

a New Beginning

*God's answer to the problems of guilt,
doubt, and temptation*

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A New Beginning

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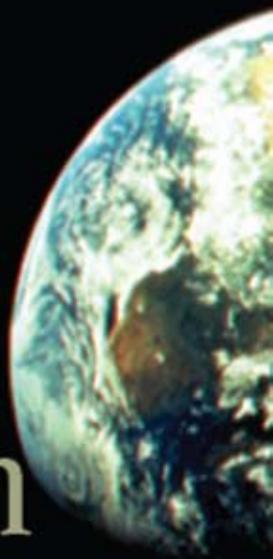
To be saved and sure of it is the greatest blessing a person can have this side of heaven. Moses recognized this when he addressed the Israelites of his day: "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord!" (Deuteronomy 33:29). There are no people like God's people, those whom He has redeemed by the blood of His Son and sealed with His Spirit, assuring them of His saving favour now and forever.

Think carefully for a moment. According to Scripture, true Christians have the best of all worlds. They have the best life. Have you ever met a person who said he was sorry he was saved? They have the best death, for the Lord assures them of His presence: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4). And they have the best eternity. Death is not the end for any of us. We will live forever, either in God's heaven or in God's hell. Only those who have the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour will enter heaven: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).

Therefore, the great question for each of us is, "Am I a Christian?" Do not take it for granted. As the apostle Peter exhorted, "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10).

This little booklet has a very simple aim. It is to show you God's way of salvation, of assurance of salvation, and of victorious Christian living. Read it carefully, and pay particular attention to the many quotations from the Word of God. After all, "your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1 Corinthians 2:5).

How GOD Sees Men



The first step on the road to heaven for each of us is to realize our true spiritual state in the sight of God. It is not how we view ourselves that matters, but how God views us. In the Bible, He paints a totally accurate picture of the natural state of all of us, without exception. It is not at all flattering. It is not meant to be. It is meant to awaken all of us to a deep sense of our need, and the reason for it. Only then can the remedy be given or received.

Here then is God's portrait of all men by nature:

◆ *All men are sinners.*

"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5).

"All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6).

"There is no man that sinneth not" (1 Kings 8:46).

All men, then, are sinners by nature and by choice. They are held personally responsible by God their Judge as wilful rebels against His law:



“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4).

◆ Sinners are spiritually dead.

“Dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1).

“By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12).

“In Adam all die” (1 Corinthians 15:22).

This death is a total inability to originate any spiritual good to merit the favour of God. All the sons of Adam are equally dead.

◆ Sinners are slaves to sin and in bondage to the devil.

“Whosoever committeth sin is the servant [or bond-slave] of sin” (John 8:34).

“The prince of the power of the air [i.e., the devil], the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2).

This is a terrible statement. The devil is energetically active in those who are disobedient to God. We tend to imagine that he is active only in those we hold to be particularly sinful—murderers and others of that kind. But he is at work in all sinners.

◆ Sinners are enemies of God.

“Enemies in your mind by wicked works” (Colossians 1:21).

“The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Romans 8:7).

◆ Sinners are separated from God.

“Your iniquities have separated between you and your God” (Isaiah 59:2).

“Without Christ, ... aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12).

◆ Sinners are under God’s condemnation.

“Condemned already” (John 3:18).

“The Lord ... will not at all acquit the wicked” (Nahum 1:3).

“The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).

“The wicked shall be turned into hell” (Psalm 9:17).

“The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8).



Thus, sinners are described by God as being lost (Isaiah 53:6; Luke 19:10) and in danger of being visited by God's wrath against their sin:

“Because there is wrath, beware lest he take thee away with his stroke: then a great ransom cannot deliver thee” (Job 36:18).

What All Men Urgently Need

Obviously, they need sin to be removed, or they must perish. They need to obtain life, or they must remain dead to God and be sentenced to endure the pains of hell, the second death, forever.

◆ They need to be reconciled to God.

No man can remain an enemy of God without falling under God's wrath. “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:31).

◆ They need to be freed from the slavery of sin and the devil.

◆ And they need to escape from the wrath and condemnation of God.

In other words, they need to be saved. God's Word says, “We must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Every person in the world needs this salvation—a salvation from sin, death, and hell; and a salvation unto God that gives the experience of His love, life, and pardon.

You Can Do Nothing to Meet This Need

If you are in the state we have just read about in God's Word, you obviously cannot do anything to cause your own salvation.

◆ You are “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1).

Dead men cannot bring themselves to life.

◆ “Good works” cannot save you.

The Bible expressly states that salvation is “not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:9).

Again it states that salvation is “not by works of righteousness which we have done” (Titus 3:5).

This explodes the common notion that God will weigh our “good deeds” against our bad ones and accept us into heaven if they outweigh the bad.

◆ Religion cannot save you.

Perhaps you are relying on the fact that you go to church and are careful to do religious works to get you to heaven. You may even pride yourself that you are not nearly so sinful as many other people.

The Lord Jesus told of a Pharisee who felt that way. He gave one tenth of his income to the synagogue and was very religious. But he was not saved (Luke 18:9-14). Jesus condemned him and all who are like him in the words of the prophet Isaiah:

“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me” (Matthew 15:8).

Paul also showed the folly of hoping to find some saving power in religious observances:

“Why ... are ye subject to ordinances, (touch not; taste not; handle not; which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?” (Colossians 2:20-22).



