never a little boy or girl in this congregation? Ask a poor little child, that can just speak, about a crown, scepter, or kingdom, the poor creature has no notion about it: give a little boy or girl a small thing to play with, it will leave the world to other people. Now in this sense we must be converted, and become as little children; that is, we must be as loose to the world, comparatively speaking, as a little child.

Do not mistake me, I am not going to persuade you to shut up your shops, or leave your business; I am not going to persuade you, that if ye will be Christians, ye must turn hermits, and retire out of the world; ye cannot leave your wicked hearts behind you, when you leave the world; for I find when I am alone, my wicked heart has followed me, go where I will. No, the religion of Jesus is a social religion. But though Jesus Christ does not call us to go out of the world, shut up our shops, and leave our children to be provided for by miracles; yet this must be said to the honor Christianity, if we are really converted, we shall be loose from the world. Though we are engaged in it, and are obliged to work for our children; though we are obliged to follow trades and merchandise, and to be serviceable to the commonwealth, yet if we are real Christians, we shall be loose to the world; though I will not pretend to say that all real Christians have attained to the same degree of spiritual-mindedness. This is the primary meaning of these words, that we must be converted and become as little children; nevertheless, I suppose the words are to be understood in other senses.

When our Lord says, we must be converted and become as little children, I suppose he means also, that we must be sensible of our weakness, comparatively speaking, as a little child. Every one looks upon a little child, as a poor weak creature; as one that ought to go to school and learn some new lesson every day; and as simple and artless; one without guile, having not learned the abominable art, called dissimulation. Now in all these senses, I believe we are to understand the words of the text. \_ Are little children sensible of their weakness? Must they be led by the hand? Must we take hold of them or they will fall? So, if we are converted, if the grace of God be really in our hearts, my dear friends, however we may have thought of ourselves once, whatever were our former high exalted imaginations; yet we shall now be sensible of our weakness; we shall no more say, "We are rich and increased with goods, and lack nothing;" we shall be inwardly poor; we shall feel "that we are poor, miserable, blind, and naked." And as a little child gives up its hand to be guided by a parent or a nurse, so those who are truly converted, and are real Christians, will give up the heart, their understandings, their wills, their affections, to be guided by the word, providence, and the Spirit of the Lord. Hence it is, that the Apostle, speaking of the sons of God, says,

"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are (and to be sure he means they only are) the sons of God."

And as little children look upon themselves to be ignorant creatures, so those that are converted, do look upon themselves as ignorant too. Hence it is, that John, speaking to Christians, calls them little children; "I have written unto you, little children." And Christ's flock is called a little flock, not only because little in number, but also because those who are members of his flock, are indeed little in their own eyes. Hence that great man, that great apostle of the Gentiles, that spiritual father of so many thousands of souls, that man, who in the opinion of Dr. Goodwin, "fits nearest the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ, in glory," that chosen vessel, the Apostle Paul, when he speaks of himself, says,

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

Perhaps some of you, when you read these words, will be apt to think that Paul did not speak true, that he did not really feel what he said; because you judge Paul's heart by your own proud hearts: but the more ye get of the grace of God, and the more ye are partakers of the divine life, the more will ye see your own meanness and vileness, and be less in your own eyes. Hence it is, that Mr. Flavel, in his book called, HUSBANDRY SPIRITUALIZED, compares young Christians to green corn; which before it is ripe, shoots up very high, but there is little solidity in it: whereas, an old Christian is like ripe corn; it doth not lift up its head so much, but then it is more weighty, and fit to be cut down, and put into the farmer's barn. Young Christians are also like little rivulets; ye know rivulets are shallow, yet make great noise; but an old Christian, he makes not much noise, he goes on sweetly, like a deep river sliding into the ocean.

And as a little child is looked upon as an harmless creature, and generally speaks true; so, if we are converted, and become as little children, we shall be guileless as well as harmless. What said the dear Redeemer when he saw Nathaniel? As though it was a rare sight he gazed upon, and would have others gaze upon it; "Behold an Israelite indeed:" Why so? "In whom is no guile." Do not mistake me; I am not saying, that Christians ought not to be prudent; they ought exceedingly to pray to God for prudence, otherwise they may follow the delusions of the devil, and by their imprudence give wrong touches to the ark of God. It was the lamentation of a great man, "God has given me many gifts, but God has not given me prudence." Therefore, when I say, a Christian must be guileless, I do not mean, he should expose himself, and lie open to every one's assault: we should pray for the wisdom of the serpent, though we shall generally learn this wisdom by our blunders and imprudence: and we must make some advance in Christianity, before we know our imprudence. A person really converted, can say, as it is reported of a philosopher, "I wish there was a window in my breast, that every one may see the uprightness of my heart and intentions:" And though there is too much of the old man in us, yet, if we are really converted, there will be in us no allowed guile, we shall be harmless. And that is the reason why the poor Christian is too often imposed upon; he judgeth other people by himself; having an honest heart, he thinks every one as honest as himself, and therefore is a prey to every one. I might enlarge upon each of these points, it is a copious and important truth; but I do not intend to multiply many marks and heads.

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## Are you Converted?

And therefore, as I have something to say by way of personal application, give me leave therefore, with the utmost tenderness, and at the same time with faithfulness, to call upon you, my dear friends. My text is introduced in an awful manner, "Verily I say unto you;" and what Jesus said then, he says now to you, to me, and to as many as sit under a preached gospel, and to as many as the Lord our God shall call. Let me exhort you to see whether ye are converted; whether such a great and almighty change has passed upon any of your souls. As I told you before, so I tell you again, ye all hope to go to heaven, and I pray God Almighty ye may be all there: when I see such a congregation as this, if my heart is in a proper frame, I feel myself ready to lay down my life, to be instrumental only to save one soul. It makes my heart bleed within me, it makes me sometimes most unwilling to preach, lest that word that I hope will do good, may increase the damnation of any, and perhaps of a great part of the auditory, through their own unbelief. Give me leave to deal faithfully with your souls. I have your dead warrant in my hand: Christ has said it, Jesus will stand to it, it is like the laws of the Medes and Persians, it altereth not. Hark, O man! Hark, O woman! He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Lord Jesus Christ says, "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Though this is Saturday night, and ye are now preparing for the Sabbath, for what you know, you may yet never live to see the Sabbath. You have had awful proofs of this lately; a woman died but yesterday, a man died the day before, another was killed by something that fell from a house, and it may be in twenty-four hours more, many of you may be carried into an unalterable state. Now then, for God's sake, for your own souls sake, if ye have a mind to dwell with God, and cannot bear the thought of dwelling in everlasting burning, before I go any further, silently put up one prayer, or say Amen to the prayer I would put in your mouths; "Lord, search me and try me, Lord, examine my heart, and let my conscience speak; O let me know whether I am converted or not!" What say ye, my dear hearers? What say ye, my fellow-sinners? What say ye, my guilty brethren? Has God by his blessed Spirit wrought such a change in your hearts? I do not ask you, whether God has made you angels? That I know will never be; I only ask you, Whether ye have any well-grounded hope to think that God has made you new creatures in Christ Jesus? So renewed and changed your natures, that you can say, I humbly hope, that as to the habitual temper and tendency of my mind, that my heart is free from wickedness; I have a husband, I have a wife, I have also children, I keep a shop, I mind my business; but I love these creatures for God' sake, and do every thing for Christ: and if God was now to call me away, according to the habitual temper of my mind, I can say, Lord, I am ready; and however I love the creatures, I hope I can say, Whom have I in heaven but thee? Whom have I in heaven, O my God and my dear Redeemer, that I desire in comparison of thee? Can you thank God for the creatures, and say at the same time, these are not my Christ? I speak in plain language, you know my way of preaching: I do not want to play the orator, I do not want to be counted a scholar; I want to speak so as I may reach poor people's hearts. What say ye, my dear hearers? Are ye sensible of your weakness? Do ye feel that ye are poor, miserable, blind, and naked by nature? Do ye give up your hearts, your affections, your wills, your understanding to be guided by the Spirit of God, as a little child gives up its hand to be guided by its parent? Are ye little in your own eyes? Do ye think meanly of yourselves? And do you want to learn something new every day? I mention these marks, because I am apt to believe they are more adapted to a great many of your capacities. A great many of you have not that showing of affection ye sometimes had, therefore ye are for giving up all your evidences, and making way for the devil's coming into your heart. You are not brought up to the mount as ye used to be, therefore ye conclude ye have no grace at all. But if the Lord Jesus Christ has emptied thee, and humbled thee, if he is giving thee to se and know that thou art nothing; though thou are not growing upward, thou art growing downward; and though thou hast not so much joy, yet thy heart is emptying to be more abundantly replenished by and by. Can any of you follow me? Then, give God thanks, and take the comfort of it.

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## God's Children

If thou art thus converted, and become a little child, I welcome thee, in the name of the Lord Jesus, into God's dear family; I welcome thee, in the name of the dear Redeemer, into the company of God's children. O ye dear souls, though the world sees nothing in you, though there be no outward difference between you and others, yet I look upon you in another light, even as so many kings sons and daughters: all hail! In the name of God, I wish every one of you joy from my soul, ye sons and daughters of the King of kings. Will not you henceforth exercise a child-like temper? Will not such a thought melt down your hearts, when I tell you, that the great God, who might have frowned you to hell for your secret sins, that nobody knew of but God and your own souls, and who might have damned you times without number, hath cast the mantle of his love over you; his voice hath been, Let that man, that woman live, for I have found a ransom. O will ye not cry out, Why me, Lord? Was King George to send for any of your children, and were you to hear they were to be his adopted sons, how highly honored would you think your children to be? What great condescension was it for Pharaoh's daughter to take up Moses, a poor child exposed in an ark of bulrushes, and bred him up for her child? But what is that happiness in comparison of thine, who was the other day a child of the devil, but now by converting grace art become a child of God? Are ye converted? Are ye become like little children? Then what must ye do? My dear hearers, be obedient to God, remember God is your father; and as every one of you must know what a dreadful cross it is to have a wicked, disobedient child; if ye do not want your children to be disobedient to you, for Christ's sake be not disobedient to your heavenly parent. If God be your father, obey him: if God be your father, serve him; love him with all your heart, love him with all your might, with all your soul, and with all your strength. If God be your father, fly from everything that may displease him; and walk worthy of that God, who has called you to his kingdom and glory. If ye are converted and become like little children, then behave as little children: they long for the breast, and with it will be contented. Are ye new-born babes? Then desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. I do not want that Arminian husks should go down with you; ye are kings sons and daughters, and have a more refined taste; you must have the doctrines of grace; and blessed be God that you dwell in a country, where the sincere word is so plainly preached. Are ye children? Then grow in grace, and in the knowledge of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Have any of you children that do not grow? Do not ye lament these children, and cry over them; do not ye say, my child will never be fit for anything in the world? Well, doth it grieve you to see a child that will not grow; how much must it grieve the heart of Christ to see you grow so little? Will ye be always children? Will ye be always learning the first principles of Christianity, and never press forward toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus? God forbid. Let the language of your heart be, "Lord Jesus help me to grow, help me to learn more, learn me to live so as my progress may be known to all!"

Are ye God's children? Are ye converted, and become like little children? Then deal with God as your little children do with you; as soon as ever they want any thing, or if any body hurt them, I appeal to yourselves if they do not directly run to their parent. Well, are ye God's children? Doth the devil trouble you? Doth the world trouble you? Go tell your father of it, go directly and complain to God. Perhaps you may say, I cannot utter fine words: but do any of you expect fine words from your children? If they come crying, and can speak but half words, do not your hearts yearn over them? And has not God unspeakably more pity to you? If ye can only make signs to him;

"As a father pitieth his children, so will the Lord pity them that fear him."

I pray you therefore be gold with your Father, saying, "Abba, Father," Satan troubles me, the world troubles me, my own mother's children are angry with me; heavenly Father, plead my cause! The Lord will then speak for you some way or other.

Are ye converted, and become as little children, have ye entered into God's family? Then assure yourselves, that your heavenly father will chasten you now and then: "for what son is there whom the father chasteneth not: if ye are without chastisement, of which all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons." It is recorded of bishop Latimer, that in the house where he came to lodge, he overheard the master of the house say, I thank God I never had a cross in my life: O said he, then I will not stay here. I believe there is not a child of God, when in a good frame, but has prayed for great humility; they have prayed for great faith, they have prayed for great love, they have prayed for all the graces of the Spirit: Do ye know, when ye put us these prayers, that ye did also say, Lord send us great trials: for how is it possible to know ye have great faith, humility and love, unless God put you into great trials, that ye may know whether ye have them or not. I mention this, because a great many of the children of God (I am sure it has been a temptation to me many times, when I have been under God's smarting rod) when they have great trials, think God is giving them over. If therefore ye are God's children; if ye are converted and become as little children; do not expect that God will be like a foolish parent; no, he is a jealous God, he loves his child too well to spare his rod. How did he correct Miriam? How did he correct Moses? How hath God in all ages corrected his dearest children? Therefore if ye are converted, and become as little children, if God hath taken away a child, or your substance, if God suffers friends to forsake you, and if you are forsaken as it were both by God and man, say, Lord I thank thee! I am a perverse child, or God would not strike me so often and so hard. Do not blame your heavenly Father, but blame yourselves; he is a loving God, and a tender Father, "he is afflicted in all our afflictions:" therefore when God spake to Moses, he spake out of the bush, as much as to say,

"Moses, this bush represents my people; as this bush is burning with fire, so are my children to burn with affliction; but I am in the bush; if the bush burns, I will burn with it, I will be with them in the furnace, I will be with them in the water, and though the water come over them, it shall not overflow them."

Are ye God's children? Are ye converted and become as little children? Then will ye not long to go home and see your Father? O happy they that have gotten home before you; happy they that are up yonder, happy they who have ascended above this field of conflict. I know not what you may think of it, but since I heard that some, whose hearts God was pleased to work upon, are gone to glory, I am sometimes filled with grief, that God is not pleased to let me go home too. How can you see so much coldness among God's people? How can ye see God's people like the moon, waxing and waning? Who can but desire to be forever with the Lord? Thanks be to God, the time is soon coming; thanks be to God, he will come and will not tarry. Do not be impatient, God in his own time will fetch you home. And though ye may be brought to short allowance now, though some of you may be narrow in your circumstances, yet do not repine; a God, and the gospel of Christ, with brown bread, are great riches. In thy Father's house there is bread enough and to spare; though thou are now tormented, yet by and by thou shalt be comforted; the angels will look upon it as an honor to convey thee to Abraham's bosom, though thou are but a Lazarus here. By the frame of my heart, I am much inclined to speak comfortably to God's people.

But I only mention one thing more, and that is, if ye are converted, and become as little children, then for God's sake take care of doing what children often do; they are too apt to quarrel one with another. O love one another; "he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him." Joseph knew that his brethren were in danger of falling out, therefore when he left them, says he, "fall not out by the way." Ye are all children of the same Father, ye are all going to the same place; why should ye differ? The world has enough against us, the devil has enough against us, without our quarreling with each other; O walk in love. If I could preach no more, if I was not able to hold out to the end of my sermon, I would say as John did, when he was grown old and could not preach, "Little children, love one another:" if ye are God's children, then love one another. There is nothing grieves me more, than the differences amongst God's people. O hasten that time, when we shall either go to heaven, or never quarrel any more!

