

The True Way of Turning to God

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You have seen, dear reader, the nature and necessity of regeneration. Be persuaded therefore to fully believe, and firmly to settle in your mind, this most certain truth: all our salvation consists in the manifestation of the nature, life, and Spirit of Jesus Christ, in our inward new man. This alone is Christian redemption, this alone delivers from the guilt and power of sin, this alone redeems, renews, and regains the first life of God in the soul of man.

Everything besides this is self, is fiction, is respectability, is self will, and however colored is still only your old man with all his deeds. Enter therefore with all your heart into this truth, let your eye be always upon it, do everything in view of it. Try everything by the truth of it, love nothing but for the sake of it.

Wherever you go, whatever you do, at home, or abroad, in the field, or at church, do all with a desire of union with Christ, in imitation of His character and inclinations, and look upon all as nothing, but that which exercises, and increases the Spirit and life of Christ in your soul. From morning to night keep Jesus in your heart, long for nothing, desire nothing, hope for nothing, but to have all this within you changed into the spirit and disposition of the holy Jesus. Let this be your Christianity, your church, and your religion.

For this new birth in Christ thus firmly believed, and continually desired, will do everything that you want to have done in you, it will dry up all the springs of vice, stop all the workings of evil in your nature, it will bring all that is good into you, it will open all the gospel within you, and you will know what it is to be taught of God. This longing desire of your heart to be one with Christ will soon put a stop to all the vanity of your life, and nothing will be admitted to enter into your heart, or proceed from it, but what comes from God and returns to God: you will soon be, as it were, tied and bound in the chains of all holy affections and desires, your mouth will have a watch set upon it, your ears would willingly hear nothing that does not tend to God, nor your eyes be open, but to see and find occasions of doing good.

In a word, when this faith has got both your head and your heart, it will then be with you as it was with the merchant who found a pearl of great price. It will make you gladly to sell all that you have, and buy it. For all that had seized and possessed the heart of any man, whatever

the merchant of this world had got together, whether of riches, power, honor, learning, or reputation, loses all its value, is counted but as dung, and willingly parted with as soon as this glorious pearl—the new birth in Christ Jesus—is discovered and found by him.

This therefore may serve as a touchstone, whereby everyone may try the truth of his condition. If the old man is still a merchant within you, trading in all sorts of worldly honor, power, or learning, if the wisdom of this world is not foolishness to you, if earthly interests and sensual pleasures are still the desire of your heart, and only covered under a form of godliness, a cloak of creeds, observances, and institutions of religion, you may be assured that the pearl of great price is not yet found by you. For where Christ is born, or his Spirit rises up in the soul, there all self is denied and obliged to leave. There all carnal wisdom, arts of advancement, with every pride and glory of this life, are as so many heathen idols all willingly renounced, and the man is not only content, but rejoices to say, that his kingdom is not of this world.

But you will perhaps say, “How shall this great work, the birth of Christ, be effected in me?” It might rather be said, since Christ has an infinite power, and also an infinite desire to save mankind, how can anyone miss of this salvation, but through his own unwillingness to be saved by him? Consider, how was it that the lame and blind, the lunatic and leper, the publican and sinner, found Christ to be their Savior and to do all that for them, which they wanted to be done to them? It was because they had a real desire of having that which they asked for, and therefore in true faith and prayer cried out to Christ that His spirit and power might enter into them and heal that which they lacked. Every one of these said in faith and desire, “Lord, if you wilt, you canst make me whole.” And the answer was always this, “According to your faith, so be it done unto you.”

This is Christ’s answer now, and thus it is done to every one of us at this day; as our faith is, so is it done unto us. And here lies the whole reason of our falling short of the salvation of Christ: it is because we really don’t want it. But you will say, “Do not all Christians desire to have Christ to be their Savior?” Yes. But here is the deceit; all would have Christ to be their Savior in the *next* world, and

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to help them into heaven when they die, by His power and merits with God.

But this is not choosing Christ to be your Savior; for His salvation—if it is had—must be had in *this* world. If He saves you, it must be done in *this* life, by changing and altering all that is within you, by helping you to a new heart, as he helped the blind to see, the lame to walk, and the dumb to speak.

For to have salvation from Christ is nothing else but to be made like unto Him; it is to have His humility and meekness, His mortification and self-denial, His renunciation of the spirit, wisdom, and honors of this world, His love of God, His desire of doing God's will, and seeking only His honor. To have these tempers formed and birthed in your heart is to have salvation from Christ. But if you do not really desire to have these tempers brought forth in you, if your faith and desire does not seek and cry to Christ for them in the same reality as the lame asked to walk and the blind to see, then you must be said to be unwilling to have Christ to be your Savior.

Again, consider, how was it that the carnal Jew, the deep-read scribe, the learned rabbi, the religious Pharisee not only did not receive, but crucified their Savior? It was because they chose and desired no such Savior as He was, no such inward salvation as He offered to them. They desired no change of their own nature, no inward destruction of their own natural character, no deliverance from the love of themselves and the enjoyments of their passions. They enjoyed satisfying their tastes and the gratifications of their old man, their long robes, their broad phylacteries, and greetings in the markets. They wanted not to have their pride and self-love dethroned, their covetousness and sensuality to be subdued by a new nature from heaven.

Their only desire was the success of Judaism, to have an outward savior, a temporal prince, who should establish their law and ceremonies over all the earth. And therefore they crucified their dear Redeemer, and would have none of His salvation, because it all consisted in a change of their nature, in a new birth from above, and a kingdom of heaven to be opened within them by the Spirit of God.

Oh Christendom, look not only at the old Jews, but see yourself in this glass. For at this day (Oh, sad truth to be told!), a Christ within us, an inward Savior raising a birth of His own nature, life, and Spirit within us is rejected as gross enthusiasm. The learned rabbis take council against it. The propagation of popery, the propagation of Protestantism, or the success of some particular church is the "salvation" which priests and people are chiefly concerned about. ~