It is absolutely necessary for you to grasp how desperate your natural state is and how incapable you are of changing it. If you do not, you will never seek the Lord's remedy on His terms. If you are not clear on this matter, go through this section again. As you do so, ask the Lord to convict you of your urgent need of His saving grace and then to show you how you may receive it.

God's *Way* of Salvation



No man can do anything to save himself. But that is a far cry from saying that he cannot be saved: “With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26). God in love and grace has made a way of salvation. This is the great message of the Bible. It is called the gospel, which simply means the “good news.”

“Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10,11).

God's way of salvation is in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus said: “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

“There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5).



It is important to recognize who Jesus is.

◆ He is the Son of God.

“Thou art my beloved Son” (Luke 3:22).

“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16).

◆ He is the eternal God in the form of a man.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:1,14).

“Christ Jesus ..., being in the form of God, ... and being found in fashion as a man” (Philippians 2:5-8).

◆ He entered the world by being born of a virgin.

“Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” (Matthew 1:23).

“The angel Gabriel was sent from God ... to a virgin ... And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS....The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:26-35).

By this miracle of the virgin birth, Jesus Christ entered the world without being tainted by the sin that is transmitted from every human father to his children in the ordinary process of procreation. As He said to His Father, in a passage describing His sinless obedience, “A body hast thou prepared me” (Hebrews 10:5).

It is equally important to understand why the Son of God came into the world.

◆ He came because of God's love for His sinful creatures.

"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16).

◆ He came to save sinners.

"The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"
(Luke 19:10).

◆ He came to fulfil the law of God, which we had broken.

"Jesus ... said ... it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15).

◆ He came to die for the ungodly and to offer Himself as a sacrifice to God for their salvation.

"Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6).

"God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

The Word of God declares:

"It is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul" (Leviticus 17:11).

Again it states:

"Without shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22).

The Lord Jesus Christ met this need by giving Himself to be "an offering and a sacrifice to God" (Ephesians 5:2). Thus by the shedding of His own blood He purchased eternal salvation for His people.

"The Son of man came...to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28).

"But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Hebrews 9:26).

"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, ... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18,19).

"He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:5,6).

"Christ ... suffered for us, ... who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:21, 24).

◆ Christ not only died, He rose bodily from the grave.

He “was delivered for [because of] our offences, and was raised again for [because of] our justification” (Romans 4:25).

◆ Here, then, is the gospel.

“Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; ... he was buried, and ...he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3, 4).

◆ Christ fully meets the needs of sinners.

He has put away sin (Hebrews 9:26).

He grants pardon to sinners (1 John 1:9).

He justifies sinners—makes them right with God (Titus 3:5-7).

He reconciles them to God (Colossians 1:21).

He imparts eternal life to those who were dead in sin (Ephesians 2:1,5; Romans 6:23).

He puts His Spirit within them (Romans 8:9,15).

He enables them to live holy lives and breaks the dominating power of sin in them (Romans 6:14; Isaiah 42:7).

He saves His people from hell (Romans 8:1).

He guarantees His people a place in heaven (John 14:2, 3).

◆ Thus Jesus Christ is the only Saviour of sinners.

“Thou shalt call his name JESUS, for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

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

◆ Christ invites you to receive Him as your Saviour.

“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” (Isaiah 1:18).

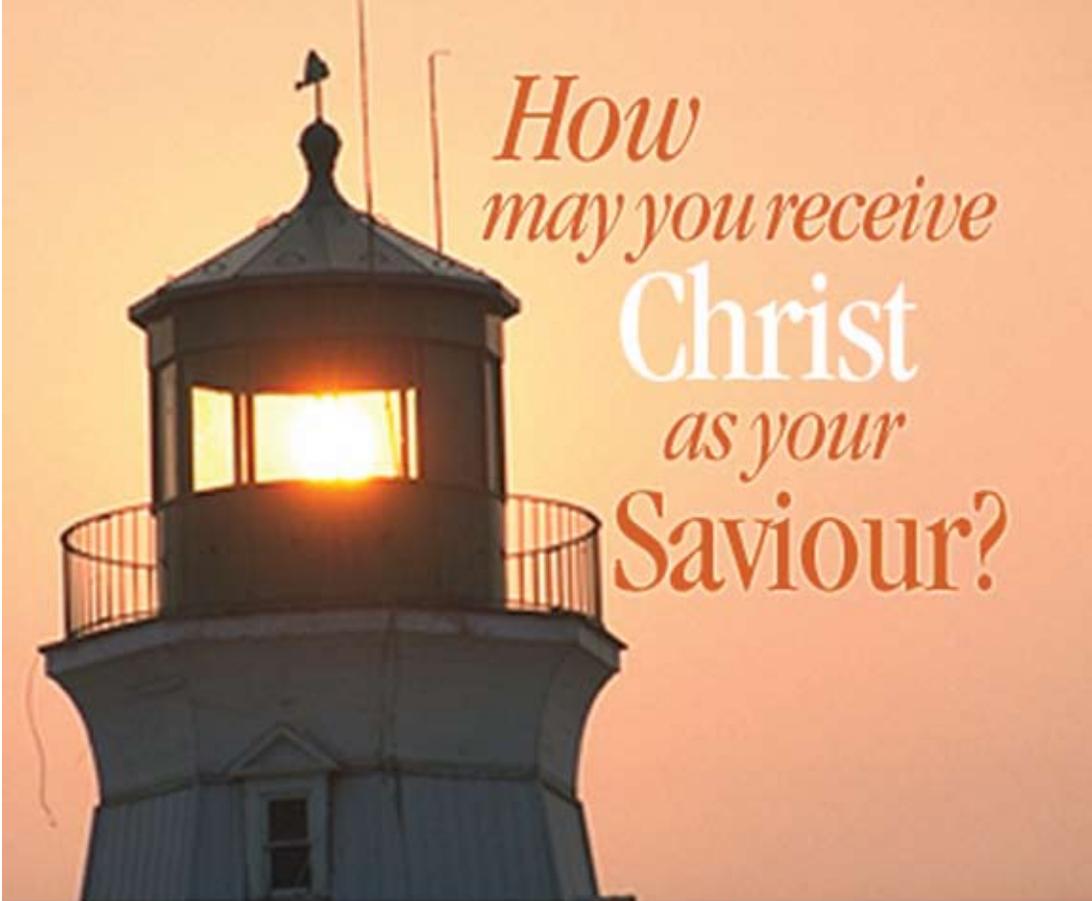
“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