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## Conclusion

Would to God I could speak to all of you in this comfortable language; but my master tells me, I must "not give that which is holy to dogs, I must not cast pearls before swine;" therefore, though I have been speaking comfortably, yet what I have been saying, especially in this latter part of the discourse, belongs to children; it is children's bread, it belongs to God's people. If any of you are graceless, Christless, unconverted creatures, I charge you not to touch it, I fence it in the name of God; here is a flaming sword turning every way to keep you from this bread of life, till ye are turned to Jesus Christ. And therefore, as I suppose many of you are unconverted, and graceless, go home! And away to your closets, and down with your stubborn hearts before God; if ye have not done lit before, let this be the night. Or, do not stay till ye go home; begin now, while standing here; pray to God, and let the language of thy heart be, Lord convert me! Lord make me a little child, Lord Jesus let me not be banished from thy kingdom! My dear friends, there is a great deal more implied in the words, than is expressed: when Christ says, "Ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," it is as much to say, "ye shall certainly go to hell, ye shall certainly be damned, and dwell in the blackness of darkness for ever, ye shall go where the worm dies not, and where the fire is not quenched." The Lord God impress it upon your souls! May an arrow (as one lately wrote me in a letter) dipped in the blood of Christ, reach every unconverted sinner's heart! May God fulfill the text to every one of your souls! It is he alone that can do it. If ye confess your sins, and leave them, and lay hold on the Lord Jesus Christ, the Spirit of God shall be given you; if you will go and say, turn me, O my God! Thou knowest not, O man, what the return of God may be to thee. Did I think that preaching would be to the purpose, did I think that arguments would induce you to come, I would continue my discourse till midnight. And however some of you may hate me without a cause, would to God every one in this congregation was as much concerned for himself, as at present (blessed be God) I feel myself concerned for him. O that my head were waters, O that mine eyes were a fountain of tears, that I might weep over an unconverted, graceless, wicked, and adulterous generation. Precious souls, for God's sake think what will become of you when ye die, if you die without being converted; if ye go hence without the wedding garment, God will strike you speechless, and ye shall be banished from his presence for ever and ever. I know ye cannot dwell with everlasting burnings; behold then I show you a way of escape; Jesus is the way, Jesus is the truth, the Lord Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the live. It is his Spirit must convert you, come to Christ, and ye shall have it; and may God for Christ's sake give it to you all, and convert you, that we may all meet, never to part again, in his heavenly kingdom; even so Lord Jesus, Amen and Amen.

# The Almost Christian

by George Whitefield

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## Introduction

"Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," Acts 26:28

THE CHAPTER, OUT OF which the text is taken, contains an admirable account which the great St. Paul gave of his wonderful conversion from Judaism to Christianity, when he was called to make his defense before Festus a Gentile governor, and king Agrippa. Our blessed Lord had long since foretold, that when the Son of man should be lifted up, "his disciples should be brought before kings and rulers, for his name's sake, for a testimony unto them." And very good was the design of infinite wisdom in thus ordaining it; for Christianity being, from the beginning, a doctrine of the Cross, the princes and rulers of the earth thought themselves too high to be instructed by such mean teachers, or too happy to be disturbed b such unwelcome truths; and therefore would have always continued strangers to Jesus Christ, and him crucified, had not the apostles, by being arraigned before them, gained opportunities of preaching to them "Jesus and the resurrection." St. Paul knew full well that this was the main reason, why his blessed Master permitted his enemies at this time to arraign him at a public bar; and therefore, in compliance with the divine will, thinks it not sufficient, barely to make his defense, but endeavors at the same time to convert his judges. And this he did with such demonstration of the spirit, and of power, that Festus, unwilling to be convinced by the strongest evidence, cries out with a loud voice, "Paul, much earning doth make thee mad." To which the brave apostle (like a true follower of the holy Jesus) meekly replies, I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness." But in all probability, seeing king Agrippa more affected with his discourse, and observing in him an inclination to know the truth, he applies himself more particularly to him. "The king knoweth of these things; before whom also I speak freely; for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him." And then, that if possible he might complete his wished-for conversion, he with an inimitable strain of oratory, addresses himself still more closely, "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest them." At which the passions of the king began to work so strongly, that he was obliged in open court, to own himself affected by the prisoner's preaching, and ingenuously to cry out, "Paul, almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

Which words, taken with the context, afford us a lively representation of the different reception, which the doctrine of Christ's ministers, who come in the power and spirit of St. Paul, meets with now-a-days in the minds of men. For notwithstanding they, like this great apostle, "speak forth the words of truth and soberness;" and with such energy and power, that all their adversaries cannot justly gainsay or resist; yet, too many, with the noble Festus before-mentioned, being like him, either too proud to be taught, or too sensual, too careless, or too worldly-minded to live up to the doctrine, in order to excuse themselves, cry out, that "much learning, much study, or, what is more unaccountable, much piety, hath made them mad." And though, blessed be God! All do not thus disbelieve our report; yet amongst those who gladly receive the word, and confess that we speak the words of truth and soberness, there are so few, who arrive at any higher degree of piety than that of Agrippa, or are any farther persuaded than to be almost Christians, that I cannot but think it highly necessary to warn my dear hearers of the danger of such a state. And therefore, from the words of the text, shall endeavor to show these three things:

FIRST, What is meant by an almost-Christian.

SECONDLY, What are the chief reasons, why so many are no more than almost Christians.

THIRDLY, I shall consider the ineffectualness, danger, absurdity, and uneasiness which attends those who are but almost Christians; and then conclude with a general exhortation, to set all upon striving not only be almost, but altogether Christians.

## What Is An Almost Christian?

1.) And, FIRST, I am to consider what is meant by an almost Christian.

An almost Christian, if we consider him in respect to his duty to God, is one that halts between two opinions; that wavers between Christ and the world; that would reconcile God and Mammon, light and darkness, Christ and Belial. It is true, he has an inclination to religion, but then he is very cautious how he goes too far in it: his false heart is always crying out, Spare thyself, do thyself no harm. He prays indeed, that "God's will may be done on earth, as it is in heaven." But notwithstanding, he is very partial in his obedience, and fondly hopes that God will not be extreme to mark every thing that he willfully does amiss; though an inspired apostle has told him, that "he who offends in one point is guilty of all." But chiefly, he is one that depends much on outward ordinances, and on that account looks upon himself as righteous, and despises others; though at the same time he is as great a stranger to the divine life as any other person whatsoever. In short, he is fond of the form, but never experiences the power of godliness in his heart. He goes on year after year, attending on the means of grace, but then, like Pharaoh's lean kine [cow?], he is never the better, but rather the worse for them.

If you consider him in respect to his neighbor, he is one that is strictly just to all; but then this does not proceed from any love to God or regard to man, but only through a principle of self-love: because he knows dishonesty will spoil his reputation, and consequently hinder his thriving in the world.

He is one that depends much upon being negatively good, and contents himself with the consciousness of having done no one any harm; though he reads in the gospel, that "the unprofitable servant was cast into outer darkness," and the barren fig-tree was cursed and dried up from the roots, not for bearing bad, but no fruit.

He is no enemy to charitable contributions in public, if not too frequently recommended: but then he is unacquainted with the kind offices of visiting the sick and imprisoned, clothing the naked, and relieving the hungry in a private manner. He thinks that these things belong only to the clergy, though his own false heart tells him, that nothing but pride keeps him from exercising these acts of humility; and that Jesus Christ, in the 25th chapter of St. Matthew, condemns persons to everlasting punishment, not merely for being fornicators, drunkards, or extortioners, but for neglecting these charitable offices, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, he shall set the sheep on his right-hand, and the goats on his left. And then shall he say unto them on his left hand, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also say, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or a-thirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have not done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not unto me: and these shall go away into everlasting punishment unto me: and these shall go away into everlasting punishment." I thought proper to give you this whole passage of scripture at large, because our Savior lays such a particular stress upon it; and yet it is so little regarded, that were we to judge by the practice of Christians, one should be tempted to think there were no such verses in the Bible.

But to proceed in the character of an ALMOST CHRISTIAN: If we consider him in respect of himself; as we said he was strictly honest to his neighbor, so he is likewise strictly sober in himself: but then both his honesty and sobriety proceed from the same principle of a false self-love. It is true, he runs not into the same excess of riot with other men; but then it is not out of obedience to the laws of God, but either because his constitution will not away with intemperance; or rather because he is cautious of forfeiting his reputation, or unfitting himself for temporal business. But though he is so prudent as to avoid intemperance and excess, for the reasons before-mentioned; yet he always goes to the extremity of what is lawful. It is true, he is no drunkard; but then he has no CHRISTIAN SELF-DENIAL. He cannot think our Savior to be so austere a Master, as to deny us to indulge ourselves in some particulars: and so by this means he is destitute of a sense of true religion, as much as if he lived in debauchery, or any other crime whatever. As to settling his principles as well as practice, he is guided more by the world, than by the word of God: for his part, he cannot think the way to heaven so narrow as some would make it; and therefore considers not so much what scripture requires, as what such and such a good man does, or what will best suit his own corrupt inclinations. Upon this account, he is not only very cautious himself, but likewise very careful of young converts, whose faces are set heavenward; and therefore is always acting the devil's part, and bidding them spare themselves, though they are doing no more than what the scripture strictly requires them to do: The consequence of which is, that "he suffers not himself to enter into the kingdom of God, and those that are entering in he hinders."

Thus lives the almost Christian: not that I can say, I have fully described him to you; but from these outlines and sketches of his character, if your consciences have done their proper office, and made a particular application of what has been said to your own hearts, I cannot but fear that some of you may observe some features in his picture, odious as it is, to near resembling your own; and therefore I cannot but hope, that you will join with the apostle in the words immediately following the text, and wish yourselves "to be not only almost, but altogether Christians."

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"Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," Acts 26:28

# The Almost Christian

by George Whitefield

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## Introduction

"Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," Acts 26:28

THE CHAPTER, OUT OF which the text is taken, contains an admirable account which the great St. Paul gave of his wonderful conversion from Judaism to Christianity, when he was called to make his defense before Festus a Gentile governor, and king Agrippa. Our blessed Lord had long since foretold, that when the Son of man should be lifted up, "his disciples should be brought before kings and rulers, for his name's sake, for a testimony unto them." And very good was the design of infinite wisdom in thus ordaining it; for Christianity being, from the beginning, a doctrine of the Cross, the princes and rulers of the earth thought themselves too high to be instructed by such mean teachers, or too happy to be disturbed b such unwelcome truths; and therefore would have always continued strangers to Jesus Christ, and him crucified, had not the apostles, by being arraigned before them, gained opportunities of preaching to them "Jesus and the resurrection." St. Paul knew full well that this was the main reason, why his blessed Master permitted his enemies at this time to arraign him at a public bar; and therefore, in compliance with the divine will, thinks it not sufficient, barely to make his defense, but endeavors at the same time to convert his judges. And this he did with such demonstration of the spirit, and of power, that Festus, unwilling to be convinced by the strongest evidence, cries out with a loud voice, "Paul, much earning doth make thee mad." To which the brave apostle (like a true follower of the holy Jesus) meekly replies, I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness." But in all probability, seeing king Agrippa more affected with his discourse, and observing in him an inclination to know the truth, he applies himself more particularly to him. "The king knoweth of these things; before whom also I speak freely; for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him." And then, that if possible he might complete his wished-for conversion, he with an inimitable strain of oratory, addresses himself still more closely, "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest them." At which the passions of the king began to work so strongly, that he was obliged in open court, to own himself affected by the prisoner's preaching, and ingenuously to cry out, "Paul, almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

Which words, taken with the context, afford us a lively representation of the different reception, which the doctrine of Christ's ministers, who come in the power and spirit of St. Paul, meets with now-a-days in the minds of men. For notwithstanding they, like this great apostle, "speak forth the words of truth and soberness;" and with such energy and power, that all their adversaries cannot justly gainsay or resist; yet, too many, with the noble Festus before-mentioned, being like him, either too proud to be taught, or too sensual, too careless, or too worldly-minded to live up to the doctrine, in order to excuse themselves, cry out, that "much learning, much study, or, what is more unaccountable, much piety, hath made them mad." And though, blessed be God! All do not thus disbelieve our report; yet amongst those who gladly receive the word, and confess that we speak the words of truth and soberness, there are so few, who arrive at any higher degree of piety than that of Agrippa, or are any farther persuaded than to be almost Christians, that I cannot but think it highly necessary to warn my dear hearers of the danger of such a state. And therefore, from the words of the text, shall endeavor to show these three things:

FIRST, What is meant by an almost-Christian.

SECONDLY, What are the chief reasons, why so many are no more than almost Christians.

THIRDLY, I shall consider the ineffectualness, danger, absurdity, and uneasiness which attends those who are but almost Christians; and then conclude with a general exhortation, to set all upon striving not only be almost, but altogether Christians.

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## What Is An Almost Christian?

1.) And, FIRST, I am to consider what is meant by an almost Christian.

An almost Christian, if we consider him in respect to his duty to God, is one that halts between two opinions; that wavers between Christ and the world; that would reconcile God and Mammon, light and darkness, Christ and Belial. It is true, he has an inclination to religion, but then he is very cautious how he goes too far in it: his false heart is always crying out, Spare thyself, do thyself no harm. He prays indeed, that "God's will may be done on earth, as it is in heaven." But notwithstanding, he is very partial in his obedience, and fondly hopes that God will not be extreme to mark every thing that he willfully does amiss; though an inspired apostle has told him, that "he who offends in one point is guilty of all." But chiefly, he is one that depends much on outward ordinances, and on that account looks upon himself as righteous, and despises others; though at the same time he is as great a stranger to the divine life as any other person whatsoever. In short, he is fond of the form, but never experiences the power of godliness in his heart. He goes on year after year, attending on the means of grace, but then, like Pharaoh's lean kine [cow?], he is never the better, but rather the worse for them.

If you consider him in respect to his neighbor, he is one that is strictly just to all; but then this does not proceed from any love to God or regard to man, but only through a principle of self-love: because he knows dishonesty will spoil his reputation, and consequently hinder his thriving in the world.

He is one that depends much upon being negatively good, and contents himself with the consciousness of having done no one any harm; though he reads in the gospel, that "the unprofitable servant was cast into outer darkness," and the barren fig-tree was cursed and dried up from the roots, not for bearing bad, but no fruit.

He is no enemy to charitable contributions in public, if not too frequently recommended: but then he is unacquainted with the kind offices of visiting the sick and imprisoned, clothing the naked, and relieving the hungry in a private manner. He thinks that these things belong only to the clergy, though his own false heart tells him, that nothing but pride keeps him from exercising these acts of humility; and that Jesus Christ, in the 25th chapter of St. Matthew, condemns persons to everlasting punishment, not merely for being fornicators, drunkards, or extortioners, but for neglecting these charitable offices, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, he shall set the sheep on his right-hand, and the goats on his left. And then shall he say unto them on his left hand, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also say, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or a-thirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have not done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not unto me: and these shall go away into everlasting punishment unto me: and these shall go away into everlasting punishment." I thought proper to give you this whole passage of scripture at large, because our Savior lays such a particular stress upon it; and yet it is so little regarded, that were we to judge by the practice of Christians, one should be tempted to think there were no such verses in the Bible.

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## Why So Many Are Almost Christians?

2.) I proceed to the second general thing proposed; to consider the reasons why so many are no more than almost Christians.