◆ This invitation is addressed to sinners.

“I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Matthew 9:13).

“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye” (Isaiah 55:1).

“Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17).



*How
may you receive
Christ
as your
Saviour?*

This is a vital question. The Bible leaves no room for error. We cannot afford to be less than clear on its answer to the question, “What must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30). If you are asking that question, here is God’s answer in simple terms.

Recognize your need to be saved.

Most people have little conception of the hatefulness of their sin in the sight of God. That is why we have taken such pains to emphasize this point already. Only when you see your need will you be willing to apply God’s remedy.

“They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick” (Matthew 9:12).

Do not be tempted to sidestep the humbling recognition of your great need. Accept no proposed answer that does not face up to and deal with your sin and guilt. Especially shun every false gospel that simply addresses

you in terms of giving you a happy and fulfilled life. The Lord does give His people such a life, but the biblical way of salvation is first and foremost God's way of bringing sinners into a right relationship with Himself through Christ. Beware of false peace.

"They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace" (Jeremiah 6:14).

Believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that He alone is able to save.

"We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:69).

"A just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" (Isaiah 45:21,22).

Accept and act upon the promises of the gospel.

We have just noted the plain invitation that the Lord has given to sinners. If you will take the Lord at His word, on His own terms, you will be saved. He has sworn to that.

What are the Lord's terms for coming to Christ?

◆ *Confession of sin to the Lord is necessary.*

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whosoever confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13).

◆ *Trust in the merits of Christ alone is also necessary.*

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31).

"As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12).

◆ *Repentance from sin is necessary.*

"God ... commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:30).

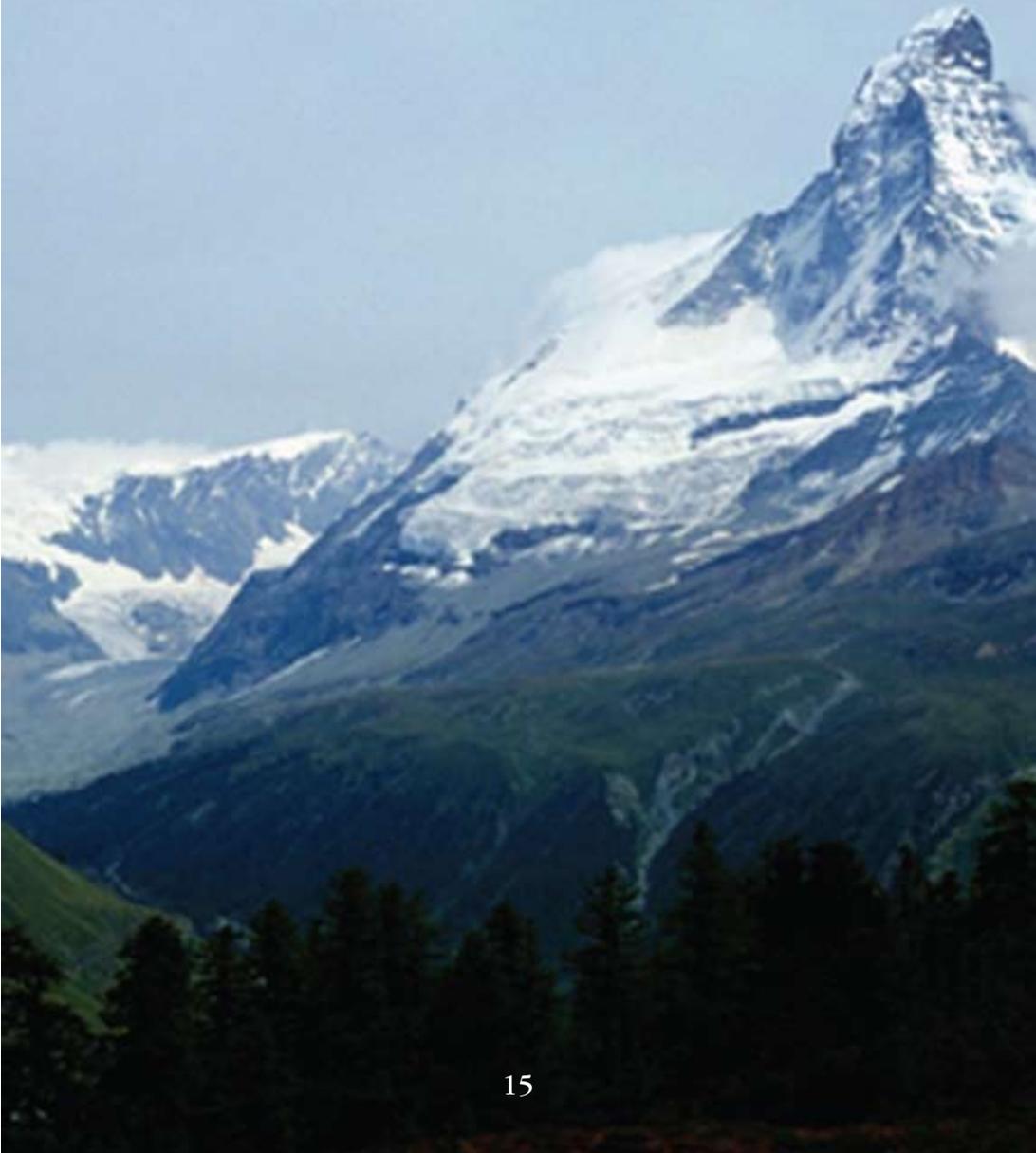
"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19).