1. And the first reason I shall mention is, because so many set out with false notions of religion; though they live in a Christian country, yet they know not what Christianity is. This perhaps may be esteemed a hard saying, but experience sadly evinces the truth of it; for some place religion in being of this or that communion; more in morality; most in a round of duties, and a model of performances; and few, very few acknowledge it to be, what it really is, a thorough inward change of nature, a divine life, a vital participation of Jesus Christ, an union of the soul with God; which the apostle expresses by saying, "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." Hence it happens, that so many, even of the most knowing professors, when you come to converse with them concerning the essence, the life, the soul of religion, I mean our new birth in Jesus Christ, confess themselves quite ignorant of the matter, and cry out with Nicodemus, "How can this thing be?" And no wonder then, that so many are only almost Christians, when so many know not what Christianity is: no marvel, that so many take up with the form, when they are quite strangers to the power of godliness; or content themselves with the shadow, when they know so little about the substance of it. And this is one cause why so many are almost, and so few are altogether Christians.

2. A second reason that may be assigned why so many are no more than almost Christians, is a servile fear of man: multitudes there are and have been, who, though awakened to a sense of the divine life, and have tasted and felt the powers of the world to come; yet out of a base sinful fear of being counted singular, or contemned by men, have suffered all those good impressions to wear off. It is true, they have some esteem for Jesus Christ; but then, like Nicodemus, they would come to him only by night: they are willing to serve him; but then they would do it secretly, for fear of the Jews: they have a mind to see Jesus, but then they cannot come to him because of the press, and for fear of being laughed at, and ridiculed by those with whom they used to sit at meat. But well did our Savior prophesy of such persons, "How can ye love me, who receive honor one of another?" Alas! have they never read, that "the friendship of this world is enmity with God;" and that our Lord himself has threatened, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me or of my words, in this wicked and adulterous generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father and of his holy angels?" No wonder that so many are no more than almost Christians, since so many "love the praise of men more than the honor which cometh of God."

3. A third reason why so many are no more than almost Christians, is a reigning love of money. This was the pitiable case of that forward young man in the gospel, who came running to our blessed Lord, and kneeling before him, inquired "what he must do to inherit eternal life;" to whom our blessed Master replied, "Thou knowest the commandments, Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal:" To which the young man replied, "All these have I kept from my youth." But when our Lord proceeded to tell him, "Yet lackest thou one thing; Go sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor; he was grieved at that saying, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions!" Poor youth! He had a good mind to be a Christian, and to inherit eternal life, but thought it too dear, if it could be purchased at no less an expense than of his estate! And thus many, both young and old, now-a-days, come running to worship our blessed Lord in public, and kneel before him in private, and inquire at his gospel, what they must do to inherit eternal life: but when they find they must renounce the self-enjoyment of riches, and forsake all in affection to follow him, they cry, "The Lord pardon us in this thing! We pray thee, have us excused."

But is heaven so small a trifle in men's esteem, as not to be worth a little gilded earth? Is eternal life so mean a purchase, as not to deserve the temporary renunciation of a few transitory riches? Surely it is. But however inconsistent such a behavior may be, this inordinate love of money is too evidently the common and fatal cause, why so many are no more than almost Christians.

4. Nor is the love of pleasure a less uncommon, or a less fatal cause why so many are no more than almost Christians. Thousands and ten thousands there are, who despise riches, and would willingly be true disciples of Jesus Christ, if parting with their money would make them so; but when they are told that our blessed Lord has said, "Whosoever will come after him must deny himself;" like the pitiable young man before-mentioned, "they go away sorrowful"" for they have too great a love for sensual pleasures. They will perhaps send for the ministers of Christ, as Herod did for John, and hear them gladly: but touch them in their Herodias, tell them they must part with such or such a darling pleasure; and with wicked Ahab they cry out, "Hast thou found us, O our enemy?" Tell them of the necessity of mortification and self-denial, and it is as difficult for them to hear, as if you was to bid them "cut off a right-hand, or pluck out a right-eye." They cannot think our blessed Lord requires so much at their hands, though an inspired apostle has commanded us to "mortify our members which are upon earth." And who himself, even after he had converted thousands, and was very near arrived to the end of his race, yet professed that it was his daily practice to "keep under his body, and bring it into subjection, lest after he had preached to others, he himself should be a cast-away!" But some men would be wiser than this great apostle, and chalk out to us what they falsely imagine an easier way to happiness. They would flatter us, we may go to heaven without offering violence to our sensual appetites; and enter into the strait gate without striving against our carnal inclinations. And this is another reason why so many are only almost, and not altogether Christians.

5. The fifth and last reason I shall assign why so many are only almost Christians, is a fickleness and instability of temper.

It has been, no doubt, a misfortune that many a minister and sincere Christian has met with, to weep and wail over numbers of promising converts, who seemingly began in the Spirit, but after a while fell away, and basely ended in the flesh; and this not for want of right notions in religion, nor out of a servile fear of man, nor from the love of money, or of sensual pleasure, but through an instability and fickleness of temper. They looked upon religion merely for novelty, as something which pleased them for a while; but after their curiosity was satisfied, they laid it aside again: like the young man that came to see Jesus with a linen cloth about his naked body, they have followed him for a season, but when temptations came to take hold on them, for want of a little more resolution, they have been stripped of all their good intentions, and fled away naked. They at first, like a tree planted by the water-side, grew up and flourished for a while; but having no root in themselves, no inward principle of holiness and piety, like Jonah's gourd, they were soon dried up and withered. Their good intentions are too like the violent motions of the animal spirits of a body newly beheaded, which, though impetuous, are not lasting. In short, they set out well in their journey to heaven, but finding the way either narrower or longer than they expected, through an unsteadiness of temper, they have made an eternal halt, and so "returned like the dog to his vomit, or like the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the more!"

But I tremble to pronounce the fate of such unstable professors, who having put their hands to the plough, for want of a little more resolution, shamefully look back. How shall I repeat to them that dreadful threatening, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him:" And again, "It is impossible (that is, exceeding difficult at least) for those that have been once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and the powers of the world to come, if they should fall away, to be renewed again unto repentance." But notwithstanding the gospel is so severe against apostates, yet many that begun well, through a fickleness of temper, (O that none of us here present may ever be such) have been by this means of the number of those that turn back unto perdition. And this is the fifth, and the last reason I shall give, why so many are only almost, and not altogether Christians.

## The Dangers of Being An Almost Christian

3.) Proceed we now to the general thing proposed, namely, to consider the folly of being no more than an almost Christian.

1. And the FIRST proof I shall give of the folly of such a proceeding is, that it is ineffectual to salvation. It is true, such men are almost good; but almost to hit the mark, is really to miss it. God requires us "to love him with all our hearts, with all our souls, and with all our strength." He loves us too well to admit any rival; because, so far as our hearts are empty of God, so far must they be unhappy. The devil, indeed, like the false mother that came before Solomon, would have our hearts divided, as she would have had the child; but God, like the true mother, will have all or none. "My Son, give me thy heart," thy whole heart, is the general call to all: and if this be not done, we never can expect the divine mercy.

Persons may play the hypocrite; but God at the great day will strike them dead, (as he did Ananias and Sapphira by the mouth of his servant Peter) for pretending to offer him all their hearts, when they keep back from him the greatest part. They may perhaps impose upon their fellow-creatures for a while; but he that enabled Elijah to cry out, "Come in thou wife of Jeroboam," when she came disguised to inquire about he sick son, will also discover them through their most artful dissimulations; and if their hearts are not wholly with him, appoint them their portion with hypocrites and unbelievers.

2. But, SECONDLY, What renders an half-way-piety more inexcusable is, that it is not only insufficient to our own salvation, but also very prejudicial to that of others.

An almost Christian is one of the most hurtful creatures in the world; he is a wolf in sheep's clothing: he is one of those false prophets, our blessed Lord bids us beware of in his sermon on the mount, who would persuade men, that the way to heaven is broader than it really is; and thereby, as it was observed before, "enter not into the kingdom of God themselves, and those that are entering in they hinder." These, these are the men that turn the world into a luke-warm Laodicean spirit; that hang out false lights, and so shipwreck unthinking benighted souls in their voyage to the haven of eternity. These are they who are greater enemies to the cross of Christ, than infidels themselves: for of an unbeliever every one will be aware; but an almost Christian, through his subtle hypocrisy, draws away many after him; and therefore must expect to receive the greater damnation.

3. But, THIRDLY, As it is most prejudicial to ourselves and hurtful to others, so it is the greatest instance of ingratitude we can express towards our Lord and Master Jesus Christ. For did he come down from heaven, and shed his precious blood, to purchase these hearts of ours, and shall we only give him half of them? O how can we say we love him, when our hearts are not wholly with him? How can we call him our Savior, when we will not endeavor sincerely to approve ourselves to him, and so let him see the travail of his soul, and be satisfied!

Had any of us purchased a slave at a most expensive rate, and who was before involved in the utmost miseries and torments, and so must have continued for ever, had we shut up our bowels of compassion from him; and was this slave afterwards to grow rebellious, or deny giving us but half his service; how, how should we exclaim against his base ingratitude! And yet this base ungrateful slave thou art, O man, who acknowledgest thyself to be redeemed from infinite unavoidable misery and punishment by the death of Jesus Christ, and yet wilt not give thyself wholly to him. But shall we deal with God our Maker in a manner we would not be dealt with by a man like ourselves? God forbid! No. Suffer me, therefore,

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"Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," Acts 26:28

THE CHAPTER, OUT OF which the text is taken, contains an admirable account which the great St. Paul gave of his wonderful conversion from Judaism to Christianity, when he was called to make his defense before Festus a Gentile governor, and king Agrippa. Our blessed Lord had long since foretold, that when the Son of man should be lifted up, "his disciples should be brought before kings and rulers, for his name's sake, for a testimony unto them." And very good was the design of infinite wisdom in thus ordaining it; for Christianity being, from the beginning, a doctrine of the Cross, the princes and rulers of the earth thought themselves too high to be instructed by such mean teachers, or too happy to be disturbed b such unwelcome truths; and therefore would have always continued strangers to Jesus Christ, and him crucified, had not the apostles, by being arraigned before them, gained opportunities of preaching to them "Jesus and the resurrection." St. Paul knew full well that this was the main reason, why his blessed Master permitted his enemies at this time to arraign him at a public bar; and therefore, in compliance with the divine will, thinks it not sufficient, barely to make his defense, but endeavors at the same time to convert his judges. And this he did with such demonstration of the spirit, and of power, that Festus, unwilling to be convinced by the strongest evidence, cries out with a loud voice, "Paul, much earning doth make thee mad." To which the brave apostle (like a true follower of the holy Jesus) meekly replies, I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness." But in all probability, seeing king Agrippa more affected with his discourse, and observing in him an inclination to know the truth, he applies himself more particularly to him. "The king knoweth of these things; before whom also I speak freely; for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him." And then, that if possible he might complete his wished-for conversion, he with an inimitable strain of oratory, addresses himself still more closely, "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest them." At which the passions of the king began to work so strongly, that he was obliged in open court, to own himself affected by the prisoner's preaching, and ingenuously to cry out, "Paul, almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

Which words, taken with the context, afford us a lively representation of the different reception, which the doctrine of Christ's ministers, who come in the power and spirit of St. Paul, meets with now-a-days in the minds of men. For notwithstanding they, like this great apostle, "speak forth the words of truth and soberness;" and with such energy and power, that all their adversaries cannot justly gainsay or resist; yet, too many, with the noble Festus before-mentioned, being like him, either too proud to be taught, or too sensual, too careless, or too worldly-minded to live up to the doctrine, in order to excuse themselves, cry out, that "much learning, much study, or, what is more unaccountable, much piety, hath made them mad." And though, blessed be God! All do not thus disbelieve our report; yet amongst those who gladly receive the word, and confess that we speak the words of truth and soberness, there are so few, who arrive at any higher degree of piety than that of Agrippa, or are any farther persuaded than to be almost Christians, that I cannot but think it highly necessary to warn my dear hearers of the danger of such a state. And therefore, from the words of the text, shall endeavor to show these three things:

FIRST, What is meant by an almost-Christian.

SECONDLY, What are the chief reasons, why so many are no more than almost Christians.

THIRDLY, I shall consider the ineffectualness, danger, absurdity, and uneasiness which attends those who are but almost Christians; and then conclude with a general exhortation, to set all upon striving not only be almost, but altogether Christians.

1  |  [2](http://www.christians.com/georgewhitefield/sermons/the_almost_christian?navtabs=1))  |  [3](http://www.christians.com/georgewhitefield/sermons/the_almost_christian?navtabs=2))  |  [4](http://www.christians.com/georgewhitefield/sermons/the_almost_christian?navtabs=3))  |  [5](http://www.christians.com/georgewhitefield/sermons/the_almost_christian?navtabs=4))  |  [Next](http://www.christians.com/georgewhitefield/sermons/the_almost_christian?navtabs=1)) »

## What Is An Almost Christian?

1.) And, FIRST, I am to consider what is meant by an almost Christian.

An almost Christian, if we consider him in respect to his duty to God, is one that halts between two opinions; that wavers between Christ and the world; that would reconcile God and Mammon, light and darkness, Christ and Belial. It is true, he has an inclination to religion, but then he is very cautious how he goes too far in it: his false heart is always crying out, Spare thyself, do thyself no harm. He prays indeed, that "God's will may be done on earth, as it is in heaven." But notwithstanding, he is very partial in his obedience, and fondly hopes that God will not be extreme to mark every thing that he willfully does amiss; though an inspired apostle has told him, that "he who offends in one point is guilty of all." But chiefly, he is one that depends much on outward ordinances, and on that account looks upon himself as righteous, and despises others; though at the same time he is as great a stranger to the divine life as any other person whatsoever. In short, he is fond of the form, but never experiences the power of godliness in his heart. He goes on year after year, attending on the means of grace, but then, like Pharaoh's lean kine [cow?], he is never the better, but rather the worse for them.

If you consider him in respect to his neighbor, he is one that is strictly just to all; but then this does not proceed from any love to God or regard to man, but only through a principle of self-love: because he knows dishonesty will spoil his reputation, and consequently hinder his thriving in the world.

He is one that depends much upon being negatively good, and contents himself with the consciousness of having done no one any harm; though he reads in the gospel, that "the unprofitable servant was cast into outer darkness," and the barren fig-tree was cursed and dried up from the roots, not for bearing bad, but no fruit.

He is no enemy to charitable contributions in public, if not too frequently recommended: but then he is unacquainted with the kind offices of visiting the sick and imprisoned, clothing the naked, and relieving the hungry in a private manner. He thinks that these things belong only to the clergy, though his own false heart tells him, that nothing but pride keeps him from exercising these acts of humility; and that Jesus Christ, in the 25th chapter of St. Matthew, condemns persons to everlasting punishment, not merely for being fornicators, drunkards, or extortioners, but for neglecting these charitable offices, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, he shall set the sheep on his right-hand, and the goats on his left. And then shall he say unto them on his left hand, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also say, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or a-thirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have not done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not unto me: and these shall go away into everlasting punishment unto me: and these shall go away into everlasting punishment." I thought proper to give you this whole passage of scripture at large, because our Savior lays such a particular stress upon it; and yet it is so little regarded, that were we to judge by the practice of Christians, one should be tempted to think there were no such verses in the Bible.