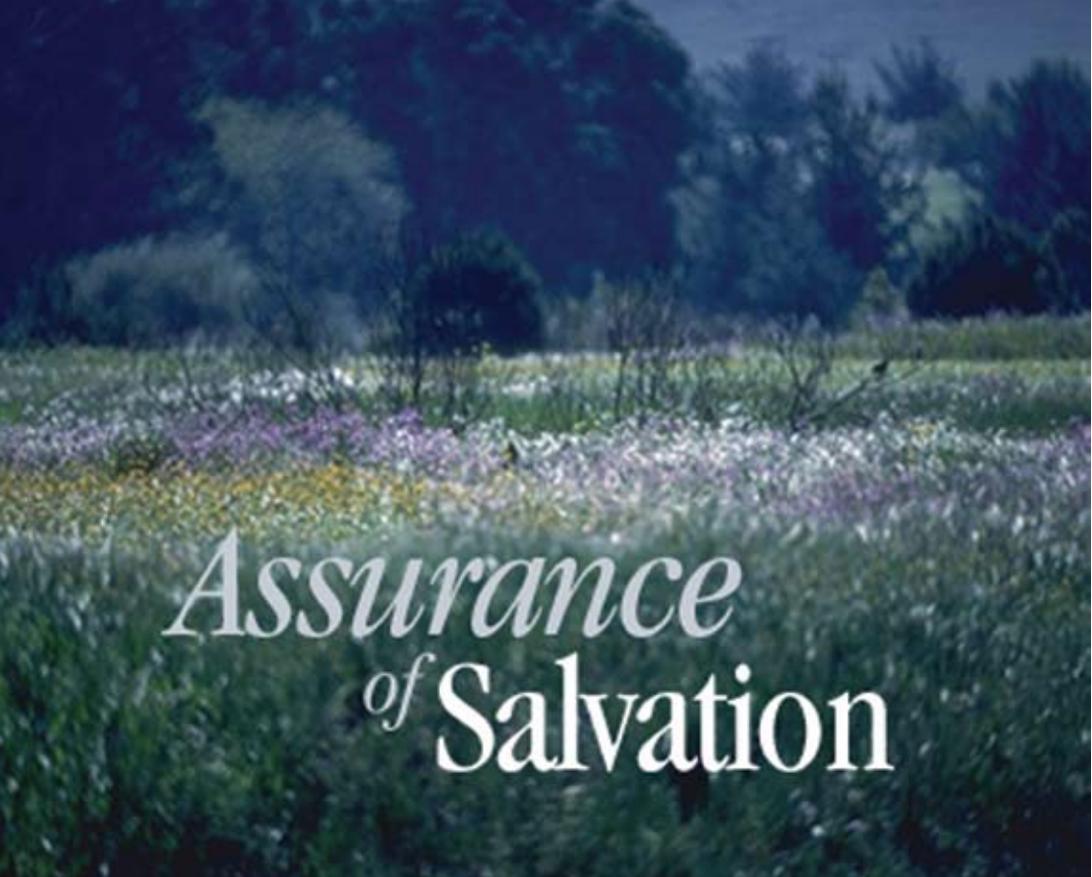
Repentance is the result of honest confession. Once you see your sinfulness before God and desire to be saved, you purpose to turn away from what you know to be sin to serve Christ as your Lord. You cannot have Him as your Saviour if you deliberately refuse to have Him as the Lord of your life.

Therefore, call now on the name of the Lord for salvation.

The Lord Jesus told of a man who simply but sincerely prayed, “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13), and He added, “This man went down to his house justified” (v.14).

Take your stand on the promise of God and accept His assurance that all Christ did in His saving work He did personally for you.





Assurance of Salvation

Assurance often poses a great problem to people who have asked the Lord Jesus Christ to be their Saviour. Usually they say they do not feel as if the great transaction has taken place in their life. They then conclude that they must not be really saved. Usually they are told to ignore their feelings, but this is almost impossible to do. To try to live the Christian life without feeling the assurance of salvation is not something of which the Bible approves. It is obviously unsatisfactory to have a religion that produces no feelings to correspond with the beliefs professed. So what is the answer?