But to proceed in the character of an ALMOST CHRISTIAN: If we consider him in respect of himself; as we said he was strictly honest to his neighbor, so he is likewise strictly sober in himself: but then both his honesty and sobriety proceed from the same principle of a false self-love. It is true, he runs not into the same excess of riot with other men; but then it is not out of obedience to the laws of God, but either because his constitution will not away with intemperance; or rather because he is cautious of forfeiting his reputation, or unfitting himself for temporal business. But though he is so prudent as to avoid intemperance and excess, for the reasons before-mentioned; yet he always goes to the extremity of what is lawful. It is true, he is no drunkard; but then he has no CHRISTIAN SELF-DENIAL. He cannot think our Savior to be so austere a Master, as to deny us to indulge ourselves in some particulars: and so by this means he is destitute of a sense of true religion, as much as if he lived in debauchery, or any other crime whatever. As to settling his principles as well as practice, he is guided more by the world, than by the word of God: for his part, he cannot think the way to heaven so narrow as some would make it; and therefore considers not so much what scripture requires, as what such and such a good man does, or what will best suit his own corrupt inclinations. Upon this account, he is not only very cautious himself, but likewise very careful of young converts, whose faces are set heavenward; and therefore is always acting the devil's part, and bidding them spare themselves, though they are doing no more than what the scripture strictly requires them to do: The consequence of which is, that "he suffers not himself to enter into the kingdom of God, and those that are entering in he hinders."

Thus lives the almost Christian: not that I can say, I have fully described him to you; but from these outlines and sketches of his character, if your consciences have done their proper office, and made a particular application of what has been said to your own hearts, I cannot but fear that some of you may observe some features in his picture, odious as it is, to near resembling your own; and therefore I cannot but hope, that you will join with the apostle in the words immediately following the text, and wish yourselves "to be not only almost, but altogether Christians."

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## Why So Many Are Almost Christians?

2.) I proceed to the second general thing proposed; to consider the reasons why so many are no more than almost Christians.

1. And the first reason I shall mention is, because so many set out with false notions of religion; though they live in a Christian country, yet they know not what Christianity is. This perhaps may be esteemed a hard saying, but experience sadly evinces the truth of it; for some place religion in being of this or that communion; more in morality; most in a round of duties, and a model of performances; and few, very few acknowledge it to be, what it really is, a thorough inward change of nature, a divine life, a vital participation of Jesus Christ, an union of the soul with God; which the apostle expresses by saying, "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." Hence it happens, that so many, even of the most knowing professors, when you come to converse with them concerning the essence, the life, the soul of religion, I mean our new birth in Jesus Christ, confess themselves quite ignorant of the matter, and cry out with Nicodemus, "How can this thing be?" And no wonder then, that so many are only almost Christians, when so many know not what Christianity is: no marvel, that so many take up with the form, when they are quite strangers to the power of godliness; or content themselves with the shadow, when they know so little about the substance of it. And this is one cause why so many are almost, and so few are altogether Christians.

2. A second reason that may be assigned why so many are no more than almost Christians, is a servile fear of man: multitudes there are and have been, who, though awakened to a sense of the divine life, and have tasted and felt the powers of the world to come; yet out of a base sinful fear of being counted singular, or contemned by men, have suffered all those good impressions to wear off. It is true, they have some esteem for Jesus Christ; but then, like Nicodemus, they would come to him only by night: they are willing to serve him; but then they would do it secretly, for fear of the Jews: they have a mind to see Jesus, but then they cannot come to him because of the press, and for fear of being laughed at, and ridiculed by those with whom they used to sit at meat. But well did our Savior prophesy of such persons, "How can ye love me, who receive honor one of another?" Alas! have they never read, that "the friendship of this world is enmity with God;" and that our Lord himself has threatened, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me or of my words, in this wicked and adulterous generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father and of his holy angels?" No wonder that so many are no more than almost Christians, since so many "love the praise of men more than the honor which cometh of God."

3. A third reason why so many are no more than almost Christians, is a reigning love of money. This was the pitiable case of that forward young man in the gospel, who came running to our blessed Lord, and kneeling before him, inquired "what he must do to inherit eternal life;" to whom our blessed Master replied, "Thou knowest the commandments, Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal:" To which the young man replied, "All these have I kept from my youth." But when our Lord proceeded to tell him, "Yet lackest thou one thing; Go sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor; he was grieved at that saying, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions!" Poor youth! He had a good mind to be a Christian, and to inherit eternal life, but thought it too dear, if it could be purchased at no less an expense than of his estate! And thus many, both young and old, now-a-days, come running to worship our blessed Lord in public, and kneel before him in private, and inquire at his gospel, what they must do to inherit eternal life: but when they find they must renounce the self-enjoyment of riches, and forsake all in affection to follow him, they cry, "The Lord pardon us in this thing! We pray thee, have us excused."

But is heaven so small a trifle in men's esteem, as not to be worth a little gilded earth? Is eternal life so mean a purchase, as not to deserve the temporary renunciation of a few transitory riches? Surely it is. But however inconsistent such a behavior may be, this inordinate love of money is too evidently the common and fatal cause, why so many are no more than almost Christians.

4. Nor is the love of pleasure a less uncommon, or a less fatal cause why so many are no more than almost Christians. Thousands and ten thousands there are, who despise riches, and would willingly be true disciples of Jesus Christ, if parting with their money would make them so; but when they are told that our blessed Lord has said, "Whosoever will come after him must deny himself;" like the pitiable young man before-mentioned, "they go away sorrowful"" for they have too great a love for sensual pleasures. They will perhaps send for the ministers of Christ, as Herod did for John, and hear them gladly: but touch them in their Herodias, tell them they must part with such or such a darling pleasure; and with wicked Ahab they cry out, "Hast thou found us, O our enemy?" Tell them of the necessity of mortification and self-denial, and it is as difficult for them to hear, as if you was to bid them "cut off a right-hand, or pluck out a right-eye." They cannot think our blessed Lord requires so much at their hands, though an inspired apostle has commanded us to "mortify our members which are upon earth." And who himself, even after he had converted thousands, and was very near arrived to the end of his race, yet professed that it was his daily practice to "keep under his body, and bring it into subjection, lest after he had preached to others, he himself should be a cast-away!" But some men would be wiser than this great apostle, and chalk out to us what they falsely imagine an easier way to happiness. They would flatter us, we may go to heaven without offering violence to our sensual appetites; and enter into the strait gate without striving against our carnal inclinations. And this is another reason why so many are only almost, and not altogether Christians.

5. The fifth and last reason I shall assign why so many are only almost Christians, is a fickleness and instability of temper.

It has been, no doubt, a misfortune that many a minister and sincere Christian has met with, to weep and wail over numbers of promising converts, who seemingly began in the Spirit, but after a while fell away, and basely ended in the flesh; and this not for want of right notions in religion, nor out of a servile fear of man, nor from the love of money, or of sensual pleasure, but through an instability and fickleness of temper. They looked upon religion merely for novelty, as something which pleased them for a while; but after their curiosity was satisfied, they laid it aside again: like the young man that came to see Jesus with a linen cloth about his naked body, they have followed him for a season, but when temptations came to take hold on them, for want of a little more resolution, they have been stripped of all their good intentions, and fled away naked. They at first, like a tree planted by the water-side, grew up and flourished for a while; but having no root in themselves, no inward principle of holiness and piety, like Jonah's gourd, they were soon dried up and withered. Their good intentions are too like the violent motions of the animal spirits of a body newly beheaded, which, though impetuous, are not lasting. In short, they set out well in their journey to heaven, but finding the way either narrower or longer than they expected, through an unsteadiness of temper, they have made an eternal halt, and so "returned like the dog to his vomit, or like the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the more!"

But I tremble to pronounce the fate of such unstable professors, who having put their hands to the plough, for want of a little more resolution, shamefully look back. How shall I repeat to them that dreadful threatening, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him:" And again, "It is impossible (that is, exceeding difficult at least) for those that have been once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and the powers of the world to come, if they should fall away, to be renewed again unto repentance." But notwithstanding the gospel is so severe against apostates, yet many that begun well, through a fickleness of temper, (O that none of us here present may ever be such) have been by this means of the number of those that turn back unto perdition. And this is the fifth, and the last reason I shall give, why so many are only almost, and not altogether Christians.

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## The Dangers of Being An Almost Christian

3.) Proceed we now to the general thing proposed, namely, to consider the folly of being no more than an almost Christian.

1. And the FIRST proof I shall give of the folly of such a proceeding is, that it is ineffectual to salvation. It is true, such men are almost good; but almost to hit the mark, is really to miss it. God requires us "to love him with all our hearts, with all our souls, and with all our strength." He loves us too well to admit any rival; because, so far as our hearts are empty of God, so far must they be unhappy. The devil, indeed, like the false mother that came before Solomon, would have our hearts divided, as she would have had the child; but God, like the true mother, will have all or none. "My Son, give me thy heart," thy whole heart, is the general call to all: and if this be not done, we never can expect the divine mercy.

Persons may play the hypocrite; but God at the great day will strike them dead, (as he did Ananias and Sapphira by the mouth of his servant Peter) for pretending to offer him all their hearts, when they keep back from him the greatest part. They may perhaps impose upon their fellow-creatures for a while; but he that enabled Elijah to cry out, "Come in thou wife of Jeroboam," when she came disguised to inquire about he sick son, will also discover them through their most artful dissimulations; and if their hearts are not wholly with him, appoint them their portion with hypocrites and unbelievers.

2. But, SECONDLY, What renders an half-way-piety more inexcusable is, that it is not only insufficient to our own salvation, but also very prejudicial to that of others.

An almost Christian is one of the most hurtful creatures in the world; he is a wolf in sheep's clothing: he is one of those false prophets, our blessed Lord bids us beware of in his sermon on the mount, who would persuade men, that the way to heaven is broader than it really is; and thereby, as it was observed before, "enter not into the kingdom of God themselves, and those that are entering in they hinder." These, these are the men that turn the world into a luke-warm Laodicean spirit; that hang out false lights, and so shipwreck unthinking benighted souls in their voyage to the haven of eternity. These are they who are greater enemies to the cross of Christ, than infidels themselves: for of an unbeliever every one will be aware; but an almost Christian, through his subtle hypocrisy, draws away many after him; and therefore must expect to receive the greater damnation.

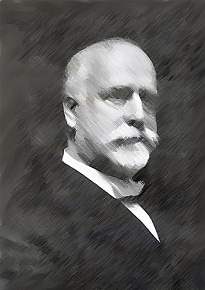
3. But, THIRDLY, As it is most prejudicial to ourselves and hurtful to others, so it is the greatest instance of ingratitude we can express towards our Lord and Master Jesus Christ. For did he come down from heaven, and shed his precious blood, to purchase these hearts of ours, and shall we only give him half of them? O how can we say we love him, when our hearts are not wholly with him? How can we call him our Savior, when we will not endeavor sincerely to approve ourselves to him, and so let him see the travail of his soul, and be satisfied!

Had any of us purchased a slave at a most expensive rate, and who was before involved in the utmost miseries and torments, and so must have continued for ever, had we shut up our bowels of compassion from him; and was this slave afterwards to grow rebellious, or deny giving us but half his service; how, how should we exclaim against his base ingratitude! And yet this base ungrateful slave thou art, O man, who acknowledgest thyself to be redeemed from infinite unavoidable misery and punishment by the death of Jesus Christ, and yet wilt not give thyself wholly to him. But shall we deal with God our Maker in a manner we would not be dealt with by a man like ourselves? God forbid! No. Suffer me, therefore,

## Exhortation

To add a word or two of exhortation to you, to excite you to be not only almost, but altogether Christians. O let us scorn all base and treacherous treatment of our King and Savior, of our God and Creator. Let us not take some pains all our lives to go to haven, and yet plunge ourselves into hell as last. Let us give to God our whole hearts, and no longer halt between two opinions: if the world be God, let us serve that; if pleasure be a God, let us serve that; but if the Lord he be God, let us, O let us serve him alone. Alas! why, why should we stand out any longer? Why should we be so in love with slavery, as not wholly to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil, which, like so many spiritual chains, bind down our souls, and hinder them from flying up to God. Alas! what are we afraid of? Is not God able to reward our entire obedience? If he is, as the almost Christian's lame way of serving him, seems to grant, why then will we not serve him entirely? For the same reason we do so much, why do we not do more? Or do you think that being only half religious will make you happy, but that going farther, will render you miserable and uneasy? Alas! this, my brethren, is delusion all over: for what is it but this half piety, this wavering between God and the world, that makes so many, that are seemingly well disposed, such utter strangers to the comforts of religion? They choose just so much of religion as will disturb them in their lusts, and follow their lusts so far as to deprive themselves of the comforts of religion. Whereas on the contrary, would they sincerely leave all in affection, and give their hearts wholly to God, they would then (and they cannot till then) experience the unspeakable pleasure of having a mind at unity with itself, and enjoy such a peace of God, which even in this life passes all understanding, and which they were entire strangers to before. It is true, it we will devote ourselves entirely to God, we must meet with contempt; but then it is because contempt is necessary to heal our pride. We must renounce some sensual pleasures, but then it is because those unfit us for spiritual ones, which are infinitely better. We must renounce the love of the world; but then it is that we may be filled with the love of God: and when that has once enlarged our hearts, we shall, like Jacob when he served for his beloved Rachel, think nothing too difficult to undergo, no hardships too tedious to endure, because of the love we shall then have for our dear Redeemer. Thus easy, thus delightful will be the ways of God even in this life: but when once we throw off these bodies, and our souls are filled with all the fullness of God, O! what heart can conceive, what tongue can express, with what unspeakable joy and consolation shall we then look back on our past sincere and hearty services. Think you then, my dear hearers, we shall repent we had done too much; or rather think you not, we shall be ashamed that we did no more; and blush we were so backward to give up all to God; when he intended hereafter to give us himself?

Let me therefore, to conclude, exhort you, my brethren, to have always before you the unspeakable happiness of enjoying God. And think withal, that every degree of holiness you neglect, every act of piety you omit, is a jewel taken out of your crown, a degree of blessedness lost in the vision of God. O! do but always think and act thus, and you will no longer be laboring to compound matters between God and the world; but, on the contrary, be daily endeavoring to give up yourselves more and more unto him; you will be always watching, always praying, always aspiring after farther degrees of purity and love, and consequently always preparing yourselves for a fuller sight and enjoyment of that God, in whose presence there is fullness of joy, and at whose right-hand there are pleasures for ever more.

[](http://www.christians.com/node/178)

Reuben Torrey

January 28, 1856 to October 26, 1928 (72), Preacher

Reuben Archer Torrey was an American evangelist, pastor, educator, and writer.

## Relationships

* http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/dwightmoody_main.mini.jpgReuben Torrey was called by [Dwight Moody](http://www.christians.com/dwightmoody/main) to succeed him.
* http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/oswaldsmith_main.mini.jpg[Oswald Smith](http://www.christians.com/oswaldsmith/main) was converted through one of Torrey's evangelistic meetings.