Salvation comes by faith in Christ. So does assurance of salvation. We must be careful not to judge God's truth by a passing feeling. Rather we should fill our hearts and minds with the Word of God, especially as it relates to what Christ has done for His people, and let that truth work in us to produce the assurance and feeling of security we desire.

The assurance and enjoyment of our salvation depend heavily on the written Word of God.

“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life” (1 John 5:13).

Since it is the written Word of God that assures us of salvation, let us note carefully what it says: “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37).

Jesus said this. Does He tell the truth? Or could this be a lying, empty promise? The very thought is impossible.

“Thy word is truth” (John 17:17).

Therefore, we can be sure of the promise that “him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

Have you come to Christ? What does He promise concerning those who come to Him? He promises that He will not cast them out. Has He then cast you out?

Again, take the promise of John 1:12:

“As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”

Have you prayed to receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour? Do you believe in Him? That is, do you receive as entirely true all that the Bible says about who He is and what He has done, and do you trust no other merit but His for your acceptance with God?

Does He not promise, then, that you are now numbered among the sons of God? Take your stand upon His promise and you will conquer doubt and fear.

This kind of biblical logic is very helpful in obtaining a well-grounded assurance of salvation. But it is only the beginning. There is a much fuller and more blessed way. It is to take your Bible and ponder what exactly happens when a person receives Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. Let us pursue this in some detail. It will certainly firmly establish your faith.



New Creatures

So, what does happen when a sinner trusts Christ? The answer is, the most radical and far-reaching change of state and condition that is possible on this earth.

God's purpose of election concerning you is fulfilled.

“He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love” (Ephesians 1:4).

“As many as were ordained to eternal life believed” (Acts 13:48).

It is wrong for any man to try to discover if he is one of God's elect before coming to Christ. Like every other spiritual blessing, election is “in Christ.” Every sinner should obey the gospel and come to Christ. Once you come, you will realize that sovereign grace alone chose you, called you, and brought you in faith to the Saviour: “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

You are reconciled to God.

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1).

“When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son” (Romans 5:10).

By His atoning death the Lord Jesus Christ has turned away the wrath of God from you and has turned you away from your former enmity to God. Being brought into this friendship and acceptance with God, you now have freedom to enter His presence—indeed to live in His presence—and enjoy real fellowship with Him.

“Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ ... If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:3,7).

You are adopted into God's family.

God “predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will” (Ephesians 1:5).

This is the legal act of taking us into His family, giving us a right to the name and all the privileges of the sons of God. Paul explains something of what that means:

“For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:15-17).

You are legally acquitted of all guilt before God.

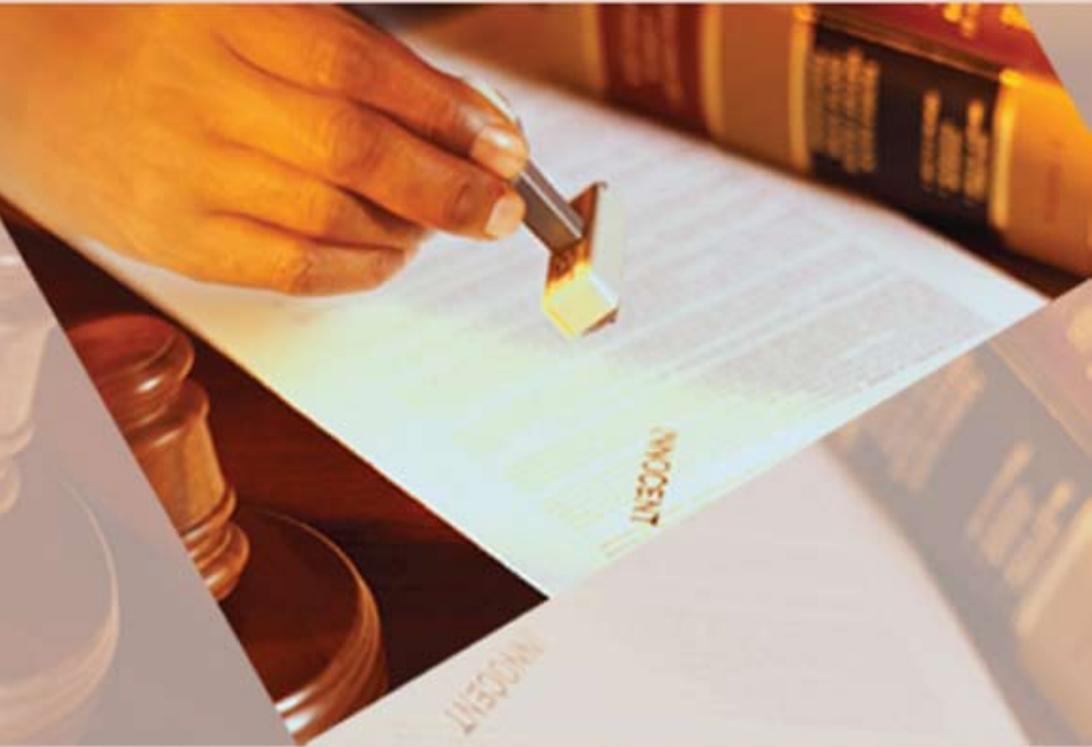
This is what the Bible calls “justification.” It is a legal term that simply means that God pardons all your sin and places all the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ to your account. Just as He imputed our sin to Christ, He imputes His righteousness to us. As Christ bore the penalty of our sin, we receive the reward of His righteousness.