# Reuben Torrey

* [At A Glance](http://www.christians.com/reubentorrey/main)
* [Testimony](http://www.christians.com/reubentorrey/main)
* [**Biography**](http://www.christians.com/reubentorrey/main)
* [Works](http://www.christians.com/reubentorrey/main)

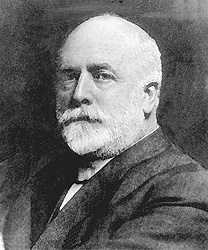
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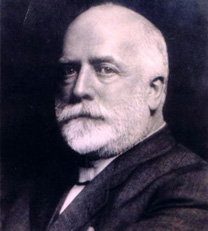
Torrey was born in Hoboken, New Jersey, on 28 January 1856. He graduated from Yale University in 1875 and Yale Divinity School in 1878. Following graduation, Torrey became a Congregational minister in Garrettsville, Ohio in 1878, marrying Clara Smith there in October 1879. From 1881 to 1893, the Torreys had five children.



In 1902–1903, he preached in nearly every part of the English-speaking world, and with song leader Charles McCallon Alexander conducted revival services in Great Britain in 1903–1905. During this period, he also visited China, Japan, Australia, and India. Torrey conducted a similar campaign in American and Canadian cities in 1906–1907. Throughout these campaigns, Torrey utilized a meeting style that he borrowed from Moody's campaigns of the 1870s.



After further studies of theology at Leipzig University and Erlangen University in 1882–1883, Torrey joined Dwight L. Moody in his evangelistic work in Chicago in 1889, and became superintendent of the Bible Institute of the Chicago Evangelization Society (now Moody Bible Institute). Five years later, he became pastor of the Chicago Avenue Church (now The Moody Church - pictured) in 1894.



His last evangelistic meeting was in Florida in 1927. Future planned meetings were cancelled due to his failing health. He died at home in Asheville, North Carolina on October 26, 1928, having preached the world over and having left a legacy of over forty books. Torrey Auditorium, for decades the main auditorium at Moody Bible Institute, was named in his honor.

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Excellence in two areas of ministry has been achieved by a few; it has been a rare genius who has been so gifted in three areas, but to excel in four capacities would seem near impossible...but it has been done two or three times in history. Reuben Archer Torrey is a classic example, for he was renown as an educator, a pastor, a world evangelist and an author.

Besides his obvious gifts in all these areas, he was also a man of prayer, a student of the Bible, and an outstanding personal soul-winner. It is said that he daily read the Bible in four languages, having a good working knowledge of Greek and Hebrew. Some students of church history feel he did more to promote personal evangelism than any other one man since the days of the apostles. His prayer life has seldom been equaled in the annals of Christendom.

One wonders if there has ever lived a man who did so many things well for Christ. One of his favorite phrases was, "I love to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

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Torrey also took upon himself the pastorship of the Chicago Avenue Church (now Moody Memorial Church) from 1894 to 1905, where again he wielded a tremendous amount of influence in the Christian world. The 2,200-seat auditorium soon began to be filled. Torrey later said he didn't believe a day went by without someone being saved as a result of the church. The success was the prayer meetings, for all over the city there were little groups who would stay up late on Saturday night, or get up early on Sunday morning to pray for their pastor. This, plus the fact that his membership was always trained in soul-winning, produced a church that lived in a constant revival atmosphere. Every year he spent several months in Northfield, Massachusetts, teaching and preaching in the various conferences there.

In 1898, a weekly prayer meeting began at the Bible Institute each Saturday night from 9 to 10 p.m. The attendance grew until it numbered an average of 300 people. Its purpose was to pray for worldwide revival. For the next three years the prayer meetings continued, followed by Torrey and three or four associates having a second prayer meeting until about 2 a.m. One night Torrey had a strange burden to pray that God would send him around the world with the Gospel. Within a week two strangers from the United Churches of Melbourne, Australia approached him following a Sunday service saying they felt Torrey was the man God wanted to come to their country for evangelistic services. Torrey was stunned and challenged by the proposal. It seemed the years of praying were about to bear fruit.

Getting a leave of absence from his Chicago responsibilities, he quickly began to ponder that God might use him as the human instrument to bring worldwide revival--his burden for many years. He was to see some 102,000 come to Christ in the next few years in the most globe-girdling enterprise ever undertaken by an evangelist.

He wired a former student, Charles M. Alexander, to meet him in Australia. Torrey went to Japan and China on the way, where he preached with great power and saw hundreds of converts made during his brief visit there.

It was April, 1902, that Torrey and Alexander met in Melbourne, Australia, and began their work there. This movement was known as the Simultaneous Mission and it lasted a month. For the first two weeks, meetings were held in fifty different centers by fifty different ministers and evangelists. The "Glory Song" (O That Will Be Glory) seemed to set the nation on fire. During the last two weeks the meetings were held in the Exhibition Building seating 8,000 people. Up to 15,000 were trying to get in nightly. W.E. Geil, another American evangelist, assisted in the meetings. Some 8,600 converts were recorded and the news of the awakening stirred all Christendom. Calls came from other key cities of Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand, where they ministered for the next six months. In Sydney, Torrey spoke to thousands in the massive city hall with hundreds converted. In Bendigo, Alexander met and led Robert Harkness, a brilliant young musical genius, to Christ, and he became his pianist, soon joining the team for the rest of their tour. In one Australian city, a largely build man thundered at Torrey, "I am not a Christian, but I am moral, upright, honorable and blameless--and I'd like to know what you have against me!" Torrey looked him straight in the eyes and replied, "I charge you, sir, with high treason against Heaven's King!"

Up to 2,000 prayer bands were conducted in various sections of the country praying continually for revival!

Two campaigns were held in Tasmania in Launceston and Hobart. The heavyweight boxing champ of Tasmania confessed Christ as Saviour the same night a member of Parliament did. Thirty days in New Zealand climaxed their tour. Revival fires broke out with a total of 20,000 decisions for Christ in the land "down under."

Calls now came from England and they headed that way, stopping in India for six weeks en route. Campaigns were held in Madura, Madras, Calcutta, Bombay, and Benares. Hundreds were saved. A convention of 400 missionaries listened to Torrey for four days receiving much blessing to bring back to their people.

They were welcomed in London in a great meeting in Exeter Hall by the leading clerics of England. They spent three weeks in Mildmay Conference Hall in North London stirring up church members to fresh zeal in soul-winning and witnessing, resulting in large numbers of conversions. They went on to Edinburgh, Scotland, for a four-week campaign held in Synod Hall. In the weeks to follow, they also ministered in France and Germany.

The team made a brief trip to America during July and August, 1903, where a welcome home crowd of some 10,000 endeavored to gain admission to the Auditorium of the Bible Institute.

In September, 1903, they were back in England, and beginning the Liverpool crusade. In four weeks they saw about 5,000 converts. The crowds became so large that two meetings per night had to be held, one for women, and the second for men. At Dublin, Ireland, at the Metropolitan Hall, some 3,000 accepted Christ.

By 1904, some 30,000 persons around the world had committed themselves to pray for the team and worldwide revival. In January, 1904, the Birmingham campaign began. It was probably the most successful campaign held anywhere on their tour. Meetings were held in Bingley Hall, seating 8,000 with space for 2,000 standees. The thirty-day crusade had some 7,000 conversions! Here Alexander met his future wife, Helen Cadbury, whom he married in July.

In September, 1904, the team was in Bolton, Wales (3,600 saved), then on to Cardiff to a 7,000-seat auditorium which filled nightly (3,750 saved). Evan Roberts led that nation to God the next year and surely the sparks of revival were lit at those meetings.

From Cardiff, the evangelists went back to Liverpool to conduct a nine-week campaign. The Tournament Hall, seating 12,500, was reserved. At times it proved inadequate and it is estimated some 35,000 were turned away on the last day of the meetings. Some 7,000 were saved and an old resident said it surpassed the Moody-Sankey revival many years previously. The choir numbered 3,658 alone, which was the largest evangelistic chorus ever organized up to that time. Two banquets were held, averaging 2,200 each for the poor people of Liverpool, averaging about 225 decisions for Christ at each.

From February to June 1905, the famous London Crusade was held. Total expenses amounted to $85,000 with nearly 15,000 professed conversions. Meetings were held at the Royal Albert Hall for the first two months; an iron and glass building seating 5,500 in South London for the next two months; and another great iron building seating over 5,000 in the heart of London on the Strand for the last month. A 1,000-voice choir helped nightly. The crusade began at the 11,000-seat Royal Albert Hall on February 4 with a welcome by many of the cities' dignitaries. The first evangelistic service was held the following night with 10,000 unable to secure admission. Some 250 were saved. A well- known concert hall singer and entertainer by the name of Quentin Ashlyn was saved soon after. It seemed as though all of London was singing revival hymns. The "Glory Song" captured the city. It was sung at every service. Tell Mother I'll Be There was also greatly used. Some 6,500 were saved at the Royal Albert Hall with special meetings for men and children also packing out the hall. Meetings held in South London produced 5,000 converts and then in the final month another 2,500 were saved. A closing service at the Royal Albert Hall announced the totals--202 meetings, 1,114,650 attended (average 5,500 per service) with over 17,000 converts!

Wherever they had gone--to Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen or Dundee in Scotland; to Dublin and Belfast in Ireland (4,000 saved); to Manchester (4,000 saved) and the other above mentioned crusades in England and Wales--the halls were unable to hold the crowds. Not since the days of Moody and Sankey had Great Britain been so stirred. A total of 70,000 came to the Lord during these three years of ministry there.

Returning to the United States in December, 1905, with more revival preaching on his mind, he made his leave of absence permanent at the two hallowed institutions that had stood by awaiting his return. James M. Gray became the chief executive officer at Moody Bible Institute and A.C. Dixon became pastor of Moody Church. From 1906 to 1911, a heavy series of crusades in America occupied his time. Oswald J. Smith was converted in the 1906 Toronto, Ontario, crusade. Atlanta, Ottawa, Ontario, San Francisco, Omaha, Cleveland, Nashville, Buffalo, Montreal, Quebec, Detroit, Los Angeles and Chicago all had good revival sessions with him. Perhaps his most successful revival stateside was in Philadelphia in the spring of 1906. Newspaper headlines blared out, "Hell is absolutely certain, Dr. Torrey warns his hearers!" These meetings lasted 62 days in three different armories at a cost of $38,365. John Wanamaker and John Converse, successful Christian businessmen, were among the chief supporters. Some 7,000 converts were claimed, although decision cards totaled only 3,615. Charles Alexander left Torrey in 1907- 08 and joined up with J. Wilbur Chapman.

Torrey helped establish the Montrose (Pennsylvania) Bible Conference in 1908. Later he would be buried there on Conference Hill.

In 1911 he went back to England, Scotland and Ireland for more meetings.

Now a call came from the west coast of the United States to give Los Angeles similar institutions to those he led in Chicago. From 1912 to 1924 he served as dean of the Los Angeles Bible Institute (now called BIOLA). He also helped to organize and served as the first pastor of the Church of the Open Door (1915- 1924). There he preached to great throngs and God blessed both his pastoring and teaching. Thousands were trained at the school including Charles E. Fuller, famed radio preacher of the next generation.

In 1919 he visited Japan and China with the Gospel and in 1921 he toured China and Korea in evangelistic endeavors.

From 1924 to 1928 he devoted his time to holding Bible conferences, giving special lectures at the Moody Bible Institute among other places. He made his home in Biltmore, North Carolina. He passed on quietly at Asheville, North Carolina.

Will Houghton, preaching his funeral, said:

"...But those who knew Dr. Torrey more intimately knew him as a man of regular and uninterrupted prayer. He knew what it meant to pray without ceasing. With hours set systematically apart for prayer, he gave himself diligently to this ministry."

Reuben A. Torrey wrote some forty books and his practical writings on the Holy Spirit, prayer, salvation, soul-winning, and evangelism are still favorites of many Christians. His Gist of the Lesson continued for more than thirty years. This was a series of helps on the International Sunday School lessons. Many of his works have been translated into foreign languages.

His first book was How to Bring Men to Christ (1893). His last, Lectures on the First Epistle of John, published in 1929 after his death. His How to Promote and Conduct a Successful Revival (1901) is considered one of the best books on personal and mass evangelism ever written.

Dr. R. A. Torrey, the well-known American evangelist, whose name will long be held in regard by thousands of Christian workers in all parts of the world, was born in 1856, at Hoboken, N.J., [United States], his father being a manufacturer in Brooklyn and New York City. From his earliest childhood he was brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, being taught to read his Bible and pray daily, a habit which he maintained during later years of wandering and skepticism.

The first definite religious impressions came from reading a book on which he stumbled, when but a boy, in the lumber-room at home. Reading this book, the question arose: "Will you be a Christian now?" But with that came the thought that if he said "Yes" he would have to be a minister, and, shrinking from such a calling, he said, "No," and for some years seemed to be left alone.

At the age of fifteen he entered Yale University, and having no spiritual life, easily fell into the ways of sin, associating with a fast set, and becoming reckless, even while continuing constant in attendance at church and prayer-meeting, as well as the reading of the Bible and daily prayer! In all this he found, of course, no true happiness, and, indeed, confessed that, "during his junior year, life became an utter burden, of which he wanted to be relieved, until, in sheer desperation, one night he rose from bed, and told God that if He would give relief he would preach the Gospel, should He so bid him."

This open confession he made in the last term of his senior college year. Entering Yale Theological Seminary, he fell away for a time, and professed to be a skeptic, but by the goodness of God was brought out of darkness into the light of life, through the study of Christian evidences.

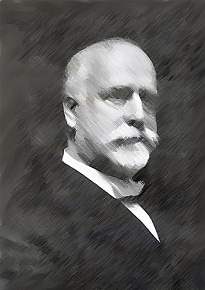
His evangelistic tours covered many years — in Australia, New Zealand, India, Great Britain, United States and Canada. Taken as a whole, the movement which Dr. Torrey organized and carried out with abounding energy, marked the greatest of its kind since the days of Moody and Sankey.

Death came on Friday, 26th October, 1928, at Ashville, North Carolina.

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Reuben Torrey

January 28, 1856 to October 26, 1928 (72), Preacher

Reuben Archer Torrey was an American evangelist, pastor, educator, and writer.

## Relationships

* http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/dwightmoody_main.mini.jpgReuben Torrey was called by [Dwight Moody](http://www.christians.com/dwightmoody/main) to succeed him.
* http://trunk.bgaw.dev.christians.com/sites/default/files/images/oswaldsmith_main.mini.jpg[Oswald Smith](http://www.christians.com/oswaldsmith/main) was converted through one of Torrey's evangelistic meetings.

# Reuben Torrey

* [At A Glance](http://www.christians.com/reubentorrey/main)
* [**Testimony**](http://www.christians.com/reubentorrey/main)
* [Biography](http://www.christians.com/reubentorrey/main)
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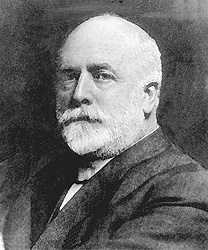
Historical Timeline

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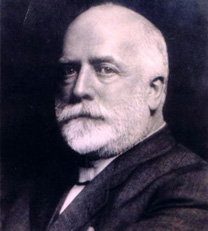
Torrey was born in Hoboken, New Jersey, on 28 January 1856. He graduated from Yale University in 1875 and Yale Divinity School in 1878. Following graduation, Torrey became a Congregational minister in Garrettsville, Ohio in 1878, marrying Clara Smith there in October 1879. From 1881 to 1893, the Torreys had five children.



In 1902–1903, he preached in nearly every part of the English-speaking world, and with song leader Charles McCallon Alexander conducted revival services in Great Britain in 1903–1905. During this period, he also visited China, Japan, Australia, and India. Torrey conducted a similar campaign in American and Canadian cities in 1906–1907. Throughout these campaigns, Torrey utilized a meeting style that he borrowed from Moody's campaigns of the 1870s.



After further studies of theology at Leipzig University and Erlangen University in 1882–1883, Torrey joined Dwight L. Moody in his evangelistic work in Chicago in 1889, and became superintendent of the Bible Institute of the Chicago Evangelization Society (now Moody Bible Institute). Five years later, he became pastor of the Chicago Avenue Church (now The Moody Church - pictured) in 1894.



His last evangelistic meeting was in Florida in 1927. Future planned meetings were cancelled due to his failing health. He died at home in Asheville, North Carolina on October 26, 1928, having preached the world over and having left a legacy of over forty books. Torrey Auditorium, for decades the main auditorium at Moody Bible Institute, was named in his honor.

[«](http://www.christians.com/reubentorrey/main#prev) [1](http://www.christians.com/reubentorrey/main#1) [2](http://www.christians.com/reubentorrey/main#2) [3](http://www.christians.com/reubentorrey/main#3) [4](http://www.christians.com/reubentorrey/main#4) [»](http://www.christians.com/reubentorrey/main#next)

Excellence in two areas of ministry has been achieved by a few; it has been a rare genius who has been so gifted in three areas, but to excel in four capacities would seem near impossible...but it has been done two or three times in history. Reuben Archer Torrey is a classic example, for he was renown as an educator, a pastor, a world evangelist and an author.

Besides his obvious gifts in all these areas, he was also a man of prayer, a student of the Bible, and an outstanding personal soul-winner. It is said that he daily read the Bible in four languages, having a good working knowledge of Greek and Hebrew. Some students of church history feel he did more to promote personal evangelism than any other one man since the days of the apostles. His prayer life has seldom been equaled in the annals of Christendom.

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One day D.L. Moody was talking with a friend, E.M. Williams, and lamented that he wished he knew of a man to head his new school. Williams gave a glowing account of Torrey's ministries. Moody called for him, and at the age of 33, Torrey became the first Superintendent of the Chicago Evangelization Society (later Moody Bible Institute), guiding it from its inception September 26, 1889, until 1908. He was the chief executive officer and the success of the Institute can probably be attributed to Torrey's contribution more than any other individual. He laid the groundwork for the curriculum and the practical Christian work program. Torrey's leadership at the school, plus his part in the 1893 World's Fair evangelism outreach, brought him to the attention of the Christian world. Torrey was automatically considered the "Elisha" to carry on Moody's work upon his death in 1899. When Moody collapsed in Kansas City in November, 1899, just prior to his death, it was Torrey who carried on the crusade.

At school, the students were constantly amazed at his ability. His teaching and prevailing prayer became renown. As he lectured in the classroom, he poured out the brilliance of his Yale and German training, which had been endued with faith and emboldened by the Holy Spirit. He was sound in doctrine and an exceptional Bible teacher. His successor, James Gray, said of him, "Few men were better equipped than he to expound the Holy Scriptures before a popular audience or in a classroom." And how he could pray! One student reported how he went to Torrey's office with a particular need, and after the session kneeling in prayer together was over, a pool of tears remained when Torrey arose. His booklet How to Pray is a classic.

Torrey also took upon himself the pastorship of the Chicago Avenue Church (now Moody Memorial Church) from 1894 to 1905, where again he wielded a tremendous amount of influence in the Christian world. The 2,200-seat auditorium soon began to be filled. Torrey later said he didn't believe a day went by without someone being saved as a result of the church. The success was the prayer meetings, for all over the city there were little groups who would stay up late on Saturday night, or get up early on Sunday morning to pray for their pastor. This, plus the fact that his membership was always trained in soul-winning, produced a church that lived in a constant revival atmosphere. Every year he spent several months in Northfield, Massachusetts, teaching and preaching in the various conferences there.

In 1898, a weekly prayer meeting began at the Bible Institute each Saturday night from 9 to 10 p.m. The attendance grew until it numbered an average of 300 people. Its purpose was to pray for worldwide revival. For the next three years the prayer meetings continued, followed by Torrey and three or four associates having a second prayer meeting until about 2 a.m. One night Torrey had a strange burden to pray that God would send him around the world with the Gospel. Within a week two strangers from the United Churches of Melbourne, Australia approached him following a Sunday service saying they felt Torrey was the man God wanted to come to their country for evangelistic services. Torrey was stunned and challenged by the proposal. It seemed the years of praying were about to bear fruit.

Getting a leave of absence from his Chicago responsibilities, he quickly began to ponder that God might use him as the human instrument to bring worldwide revival--his burden for many years. He was to see some 102,000 come to Christ in the next few years in the most globe-girdling enterprise ever undertaken by an evangelist.

He wired a former student, Charles M. Alexander, to meet him in Australia. Torrey went to Japan and China on the way, where he preached with great power and saw hundreds of converts made during his brief visit there.

It was April, 1902, that Torrey and Alexander met in Melbourne, Australia, and began their work there. This movement was known as the Simultaneous Mission and it lasted a month. For the first two weeks, meetings were held in fifty different centers by fifty different ministers and evangelists. The "Glory Song" (O That Will Be Glory) seemed to set the nation on fire. During the last two weeks the meetings were held in the Exhibition Building seating 8,000 people. Up to 15,000 were trying to get in nightly. W.E. Geil, another American evangelist, assisted in the meetings. Some 8,600 converts were recorded and the news of the awakening stirred all Christendom. Calls came from other key cities of Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand, where they ministered for the next six months. In Sydney, Torrey spoke to thousands in the massive city hall with hundreds converted. In Bendigo, Alexander met and led Robert Harkness, a brilliant young musical genius, to Christ, and he became his pianist, soon joining the team for the rest of their tour. In one Australian city, a largely build man thundered at Torrey, "I am not a Christian, but I am moral, upright, honorable and blameless--and I'd like to know what you have against me!" Torrey looked him straight in the eyes and replied, "I charge you, sir, with high treason against Heaven's King!"

Up to 2,000 prayer bands were conducted in various sections of the country praying continually for revival!

Two campaigns were held in Tasmania in Launceston and Hobart. The heavyweight boxing champ of Tasmania confessed Christ as Saviour the same night a member of Parliament did. Thirty days in New Zealand climaxed their tour. Revival fires broke out with a total of 20,000 decisions for Christ in the land "down under."

Calls now came from England and they headed that way, stopping in India for six weeks en route. Campaigns were held in Madura, Madras, Calcutta, Bombay, and Benares. Hundreds were saved. A convention of 400 missionaries listened to Torrey for four days receiving much blessing to bring back to their people.

They were welcomed in London in a great meeting in Exeter Hall by the leading clerics of England. They spent three weeks in Mildmay Conference Hall in North London stirring up church members to fresh zeal in soul-winning and witnessing, resulting in large numbers of conversions. They went on to Edinburgh, Scotland, for a four-week campaign held in Synod Hall. In the weeks to follow, they also ministered in France and Germany.

The team made a brief trip to America during July and August, 1903, where a welcome home crowd of some 10,000 endeavored to gain admission to the Auditorium of the Bible Institute.

In September, 1903, they were back in England, and beginning the Liverpool crusade. In four weeks they saw about 5,000 converts. The crowds became so large that two meetings per night had to be held, one for women, and the second for men. At Dublin, Ireland, at the Metropolitan Hall, some 3,000 accepted Christ.

By 1904, some 30,000 persons around the world had committed themselves to pray for the team and worldwide revival. In January, 1904, the Birmingham campaign began. It was probably the most successful campaign held anywhere on their tour. Meetings were held in Bingley Hall, seating 8,000 with space for 2,000 standees. The thirty-day crusade had some 7,000 conversions! Here Alexander met his future wife, Helen Cadbury, whom he married in July.

In September, 1904, the team was in Bolton, Wales (3,600 saved), then on to Cardiff to a 7,000-seat auditorium which filled nightly (3,750 saved). Evan Roberts led that nation to God the next year and surely the sparks of revival were lit at those meetings.

From Cardiff, the evangelists went back to Liverpool to conduct a nine-week campaign. The Tournament Hall, seating 12,500, was reserved. At times it proved inadequate and it is estimated some 35,000 were turned away on the last day of the meetings. Some 7,000 were saved and an old resident said it surpassed the Moody-Sankey revival many years previously. The choir numbered 3,658 alone, which was the largest evangelistic chorus ever organized up to that time. Two banquets were held, averaging 2,200 each for the poor people of Liverpool, averaging about 225 decisions for Christ at each.

From February to June 1905, the famous London Crusade was held. Total expenses amounted to $85,000 with nearly 15,000 professed conversions. Meetings were held at the Royal Albert Hall for the first two months; an iron and glass building seating 5,500 in South London for the next two months; and another great iron building seating over 5,000 in the heart of London on the Strand for the last month. A 1,000-voice choir helped nightly. The crusade began at the 11,000-seat Royal Albert Hall on February 4 with a welcome by many of the cities' dignitaries. The first evangelistic service was held the following night with 10,000 unable to secure admission. Some 250 were saved. A well- known concert hall singer and entertainer by the name of Quentin Ashlyn was saved soon after. It seemed as though all of London was singing revival hymns. The "Glory Song" captured the city. It was sung at every service. Tell Mother I'll Be There was also greatly used. Some 6,500 were saved at the Royal Albert Hall with special meetings for men and children also packing out the hall. Meetings held in South London produced 5,000 converts and then in the final month another 2,500 were saved. A closing service at the Royal Albert Hall announced the totals--202 meetings, 1,114,650 attended (average 5,500 per service) with over 17,000 converts!

Wherever they had gone--to Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen or Dundee in Scotland; to Dublin and Belfast in Ireland (4,000 saved); to Manchester (4,000 saved) and the other above mentioned crusades in England and Wales--the halls were unable to hold the crowds. Not since the days of Moody and Sankey had Great Britain been so stirred. A total of 70,000 came to the Lord during these three years of ministry there.

Returning to the United States in December, 1905, with more revival preaching on his mind, he made his leave of absence permanent at the two hallowed institutions that had stood by awaiting his return. James M. Gray became the chief executive officer at Moody Bible Institute and A.C. Dixon became pastor of Moody Church. From 1906 to 1911, a heavy series of crusades in America occupied his time. Oswald J. Smith was converted in the 1906 Toronto, Ontario, crusade. Atlanta, Ottawa, Ontario, San Francisco, Omaha, Cleveland, Nashville, Buffalo, Montreal, Quebec, Detroit, Los Angeles and Chicago all had good revival sessions with him. Perhaps his most successful revival stateside was in Philadelphia in the spring of 1906. Newspaper headlines blared out, "Hell is absolutely certain, Dr. Torrey warns his hearers!" These meetings lasted 62 days in three different armories at a cost of $38,365. John Wanamaker and John Converse, successful Christian businessmen, were among the chief supporters. Some 7,000 converts were claimed, although decision cards totaled only 3,615. Charles Alexander left Torrey in 1907- 08 and joined up with J. Wilbur Chapman.

Torrey helped establish the Montrose (Pennsylvania) Bible Conference in 1908. Later he would be buried there on Conference Hill.

In 1911 he went back to England, Scotland and Ireland for more meetings.

Now a call came from the west coast of the United States to give Los Angeles similar institutions to those he led in Chicago. From 1912 to 1924 he served as dean of the Los Angeles Bible Institute (now called BIOLA). He also helped to organize and served as the first pastor of the Church of the Open Door (1915- 1924). There he preached to great throngs and God blessed both his pastoring and teaching. Thousands were trained at the school including Charles E. Fuller, famed radio preacher of the next generation.

In 1919 he visited Japan and China with the Gospel and in 1921 he toured China and Korea in evangelistic endeavors.

From 1924 to 1928 he devoted his time to holding Bible conferences, giving special lectures at the Moody Bible Institute among other places. He made his home in Biltmore, North Carolina. He passed on quietly at Asheville, North Carolina.

Will Houghton, preaching his funeral, said:

"...But those who knew Dr. Torrey more intimately knew him as a man of regular and uninterrupted prayer. He knew what it meant to pray without ceasing. With hours set systematically apart for prayer, he gave himself diligently to this ministry."

Reuben A. Torrey wrote some forty books and his practical writings on the Holy Spirit, prayer, salvation, soul-winning, and evangelism are still favorites of many Christians. His Gist of the Lesson continued for more than thirty years. This was a series of helps on the International Sunday School lessons. Many of his works have been translated into foreign languages.

His first book was How to Bring Men to Christ (1893). His last, Lectures on the First Epistle of John, published in 1929 after his death. His How to Promote and Conduct a Successful Revival (1901) is considered one of the best books on personal and mass evangelism ever written.

Dr. R. A. Torrey, the well-known American evangelist, whose name will long be held in regard by thousands of Christian workers in all parts of the world, was born in 1856, at Hoboken, N.J., [United States], his father being a manufacturer in Brooklyn and New York City. From his earliest childhood he was brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, being taught to read his Bible and pray daily, a habit which he maintained during later years of wandering and skepticism.

The first definite religious impressions came from reading a book on which he stumbled, when but a boy, in the lumber-room at home. Reading this book, the question arose: "Will you be a Christian now?" But with that came the thought that if he said "Yes" he would have to be a minister, and, shrinking from such a calling, he said, "No," and for some years seemed to be left alone.

At the age of fifteen he entered Yale University, and having no spiritual life, easily fell into the ways of sin, associating with a fast set, and becoming reckless, even while continuing constant in attendance at church and prayer-meeting, as well as the reading of the Bible and daily prayer! In all this he found, of course, no true happiness, and, indeed, confessed that, "during his junior year, life became an utter burden, of which he wanted to be relieved, until, in sheer desperation, one night he rose from bed, and told God that if He would give relief he would preach the Gospel, should He so bid him."

This open confession he made in the last term of his senior college year. Entering Yale Theological Seminary, he fell away for a time, and professed to be a skeptic, but by the goodness of God was brought out of darkness into the light of life, through the study of Christian evidences.

His evangelistic tours covered many years — in Australia, New Zealand, India, Great Britain, United States and Canada. Taken as a whole, the movement which Dr. Torrey organized and carried out with abounding energy, marked the greatest of its kind since the days of Moody and Sankey.

Death came on Friday, 26th October, 1928, at Ashville, North Carolina.

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**TRUE AND FALSE REPENTANCE**

**by Charles G. Finney**

"For Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea.what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourself to be clear in this matter"--2 Corin 7:10-11.

True repentance involves a change of opinion respecting the nature of sin followed by a corresponding change of feeling toward sin. Feeling is the result of thought. When this change of opinion produces a corresponding change of feeling, if the opinion is right and the feeling corresponds, this is true repentance. Godly sorrow, which God requires, must spring from His views of sin.

To one who truly repents, sin looks very different than it does to him who has not repented. Instead of looking desirable or fascinating, it looks odious and detestable. He is astonished that he ever could have desired such a thing. Impenitent sinners may look at sin and see that it will ruin them because God will punish them for it. But it still appears in itself desirable. They love it. If it could end in happiness, they would never think of abandoning their sin.

But one who truly repents looks at his own conduct as perfectly hateful. He looks back and exclaims, "How detestable and worthy of hell my sin was."