“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Christ did not morally become a sinner when He was made sin for us. He was legally treated as guilty because He stood as our substitute before

God. The law of God looked on Him and His people as one and therefore exacted our punishment from Him. Similarly, justification describes, not a moral change in us, but a legal change in our status before God. Because in the eyes of the law Christ and His people are one, we receive the full reward of His obedience. God treats us as He does Christ. Christ's obedience is the basis of all God's favour to us.

Recognizing this legal oneness with Christ is the key to enjoying all the other blessings of salvation. We do not have to perform in order to impress



God or to gain His love and favour. Christ has done all that needs to be done to gain acceptance with God for us. He is our righteousness.

“But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us ... righteousness” (1 Corinthians 1:30).

“The Lord [is] our righteousness” (Jeremiah 23:6).

We cannot improve on that righteousness. Since God accepts us as perfect in Christ, and we do not have to work to gain acceptance with Him, we are

free to serve the Lord with gladness out of hearts of love and gratitude. We can also honestly recognize and bemoan our own imperfections and yet strive to be holy, not to establish a right standing with God, but because our Saviour has done that for us.

Living in the light of this great truth will enable us to grow in grace and enter into all the fulness of our new life in Christ.

You are made a new creature.

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Peter tells us how this happens. He says that the Lord has given unto us “exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:4).

Here is what will give you the power to live a holy life. It does not mean that you will be sinless (1 John 1:8,10). It does mean that you will have a new attitude toward sin. You will no longer acknowledge its mastery over you but will treat it as a usurping tyrant. You will oppose it and delight to be holy and Christlike.

You are indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus promised: “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:16,17).

He fulfils this in the case of every Christian: “Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God” (1 Corinthians 6:19).

You are vitally united to Christ.

As a Christian you are made a member of Christ’s body, the church (1 Corinthians 12:12,13).

You are also made a living stone in the temple, or spiritual house, the Lord is building (1 Peter 2:5).

These metaphors mean that as a Christian you have the very closest possible union with Christ. Paul frequently uses the phrase “in Christ,” especially in Ephesians and Colossians, to drive home the same message. Christ and His

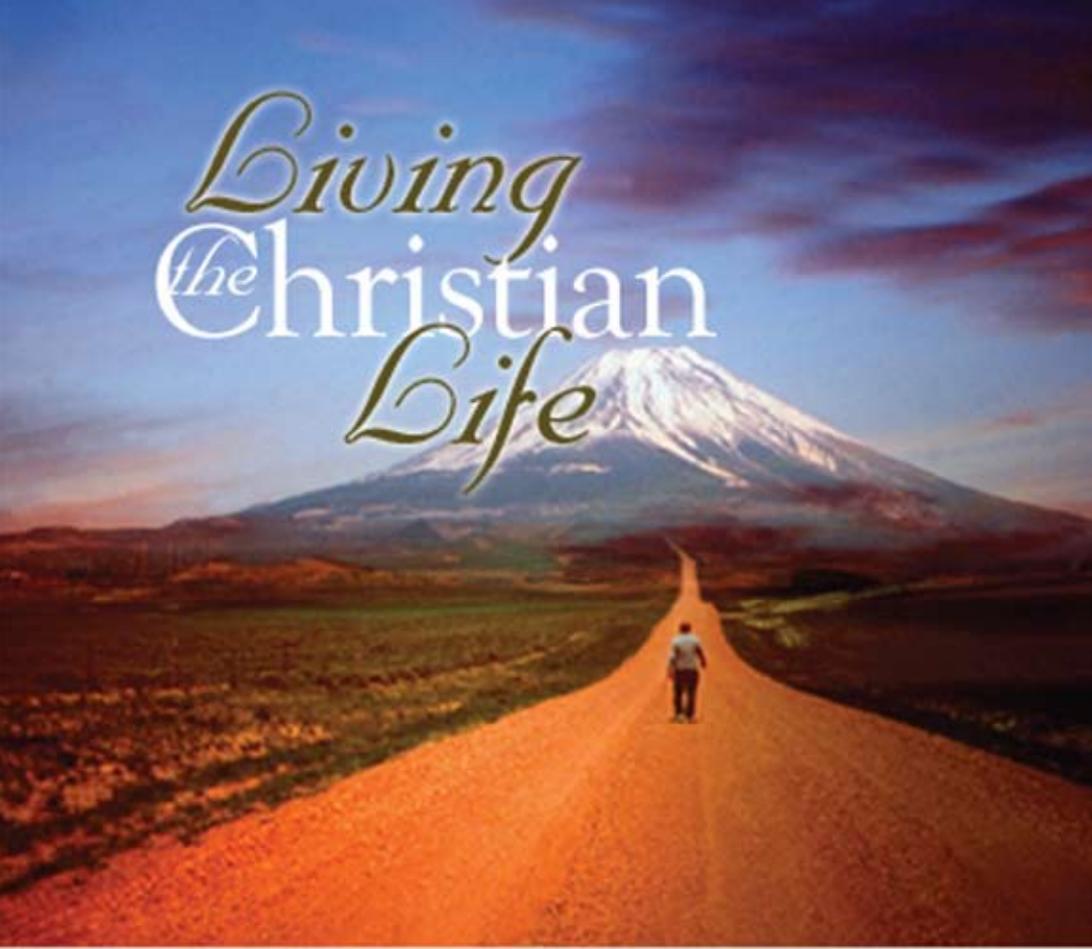


people cannot be separated. God will never deal with a Christian apart from Christ and His merits. Nor will He ever deal with Christ apart from His people.