Sinners don't see why God threatens sin with such terrible punishment. They love it so much that they cannot see why God thinks it is worthy of everlasting judgment. When sinners are strongly convicted, they see sin in the same light as a Christian does. Then all they need is a corresponding change in feeling to be saved.

Many sinners reflect on their relationship to God and know that they deserve eternal death, but their heart doesn't agree with God's opinions. This is the case with the demons and wicked spirits in hell. A change of opinion is indispensable to true repentance and always precedes it. There may be a change of opinion without repentance, but no genuine repentance occurs without a change of opinion.

The unsaved sinner things it utterly incredible that sin deserves everlasting death. He may be fully changed, however, to see that sin injures himself and everybody else and that there is no remedy but universal abstinence. Even the devil knows this is true.

The word rendered "repentance" implies a change of opinion in regard to the just outcome of sin. The careless sinner has almost no right ideas about the just punishment of sin. Even if he admits; in theory, that sin deserves eternal death, he does not believe it. If he believed it, it would be impossible for him to remain a careless sinner. He is deceived if he supposes that he honestly holds the opinion that sin deserves the wrath of God forever.

The truly awakened and convicted sinner sees clearly that sin deserves everlasting punishment from God. To him it is simply a matter of fact.

A CHANGE OF HEART

In true repentance there must be a corresponding change of feeling. This change of feeling respects sin in its nature, its functions, its tendencies, and its outcome. The individual who truly repents not only sees sin as detestable, vile, and worthy of abhorrence, but he hates it in his heart. A person may see sin to be hurtful and abominable and still love it, desire it, and cling to it. But when he truly repents, he wholeheartedly abhors and renounces it.

This is the source of those tears of sorrow which sometimes break out when Christians see sin in its true nature. When a believer views sin in relation to God, he feels like weeping. Fountains of sorrow gush forth, and he wants to get down on his face and pour out a flood of tears over his sin.

When a believer views sin in its tendencies, it awakens a burning desire to stop it and save people from their sins. His heart is set on fire, and he prays with all his might to pull sinners out of hell and save them from the awful consequences of sin. It is as if he saw all the people taking poison that would destroy them. He lifts up his voice and screams, "Beware!"

He has an intellectual conviction that sin deserves everlasting punishment and is amazed that God can forgive him. Instead of thinking it severe or unkind that sinners are sent to hell, he is full of adoring wonder that he is not sent to hell himself. And when he thinks of such a sinner being saved, he feels a sense of gratitude unlike any he has ever known. If your repentance is genuine, you have a conscious change of views and feelings in regard to sin. Can you say this? Do you know that there has been a change in you and that old things are done away and all things have become new?

When repentance is genuine, the prevailing tendency to repeat sin is gone. If you have truly repented, you do not now love sin. You do not now abstain from it through fear or to avoid punishment but because you hate it. Look at the sins you used to practice. How do they appear to you? Do they look pleasant, and would you really love to practice them again if you dared? If you do have the disposition to sin left, you are only convicted. Your opinions of sin may be changed, but if the love of that sin remains, you are still an impenitent sinner.

The Scripture says, "Godly sorrow worketh repentance." Godly sorrow produces a reformation of conduct.. Otherwise it is like saying that repentance produces repentance. But repentance must be a change of mind that produces a change of conduct and ends in salvation. Have you forsaken your sins? Or are you still practicing them? If so, you are still a sinner. You may have changed your mind, but if you have not changed your conduct, it is not godly repentance.

REPENTANCE UNTO SALVATION

Genuine repentance leads to confession and restitution. The thief has not repented while he keeps the money he stole. He may have conviction but no repentance. If he had truly repented, he would go and give back the money. If you have cheated anyone and do not restore what you have taken; or if you have cheated anyone and do not restore what you have taken; of if you have injured anyone and do not undo the wrong, you have not truly repented.

` True repentance is a permanent change of character and conduct. The text says it is repentance "not to be repented of." True repentance is so deep and fundamental that the man never changes back again. People often quote it as if it read "repentance that does not need to be repented of." But it says, not to be repented of and is so thorough that there is no going back. The love of sin is totally abandoned. Any individual who has truly repented has changed his views and feelings and will not change back to the love of sin. The truly penitent sinner exercises feelings of which he will never repent--"unto salvation." The very reason it ends in salvation is because it will not be repented of.

False repentance is the sorrow of the world: sorrow for sin arising from worldly considerations and motives connected with the present life. At most false repentance has respect for the individuals own happiness in a future world and has no regard for the true nature of sin.

False repentance is not founded on a change of opinion like true repentance. A person may see the evil consequences of sin from a worldly point of view, and it may fill him with anxiety. He may see that it will greatly affect his character or endanger his life. If his secrets were found out, he would be disgraced--this may fill him with fear and distress. People often have this kind of sorrow when some worldly consideration is at the bottom of it.

Selfishness is at the root of false repentance. it may be a strong feeling of regret in the mind of the individual. He sees the evil consequences of his actions, and it makes him miserable or exposes him to the wrath of God. Sin may injure his family, his friends, or himself in time or eternity. All this is pure selfishness.

He may feel remorse of conscience--biting, consuming remorse--and no true repentance. It may extend to deep and dreadful fear of the wrath of God and the pains of hell but be purely selfish. All the while there may be no abhorrence of sin and no feelings of the heart convicted of the infinite evil of sin.

False repentance leaves the feelings unchanged and the disposition to sin in the heart unbroken and unsubdued. The feelings about the nature of sin are not changed, and the individual still feels a desire to sin. He abstains from it not from abhorrence of it but from the dread of its consequences.

The individual who has exercised true repentance is willing to admit that he has repented and that he was a sinner. He who falsely repents resorts to excuses and lying to cover his sins and is ashamed of his repentance. he will cover up his sins by a thousand apologies and excuses, trying to smooth them over and diminish their enormity. If he speaks of his past conduct, he always does it in the softest and most favorable terms.

REPENTANCE UNTO DEATH

False repentance leads to death. it makes people commit one sin to cover up another. Instead of that open-hearted breaking forth of humility and frankness, you see a half-hearted confession that confesses nothing.

Are you ashamed to talk about your sins? If so, then your sorrow is only a worldly sorrow. Often sinners avoid conversation about their sins yet call themselves anxious inquirers, expecting to become Christians. The same kind of sorrow is found in hell. No doubt all those wretched inhabitants of the pit wish to get away from the eye of God. No such sorrow is found among the saints in heaven.

Open, genuine sorrow is consistent with true happiness. The saints are happy, yet have a deep, undisguised remorse for sin. But this worldly sorrow is ashamed of itself and is mean and miserable--its end is death.

The change produced by worldly sorrow extends only to those things of which the individual has been strongly convicted. The heart is not changed. You will see him avoid only those obvious sins about which he has been counseled.

Observe a young convert. If he is deceived, you will find only a partial change in his conduct. He is reformed in certain things, but he continues to practice many wrong things. If you become intimately acquainted with him, you will find him strict and quick-sighted in regard to certain things but far from manifesting a Christian spirit in regard to all sin.

Ordinarily, the change produced by false repentance is temporary even in those things which are reformed. The individual is continually relapsing into old sins. The disposition to sin is not gone--only checked and restrained by fear. As soon as he has a hope, is attending church, and gets bolstered up so that his fears are relieved, you will see him gradually returning to his old sins.

This was the difficulty with the house of Israel that made them constantly return to idolatry and other sins. They had only worldly sorrow. You see it everywhere in the Church. Individuals are reformed for a time and are taken into a congregation, but then they relapse into their old sins. They call it "getting cold" or backsliding, but the truth is, they always loved sin.

This is the foundation of all those flashed and starts in religion that you see so much of. People are awakened and convicted, but soon they settle down in false security and away they go. Perhaps they may keep their guard and won't be turned out of church; but if the foundations of sin are not broken up, they will return to their old ways.

A true convert's most obsessive sins before conversion are the furthest from them now. He is least likely to fall into his old besetting sin because he abhors it most. But if he is deceived and worldly minded, he always tends toward the same sins. The fountain of sin is not broken up. He has not purged iniquity from his heart but has regarded sin in his heart the whole time.

BONDAGE AND LEGALISM

The change produced by false repentance is not only partial and temporary, it is also forced and constrained. The reformation of one who has true repentance is from the heart. In him the Bible promise is fulfilled. He actually finds that wisdom's "ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace" (Proverbs 3:17). He experiences that the Savior's yoke is easy and His burden is light. He has felt that God's commandments are not grievous but joyous. :"More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb" (Psalm 19:10)

But this spurious kind of repentance is very different: it is a legal repentance, resulting from fear and not love. Selfish repentance is anything but a free, voluntary change from sin to obedience. If you have this kind of repentance, you will find that you are conscious that you abstain from sin not because you hate it but from other considerations. You are more motivated by forbiddings of conscience or the fear that you will lose your soul, your hope, or your character than from abhorrence of sin or love of God.

Such people always apologize for sin, evade duty, and think there is no great harm in doing as they do. They love their sins. If there is not some scriptural command of God that they dare not resist, they will continue in sin.

This is not so with true repentance. If a thing seems contrary to the great law of love, the person who has true repentance will hate it and avoid it whether he has a direct command from God for it or not. He sees it is contrary to the law of benevolence, and he would no more do it than he would blaspheme God, steal, or commit any other abomination. The man that has true repentance does not need a "thus saith the Lord" to keep him from oppressing his fellowmen.

False repentance leads to self-righteousness. An individual may know that Jesus Christ is the only Savior of sinners and may profess to believe in and rely on Him alone for salvation. But he is actually placing ten times more reliance on his reformation than on Jesus Christ for his salvation. And if he would watch his own heart, he would know it. He may say he expects salvation by Christ, but he is really building a righteousness of his own.

He supposes his worldly sorrow to be true repentance, and he trusts in it. He takes it for granted that Jesus will save him because he has had sorrow on account of his sins, although he is not conscious that he has never felt any resting in Christ. He felt sorrow, then got relief and felt better. Now he expects to be saved by Christ, when his very consciousness will teach him that he has never relied on Him.

The individual who has this kind of sorrow becomes harder in heart in proportion to the number of times that he exercises such sorrow. If he has strong emotions of conviction but his heart is not broken, the fountains of feeling dry up and his heart is more difficult to reach.

A real Christian who has truly repented is different. Every time you bring the truth to him he becomes more easily affected, excited, and broken under God's blessed Word. His heart gets into the habit of going along with the convictions of this understanding, and he becomes as teachable as a little child.

A HARDENING OF HEART

Churches--or individual members--who have only worldly repentance pass through a revival, get waked up, and then grow cold again. Let this be repeated, and you will find them more and more difficult to be roused. Soon they become as hard as millstone, and nothing can ever rally them to a revival again.

On the other hand, some churches and individuals experience true repentance. Let them go through successive revivals, and you will find them growing more and more tender. When they hear the trumpet blow for a revival, they will glow instantly and be ready for the work.

The distinction between true and false repentance is as broad as between light and darkness. The principle is illustrated in sinners, who after passing through repeated revivals, will scoff and criticize. Although he heavens hang with clouds of mercy over their heads, they reject it. If they don't have true repentance, every fresh excitement hardens the heart and makes them more difficult to be reached by the truth.

Some people are thrown into distress whenever the truth is flashed upon their minds. They may not have as much conviction as the real Christian, but the real Christian is filled with peace at the very time his tears are flowing from conviction of sin. And each repeated season of conviction makes him more and more watchful, tender, and careful, until his conscience becomes so sensitive that the very appearance of evil will offend it. But the other kind of sorrow, which does not lead to true renunciation of sin, leaves the heart harder than before and soon sears the conscience like a hot iron.

False repentance is sure to be repented of. You will soon find these people becoming ashamed of the deep feelings that they had. They do not want to speak of them, and if they do talk of them it is always lightly and coldly. Perhaps they bustled about in time of revival and appeared as busy as anybody. Very likely they were among the extremes in everything that was done. But now the revival is over, and you find them opposed to new measures, changing back, and ashamed of their zeal. In fact, they repent of their repentance!

After they have joined a church, they will be ashamed of their public repentance. When the height of the revival has gone by, they will begin to talk about being "too enthusiastic" and the necessity of being more sober and consistent.

You some times find people who profess to be converted in a revival turning against the very measure, means, and doctrines by which they profess to have been converted. Not so with the true Christian. He is never ashamed of his repentance. The last thing he would ever think of being ashamed of is the excitement he felt in a revival.

Many people have mistaken conviction for conversion and the sorrow of the world for that godly sorrow that "worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of". I am convinced, after years of observation, that this is the reason for the present deplorable state of the Church all over the world.

WHERE DO WE STAND?

Many sinners think it is a great trial to give up their ungodly companions and their sins. If they had true repentance, they would not think it any cross to give up their sins. When I first saw young people becoming Christians and joining the Church, I thought it was a good thing because their souls would be saved and they would get to heaven. But at the time repentance seemed to be a very sorrowful thing. I never dreamed then that these young people could ever be truly happy.

It is very common for people who know that Christianity is good to think they cannot be happy in the Church. They do not understand that true repentance leads to an abhorrence of those things that were formerly loved. Sinners do not see that when their young friends become true Christians sinful amusements are crucified.

People who experience false repentance do not know what it is to enjoy Christianity. They are not cheerful and happy. They are grieved because they have to withdraw from so many things they love or because they have to give so much money. They are in the fire all the time. Instead of rejoicing in every opportunity of self-denial and rejoicing in truth, the plain truth distresses them. Why? Because their hearts do not love to work for God. If they loved to do their duty, every ray of light that broke in upon their minds from heaven would be welcomed and would make them happier.

Perhaps you think I suppose all true Christians are perfect. There is a radical difference between a backslidden Christian and a hypocrite who has returned to the world. The hypocrite loves the world and enjoys sin when he returns to it. He may have fear, remorse, and apprehension about the loss of character; but, after all, he enjoys sin.

The backslidden Christian is different. He loses his first love, then he falls prey to temptation and enters into sin. But he does not love it. It is always bitter to him, and he feels unhappy and homesick. He has , at the time, no Spirit of God to keep him from sin, but he does not love it. He is unhappy, and he feels like a wretch. He is as different from the hypocrite as can be. He can never again enjoy sin or delight in the pleasures of the world. Never again can he drink iniquity like water. As long as he continues to wander, he is miserable.

Convicted sinners are afraid to pledge themselves to give up their sins. They tell you they can't promise to do it because they are afraid they won't keep the promise. They love sin. The drunkard knows that he loves strong drink. Although he may be constrained to abstain from it, he still craves it. Likewise, the convicted sinner loves sin, and his hold on sin has never been broken--he dares not promise to give it up.

Sinners who have worldly sorrow can now see where the difficulty lies and why they are not converted. Their intellectual views of sin may be such that if their hearts corresponded they would be Christians. Perhaps they think this is true repentance. If they were truly willing to give up all sin, they would not hesitate to pledge themselves to it and have all the world know that they had done it.

If you are willing to give up sin, you are willing to promise to do it and willing to have it known that you have done it. But if you resist conviction and still love your sins, all your convictions will not help you. They will only sink you deeper in hell for resisting them.

Let us pray that this is the evidence that our repentance is genuine: "For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a Godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter" (2 Corinthians 7:11).

## Religious experiences are no proof of salvation

Some people have strong religious experiences, and think of them as proof of God's working in their hearts. Often these experiences give people a sense of the importance of the spiritual world, and the reality of divine things. However, these, too, are no sure proof of salvation. Demons and damned human beings have many spiritual experiences which have a great effect on their heart attitudes. They live in the spiritual world and see first-hand what it is like. Their sufferings show them the worth of salvation and the worth of a human soul in the most powerful way imaginable. The parable in Luke chapter 16 teaches this clearly, as the suffering man asks that Lazarus might be sent to tell his brothers to avoid this place of torment. No doubt people in hell now have a distinct idea of the vastness of eternity, and of the shortness of life. They are completely convinced that all the things of this life are unimportant when compared to the experiences of the eternal world. People now in hell have a great sense of the preciousness of time, and of the wonderful opportunities people have, who have the privilege of hearing the Gospel. They are completely aware of the foolishness of their sin, of neglecting opportunities, and ignoring the warnings of God. When sinners find out by personal experience the final result of their sin there is "weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matt 13:42) So even the most powerful religious experiences are not a sure sign of God's grace in the heart.

Demons and damned people also have a strong sense of God's majesty and power. God's power is most clearly displayed in his execution of divine vengeance upon his enemies. "What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath-prepared for destruction?" (Rom 9:22) Shuddering, the devils await their final punishment, under the strongest sense of God's majesty. They feel it now, of course, but in the future it will show to the greatest degree, when the Lord Jesus "is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels." (2 Thess 2:7) On that day, they will desire to be run away, to be hidden from the presence of God.

"Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him." Rev 1:7

So everyone will see him in the glory of His Father. But, obviously, not all who see him will be saved.

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## People are different from demons

Now it is possible that some people might object to all this, saying that ungodly men in this world are quite different from demons. They are under different circumstances and are different kind of beings. An objector might say, "Those things that are visible and present to demons are invisible and future to men. Besides, people have the disadvantage of having bodies, which restrain the soul, and keep people from seeing these spiritual things first-hand. Therefore, even if demons do have a great knowledge and personal experience of the things of God, and have no grace, the conclusion does not apply to me." Or, put another way: if people have these things in this life, it may very well be a sure sign of God's grace in their hearts.

In reply, it is agreed that no man in this life has ever had the degree of these things as the demons have them. No person has ever shuddered, with the same amount of fear that the demons shudder with. No man, in this life, can ever have the same kind of knowledge that the Devil has. It is clear that demons and damned men understand the vastness of eternity, and the importance of the other world, more than any living person, and so they crave salvation all the more.

But we can see that men in this world can have experiences of the same kind as those of demons and damned people. They have the same mental outlook, the same opinions and emotions, and the same kind of impressions on the mind and heart. Notice, that for the apostle James it is a convincing argument. He claims that if people think believing in one God is proof of God's grace, it is not proof, because demons believe the same. James is not referring to the act of believing only, but also to the emotions and actions that go along with their belief. Shuddering is an example of emotions from the heart. This shows that if people have the same kind of mental outlook, and respond from the heart in the same way, it is no sure sign of grace.

The Bible does not state how much people in this world may see God's glory, and not have God's grace in their hearts. We are not told exactly to what degree God reveals himself to certain people, and how much they will respond in their hearts. It is very tempting to say that if a person has a certain amount of religious experience, or a certain amount of truth, they must be saved. Perhaps it is even possible for some unsaved people to have greater experiences than some of those who have grace in their hearts! So it is wrong to look at experience or knowledge in terms of amount. Men who have a genuine work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts have experiences and knowledge of a different kind.

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## People can have religious feelings that demons cannot

At this point, someone might answer these thoughts by saying, "I agree with you. I see that believing in God, seeing His majesty and holiness, and knowing that Jesus died for sinners is not proof of grace in my heart. I agree that demons can know these things as well. But I have some things they don't have. I have joy, peace, and love. Demons can't have them, so that must show that I am saved."

Yes, it is true that you have something more than a demon can have, but it is nothing better than a demon could have. A person's experience of love, joy, etc., may not be because they have any cause in them different from a demon, but just different circumstances. The causes, or origins, of their feelings are the same. This is why these experiences are no better than those of demons. To explain further:

All the things that were discussed before about demons and damned people, arise from two main causes, natural understanding and self-love. When they think about themselves, these two things are what determine their feelings and response. Natural understanding shows them that God is holy, while they are wicked. God is infinite, but they are limited. God is powerful, and they are weak. Self-love gives them a sense of the importance of religion, the eternal world, and a longing after salvation. When these two causes work together, demons and damned men become aware of the awesome majesty of God, whom they know will be their Judge. They know that God's judgment will be perfect and their punishment will be forever. Therefore, these two causes together with their senses will bring about their anguish on that judgment day, when they see the outward glory of Christ and His saints.

The reason many people feel joy, peace, and love today, while demons do not, may be more due to their circumstances, rather than any difference in their hearts. The causes in their hearts are the same. For example, the Holy Spirit is now at work in the world keeping all of mankind from being as wicked as they could be (2 Thess 2:17). This is in contrast to demons, who are just as wicked as they can be all the time. Furthermore, God in his mercy gives gifts to all people, such as the rain for crops (Matt 5:45), heat from the sun, etc. Not only that, but often people receive many things in life to bring them happiness, such as personal relationships, pleasures, music, good health, and so on. Most important of all, many people have heard news of hope: God has sent a Saviour, Jesus Christ, who died to save sinners. In these circumstances, the natural understanding of people can cause them to feel things that demons never can.

Self-love is a powerful force in the hearts of men, strong enough without grace to cause people to love those who love them,

"But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them." Luke 6:32

It is a natural thing for a person who sees God being merciful, and who knows that they are not as bad as they could be, to therefore be sure of God's love for them. If your love for God comes only from your feelings that God loves you, or because you have heard that Christ died for you, or something similar, the source of your love to God is only self-love. This reigns in the hearts of demons as well.

Imagine the situation of the demons. They know they are unrestrained in their wickedness. They know God is their enemy and always will be. Although they are without any hope, still they are active and fighting. Just think, what if they had some of the hope that people have? What if demons, with their knowledge of God, had their wickedness restrained? Imagine if a demon, after all his fears about God's judgment, was suddenly led to imagine that God might be his Friend? That God might forgive him and let him, sin and all, into heaven? Oh the joy, the wonder, the gratitude we would see! Would not this demon be a great lover of God, since, after all everybody loves people who help them? What else could cause feelings so powerful and sincere? Is it any wonder, that so many people are deceived this way? Especially since people have the demons to promote this delusion. They have been promoting it now for many centuries, and alas they are very good at it.

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## True Spiritual experiences have a different source

Now we come to the question, if all these various experiences and feelings come from nothing more than demons are capable of, what are the kinds of experiences that are truly spiritual and holy? What do I have to find in my own heart, as a sure sign of God's grace there? What are the differences that show them to be from the Holy Spirit?

This is the answer: those feelings and experiences which are good signs of God's grace in the heart differ from the experience of demons in their source and in their results.

Their source is the sense of the overwhelming holy beauty and loveliness of the things of God. When a person grasps in his mind, or better yet, when he feels his own heart held captive by the attractiveness of the Divine, this is an unmistakable sign of God's working.

The demons and damned in hell do not now, and never will experience even the tiniest bit of this. Before their fall, the demons did have this sense of God. But in their fall, they lost it, the only thing they could lose of their knowledge of God. We have seen how the demons have very clear ideas about how powerful God is, his justice, holiness, and so on. They know a lot of facts about God. But now they haven't a clue about what God is like. They cannot know what God is like any more than a blind man can know about colors! Demons can have a strong sense God's awesome majesty, but they don't see his loveliness. They have observed His work among the human race for these thousands of years, indeed with the closest attention; but they never see a glimmer of His beauty. No matter how much they know about God (and we have seen that they know very much indeed) the knowledge they have will never bring them to this higher, spiritual knowing what God is like. On the contrary, the more they know about God, the more they hate Him. The beauty of God consists primarily in this holiness, or moral excellence, and this is what they hate the most. It is because God is holy that the demons hate Him. One could suppose that if God were to be less holy, the demons would hate Him less. No doubt demons would hate any holy Being, no matter what He was like otherwise. But surely they hate this Being all the more, for being infinitely holy, infinitely wise, and infinitely powerful!

Wicked people, including those alive today, will on the day of judgment see all there is to see of Jesus Christ, except His beauty and loveliness. There is not one thing about Christ that we can think of, that will not be set before them in the strongest light on that brilliant day. The wicked will see Jesus "coming in clouds with great power and glory." (Mark 13:26) They will see his outward glory, which is far, far greater than we can possibly imagine now. You know the wicked will be thoroughly convinced of all who Christ is. They will be convinced about His omniscience, as they see all their sins replayed and evaluated. They will know first-hand Christ's justice, as their sentences are announced. His authority will be made utterly convincing when every knee will bow, and every tongue confess Jesus as Lord. (Phil 2:10,11) The divine majesty will be impressed upon them in quite an effective way, as the wicked are poured into hell itself, and enter into their final state of suffering and death (Rev 20:14,15) When that happens, all their knowledge of God, as true and as powerful as it may be, will be worth nothing, and less than nothing, because they will not see Christ's beauty.

Therefore, it is this seeing the loveliness of Christ that makes the difference between the saving grace of the Holy Spirit, and the experiences of demons. This sight or sense is what makes true Christian experience different from everything else. The faith of God's elect people is based on this. When a person sees the excellence of the gospel, he senses the beauty and loveliness of the divine scheme of salvation. His mind is convinced that it is of God, and he believes it with all his heart. As the apostle Paul says in 2 Cor 4:34, "even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." That is to say, as was explained before, unbelievers can see that there is a gospel, and understand the facts about it, but they do not see its light. The light of the gospel is the glory of Christ, his holiness and beauty. Right after this we read,

2 Cor 4:6 "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

Clearly, it is this divine light, shining into our hearts, that enables us to see the beauty of the gospel and have a saving belief in Christ. This supernatural light shows us the superlative beauty and loveliness of Jesus, and convinces us of His sufficiency as our Saviour. Only such a glorious, majestic Saviour can be our Mediator, standing between guilty, hell-deserving sinners such as ourselves, and an infinitely holy God. This supernatural light gives us a sense of Christ that convinces us in a way nothing else ever could.

When a most wicked sinner is caused to see Christ's divine loveliness, he no longer speculates why God should be interested in him, to save him. Before, he could not understand how the blood of Christ could pay the penalty for sins. But now he can see the preciousness of Christ's blood, and how it is worthy to be accepted as the ransom for the worst of sins. Now the soul can recognize that he is accepted by God, not because of who he is, but because of the value God puts on the blood, obedience, and intercession of Christ. Seeing this value and worth gives the poor guilty soul rest which cannot be found in any sermon or booklet.

When a person comes to see the proper foundation of faith and trust with his own eyes, this is saving faith.

"For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life." John 6:40  
"I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me." John 17:6-8

It is this sight of the divine beauty of Christ that captivates the wills and draws the hearts of men. A sight of the outward greatness of God in His glory may overwhelm men, and be more than they can endure. This will be seen on the day of judgment, when the wicked will be brought before God. They will be overwhelmed, yes, but the hostility of the heart will remain in full strength and the opposition of the will continue. But on the other hand, a single ray of the moral and spiritual glory of God and of the supreme loveliness of Christ shone into the heart overcomes all hostility. The soul is inclined to love God as if by an omnipotent power, so that now not only the understanding, but the whole being receives and embraces the loving Saviour.

This sense of the beauty of Christ is the beginning of true saving faith in the life of a true convert. This is quite different from any vague feeling that Christ loves him or died for him. These sort of fuzzy feelings can cause a sort of love and joy, because the person feels a gratitude for escaping the punishment of their sin. In actual fact, these feelings are based on self-love, and not on a love for Christ at all. It is a sad thing that so many people are deluded by this false faith. On the other hand, a glimpse of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ causes in the heart a supreme genuine love for God. This is because the divine light shows the excellent loveliness of God's nature. A love based on this is far, far above anything coming from self-love, which demons can have as well as men. The true love of God which comes from this sight of His beauty causes a spiritual and holy joy in the soul; a joy in God, and exulting in Him. There is no rejoicing in ourselves, but rather in God alone.

The sight of the beauty of divine things will cause true desires after the things of God. These desires are different from the longings of demons, which happen because the demons know their doom awaits them, and they wish it could somehow be otherwise. The desires that come from this sight of Christ's beauty are natural free desires, like a baby desiring milk. Because these desires are so different from their counterfeits, they help to distinguish genuine experiences of God's grace from the false.

False spiritual experiences have a tendency to cause pride, which is the devil's special sin. "He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil." (1 Tim 3:6) Pride is the inevitable result of false spiritual experiences, even though they are often covered with a disguise of great humility. False experience is enamored with self and grows on self. It lives by showing itself in one way or another. A person can have great love for God, and be proud of the greatness of his love. He can be very humble, and very proud indeed of his humility. But the emotions and experiences that come from God's grace are exactly opposite. God's true working in the heart causes humility. They do not cause any kind of showiness or self-exaltation. That sense of the awesome, holy, glorious beauty of Christ kills pride and humbles the soul. The light of God's loveliness, and that alone, shows the soul its own ugliness. When a person really grasps this, he inevitably begins a process of making God bigger and bigger, and himself smaller and smaller.

Another result of God's grace working in the heart is that the person will hate every evil and respond to God with a holy heart and life. False experiences may cause a certain amount of zeal, and even a great deal of what is commonly called religion. However it is not a zeal for good works. Their religion is not a service of God, but rather a service of self. This is how the apostle James puts it himself in this very context,

"You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that-and shudder. You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless ?" James 2:19-20

In other words, deeds, or good works, are evidence of a genuine experience of God's grace in the heart. "We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (1 John 2:34) When the heart has been ravished by the beauty of Christ, how else can it respond?

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## The sight of Christ's beauty- God's greatest gift!

How excellent is that inner goodness and true religion that comes from this sight of the beauty of Christ! Here you have the most wonderful experiences of saints and angels in heaven. Here you have the best experience of Jesus Christ Himself. Even though we are mere creatures, it is a sort of participation in God's own beauty.

"Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature." 2 Pet 1:4  
"God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness." Heb 12:10

Because of the power of this divine working, there is a mutual indwelling of God and His people. "God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him." (1 John 4:16)

This special relationship has to make the person involved as happy and as blessed as any creature in existence. This is a special gift of God, which he gives only to his special favorites. Gold, silver, diamonds, and earthly kingdoms are given by God to people who the Bible calls dogs and pigs. But this great gift of beholding Christ's beauty, is the special blessing of God to His dearest children. Flesh and blood cannot give this gift: only God can bestow it. This was the special gift which Christ died to obtain for his elect. It is the highest token of his everlasting love, the best fruit of his labours, and the most precious purchase of his blood.

By this gift, more than anything else, the saints shine as lights in the world. This gift, more than anything else, is their comfort. It is impossible that the soul who possesses this gift should ever perish. This is the gift of eternal life. It is eternal life begun: those who have it can never die. It is the dawning of the light of glory. It comes from heaven, it has a heavenly quality, and it will take its bearer to heaven. Those who have this gift may wander in the wilderness or be tossed by waves on the ocean, but they will arrive in heaven at last. There the heavenly spark will be made perfect and increased. In heaven the souls of the saints will be transformed into a bright and pure flame, and they will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Amen.

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