What assurance this gives believers. In Christ every Christian has eternal life. Nothing can ever cut him off from his Saviour:

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?...Nay, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:35, 37-39).

“Think on these things” (Philippians 4:8). These are the things that make for peace of heart and full assurance of faith.



Living the Christian Life

Those who have just received Christ are like newborn babes (1 Peter 2:2). They have been “born again” (John 3:3,7) into the family of God. And just as babies need to grow and develop, so do Christians. Here are a few simple, basic guidelines for your development in the Christian life.

Baptism

Baptism is both a confession of faith and the sign and seal of the covenant of grace into which the Lord has brought us. As a sign, baptism pictures by an external act the internal washing of the soul by the blood of Christ. As a seal, it is a God-given token of assurance to a believer that he has been born again and savingly united to Christ. As such, baptism is the initial step of entrance into the visible church.

“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost...Then they that gladly received his word were baptized” (Acts 2:38, 41).

Bible Reading

“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2).

The Word of God is the Christian’s food. It will make you strong in the faith. Start with John’s Gospel and read it carefully, chapter by chapter. Then do the same the whole way through the New Testament. Try to remember at least one thing out of every chapter you read.

As you read the Bible keep a notebook and answer some basic questions from each chapter you read.

For example:

- ◆ What does this chapter teach me about God?
- ◆ What does it teach me about Christ?
- ◆ What does it teach me about the Holy Spirit?
- ◆ What are the leading doctrines?
- ◆ What sins are recorded that I should avoid?
- ◆ What virtues are recorded that I should emulate?

Daily Prayer

“Pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

“Men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Luke 18:1).

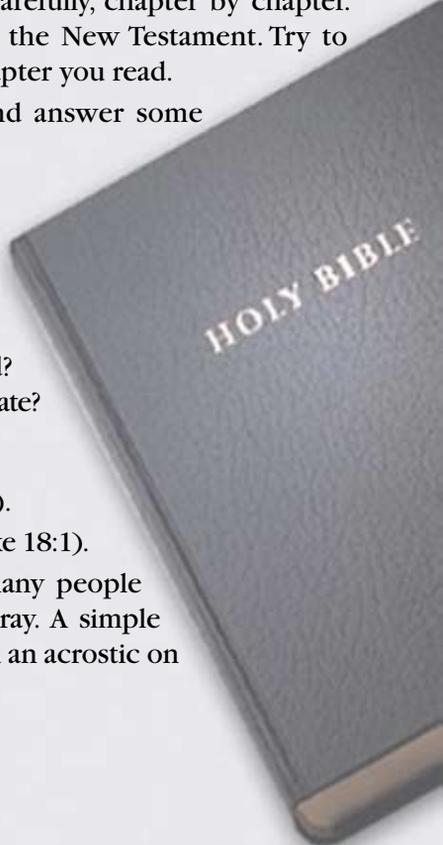
Prayer is the air a Christian breathes, yet many people have expressed difficulty in being able to pray. A simple structure for your prayer life may be based on an acrostic on the word ACTS:

- A is for adoration
- C is for confession
- T is for thanksgiving
- S is for supplication

These are four vital components of true prayer.

Connection Between Bible Reading and Prayer

Our reading and study of the Bible is the foundation of our praying. Normally, therefore, Bible reading should precede prayer. Take time to get into the Word of God and let that lead you in your praying. The answers to the questions you have listed in your Bible reading will now be a great



help in directing you how to approach God with praise, confession, and supplication.

Another way to gain help from the Bible in your daily prayer life is to read a psalm or other such portion of Scripture on your knees and praise God for everything it suggests to your mind. The beauty of this method is that it keeps your approach to God fresh. It also helps to create a spirit of praise and joy in the Lord. And, as Nehemiah said, “The joy of the Lord is your strength” (Nehemiah 8:10).

Witnessing for Christ

“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Romans 10:9).

Never be ashamed to own Christ as your Saviour. Be like the demoniac whom Jesus healed in Gadara, and start confessing Christ in your own home and neighbourhood as soon as you possibly can (Mark 5:19, 20).

Let your testimony as a Christian shine to all around you by your holy living and separation from the sins of the world.

“Let your moderation be known unto all men” (Philippians 4:5).

“Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Romans 13:13).

Church Membership

Become an active member in a Bible-believing church. This is the Lord’s command:

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together” (Hebrews 10:25).

Especially do not neglect attendance at the Lord’s Table. The Lord Jesus said:

“This do in remembrance of me” (1 Corinthians 11:24).

It is important to make sure you get into fellowship in a church that remains faithful to the Word of God.

Most major denominations have departed from the Word of God (2 Peter 2:1). They have embraced “another gospel” (Galatians 1:6, 7). They are involved in the ecumenical movement (the World Council of Churches),

which is seeking to create one united church on earth, including the Roman Catholic church, contrary to the plain commands of Scripture. In many churches this ecumenical thrust is being fueled by a counterfeit of the charismatic gifts of the early church.

These are serious dangers for a new believer to avoid. God's Word commands us to keep ourselves separate from such movements:

"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3).

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Corinthians 6:14).

"Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Romans 16:17).

"Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Ephesians 5:11).

Look for a church where the Lord Jesus Christ is constantly uplifted. Once you are in such a church, do not be content with being an onlooker. Get fully involved in the work of God in the church where He has placed you.

The Fulness of the Spirit

Seek a daily infilling of the Holy Spirit's power.

"Be [continually] filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18).

God's work can only be done by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit:

"Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6).

Every Christian has the Holy Spirit dwelling within him (Romans 8:9), and every Christian should have the Spirit to fill him with power to serve God.

"Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me" (Acts 1:8).

"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke 11:13).

Living by Faith

We may sum up how to live the Christian life very simply. Let Christ and His glory be your basic aim in life. Remember that you are to live by faith. That is, let what you believe determine how you act.

"The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).



Dealing with Problems

The devil often uses all his wiles to discourage and defeat God's people. Here are some of the things that discourage Christians. In each case we can overcome discouragement and live effectively for God.

Some become discouraged by opposition.

This world is no friend of Christ's. It opposed and crucified Him. Small wonder then if it opposes us who serve Christ.

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matthew 5:10-12).

Instead of becoming discouraged by opposition we should ask God for grace to bear it as the early Christians did, "rejoicing that they were counted

worthy to suffer shame for his name” (Acts 5:41). Remember, though we may suffer opposition, we are on the winning side. No matter who opposes us, God is for us.

“If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31).

Some become discouraged through worry.

The devil is ever seeking to rob God’s people of the peace of heart and mind which they ought to be enjoying in Christ. The answer to sad,



depressed feelings is to count the blessings God has given you and praise Him fervently for each of them in turn.

“Be careful [anxious] for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6, 7).

Especially praise Him for saving you. It is a good idea to read a portion of Scripture such as Ephesians 1:1-14 or 1 Peter 1:1-9 and meditate on the great

blessings all believers have in Christ until you are stirred to praise the Lord and leave off your depressed feelings. Your heavenly Father is caring for you.

“The very hairs of your head are all numbered” (Matthew 10:30).

“We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

“Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1 Peter 5:7).

So, if you are depressed by worry, instead of brooding on yourself and your woes, fill your mind with the Lord and all His works. You will not remain depressed for long: “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee” (Isaiah 26:3).

The struggle with sin brings some Christians into defeat and despair.

While Christians have a perfect righteousness in Christ, they are not yet perfect in their own natures. They still sin, and this often causes them to doubt the reality of the work of grace within them. Often they despair of living in the victory of true holiness. But the Christ who justifies also sanctifies.

Though they are not yet perfect, true Christians are always marked by their attitude to sin. They are new creatures who no longer judge things in a merely worldly way.

“Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:16,17).

Whereas to the ungodly man the worst thing about sin is its detection and punishment, to the Christian the worst part about it is that it grieves the Lord and mars his enjoyment of fellowship with Him. He cannot be satisfied with mere outward appearances without an inward heart reality (2 Corinthians 5:12).

Hypocrites, like the proverbial sow, can go back happily to wallowing in the mire (2 Peter 2:22), but God’s redeemed, the sheep of His pasture, will always be miserable in the filth of sin.

So how do you deal with sin in your life? How do you overcome sinful habits and live in true holiness?



◆ First, be willing to see sin as the Lord sees it and describes it in His Word. Do not excuse it as a mere genetic, psychological, or social problem. It is sin and must be confessed as such. It is “the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4).

◆ Second, recognize that while you are in the flesh you will have a bitter warfare against sin: “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Galatians 5:17). This passage makes it clear that Christians still have to battle the flesh. But the last clause holds the key to victory. Every Christian has the Holy Spirit indwelling him. The Spirit opposes the flesh and keeps the believer back from slavery

to it. The more you yield to the control of the Holy Spirit, the more you will overcome sin.

◆ Third, receive God's promise that Christ saves from the power of sin as well as its guilt: "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). "Sin shall not have dominion over you" (Romans 6:14). This victory is enjoyed by faith in Christ: "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4).

◆ Fourth, "walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16). It is vain to pray for forgiveness and victory if you are unwilling in your heart to turn from the sin in question, or if you continue to make provision for it—for example, by the company you keep, the programmes you watch, or the literature you read.

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psalm 66:18). Again, the Scripture plainly commands, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Romans 13:14).

◆ Fifth, if you do sin, confess it honestly, knowing that Christ intercedes for you and will restore you to fellowship: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1). "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

It is wonderful beyond words to be a Christian. The Holy Spirit produces spiritual fruit in God's people that ensures a life of a kind that unsaved people can never understand or enjoy:

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Galatians 5:22, 23).

It is God's will that His people live that life to the full. Christ is real. The gospel is real. The fulness that it promises us is real. Do not settle for anything less than being a complete Christian.

"His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3). We have everything we need already provided for us in Christ. We have all spiritual blessings in Him (Ephesians 1:3).

Being made rich toward God through Him, let us not live like spiritual paupers.

A NEW BEGINNING

There are no more universal and urgent problems than guilt, doubt, and temptation.

- ◆ How may I have my sins forgiven and my guilt removed?
- ◆ How may I be sure that I possess eternal life and that I am not deluding myself?
- ◆ How may I enjoy the Christian life and live above constant failure and frustration?

These are the questions this little book answers from the Word of God.

Illustrated with full-colour photographs that complement the text, here is a book for inquirers into the nature of the Christian message of salvation and for Christians desiring to gain a good grasp of the first principles of the gospel. It is highly recommended both for personal use and for group study and discussion.



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