



*The Way  
To*

# **ETERNAL LIFE**

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## The Way To Eternal Life or What Must I Do To Be Saved?

November 22, 1963, was a day which stunned and saddened the whole world—it was the day when the President of the United States, John F. Kennedy, met death from an assassin's bullet. The rushing world stopped as one of its great leaders fell.

The tremendous impact of this event was felt throughout the world; yet, greater still was its effect on the city of Dallas where it took place. To those who actually witnessed the scene, it was a day never to be forgotten. Among those watching the horrible spectacle was my youngest son, Dennis.

On the morning of November 22, 1963, Dennis, with two other boys, got into his little red Volkswagen and started to the Dallas Love Field airport. On the way, they noticed it was a little after eleven by the big clock on a building just off the expressway. They had to hurry, for they knew the President would be landing soon in his big jet plane. They arrived at the airport just before the plane came in. Soon it landed, and in a few minutes, the President's car was coming through the gate off the field. One of the boys was on top of the Volkswagen taking pictures. The President glanced at the boy, smiled, and then waved at the crowd as the procession passed on.

Dennis and his friends had managed to get tickets to the Mart where the President was scheduled to speak in just an hour. Later, while they were walking around the Mart, they saw a reporter with a walkie-talkie running for the photographer's stand. At that moment, a car came roaring down the highway with sirens wide open. It had to slow down to make the corner. Now, Dennis was taking pictures with a movie camera. As he looked through the viewfinder, what he saw startled him beyond words. The President was slumped down on the floor, and Mrs. Kennedy and a man were leaning over him. One of the photographers exclaimed, "The President has been shot!"

The boys got in the Volkswagen and followed the racing car to the hospital. Secret service men had not yet been stationed at the doors. With boyish curiosity, they went in. They followed a reporter up to the room where the stricken President had been carried. A nurse came rushing out asking what was their blood type, and if needed, would they give blood for a transfusion. Dennis said he would be glad to, but before any decision could be made, the doctors called the nurse back into the room and told her it was no use. The President was past any human aid. Shortly, the announcement came that the President was dead!

As the boys came back to the school, they were very thoughtful. No one said anything. They passed the clock that they had looked at only two hours before. Little did they know, it was under that clock an assassin's rifle had rung out.

They crossed over into Oak Cliff. Then, they had another shock! They came upon the scene of a shooting on the street. Blood was on the pavement, and the policemen were frantically pursuing a man who had killed a policeman. The officers quickly captured him and took him to the police station where they learned he was probably the one who had killed the President. Later, evidence showed that he was.

It was an eventful and sobering day for the boys. I asked Dennis, after he had witnessed this tragic but historic event, what impression it had made on him. Very soberly he replied, "It showed us boys how short life can be and how suddenly death can come. It caused me to realize that even if you have hundreds of men guarding you, you can be taken away in a split second, and you have to be ready."

## IS THERE LIFE AFTER DEATH?

As Job spoke the words, "If a man die, shall he live again?"(Job 14:14), mankind has questioned, Where did we come from? Where are we going? What is man's destination? If man does live again, what will life be like?

There is something within the human heart—an instinctive longing for immortality. There is something within him that says death and the grave are not the end. Indeed, there are scarcely a people in the world that do not have some kind of belief in life after death.

Man is the highest order of all the creatures that live on the face of the Earth—although, even the lowly animal kingdom possesses instincts that are remarkable. For example, if you place a carrier pigeon in a sealed box, and take it to an unfamiliar place that is miles away from where it has been, what happens? As soon as the pigeon is released, the bird rises into the air, circles a few times to get its bearings, and then, takes off on a direct line for home. Soon, it will be back at its very starting place.

Now, is it possible the instinct within the carrier pigeon could lead it safely to its home, and yet, the instinct within man could not lead him to God and his heavenly home? How much more value is a man worth than a bird? This is what Jesus said when He spoke of the sparrows.

"Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not

one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:29-31).

Nature teaches there is life after death. A grain of wheat falls to the ground, seemingly only to perish. But no! Nature has reserved a miracle. Out of death comes life! The grain of wheat that died not only receives life, but also reproduces itself many times over. Surely, man is worth more than a grain of wheat!

Jesus plainly taught that there is life after death. When the Sadducees denied there was a resurrection, He said, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God ... But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, *'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'*? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Matthew 22:29, 31, 32).

Yes, you and I shall live again after this life. The only question, and the all-important one, is whether that existence will be a happy one, or God forbid, will it be a consciousness of lost opportunity we had during our lifetime on Earth?

## WHO IS GOD?

Almost everyone in the world, except where atheism has become the policy of a government, believes in a Higher Power—a Supreme Being, other than man, Whom we call God. Man, being made in the image of God, instinctively calls on Him in the hour of distress and trial. At that moment, reason tells him there is a God. Design speaks and says there must be a Designer. Creation declares there must be a Creator. Effects demand there must first be a cause.

Although nearly all believe in God, many know little about Him. How and where can this knowledge be obtained? Philosophers and scientists tell us something about His works—they are infinitely great; the Universe is one of order and design, and it is held together by immutable laws. Nature shows God as a Creator of beauty and infinite variety. Of the billions of snowflakes that fall to the Earth, no two are exactly alike. Nevertheless, science and nature cannot reveal the moral aspects of God. They cannot tell us He is a loving Father, or He is a God of holiness Who hates sin. This knowledge must come by revelation. There is only one book in the world that can give us this—the Holy

Scriptures, the Bible.

The Bible reveals that God is a Spirit. The ancients were certain they saw God in the visible Heavens. They worshipped the sun, the moon and the stars. The Greeks had their demigods—male and female gods and goddesses. Still others conceived God as being in the image of a beast or even a serpent. However, Jesus brought the true revelation of God to man. He declared there is one God, and He is a Spirit, “and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24).

Because God is a Spirit, He can be everywhere at once. There is no limit to His power. Although we cannot see the spirit with our natural eye, we know the spirit exists. We, too, are a spirit, living within a body. When the body dies, our spirit still survives.

Some people try to reason about God. One cannot understand Him by reason, anymore than one can reason out how He created the world from nothing or how He has existed from the beginning. We understand and know God by faith.

We cannot see radio or sound waves, but we know they exist. They pass through our automobiles, as well as our homes. Today, when we turn on our radio, we can hear the broadcast from many hundreds of miles away. Likewise, though we do not see God with our natural eye, by faith we know God is present and that He hears us when we pray. As the Scripture declares, “And you will seek Me and find *Me*, when you search for Me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13).

## WHAT SEPARATES MAN FROM GOD?

The Bible reveals that God is a God of tender love and mercy, but it also speaks of Him as a God of holiness. It is because God is holy and man is sinful that a great gulf was created between the two. A holy God cannot look with approval upon sin. It is for this reason the fellowship between God and man has been broken. The sinner himself cannot find a way to restore that fellowship. He cannot lift himself up by his own works to Heaven. Man is eternally separated from God, unless he can find someone who has the power to redeem him.

How did sin, which has separated man from God, come into the world? No one can deny that sin exists. Some may not recognize themselves as sinners, but all must agree there is sin in the world. One need only read the newspapers with their pages filled with reports of murder, brutality and crime to know there is something very wrong with our society. One need only note today’s juvenile delinquency, the rising incidence of crimes of violence, the thousands of young women who

prostitute their bodies in a life of shame, the state institutions overflowing with people whose minds are disordered and shattered to know that something is dreadfully wrong with this world.

Sin is not confined to the criminal fringes of the population. Society groans from the festering evil within its ranks—unfaithfulness in marriage, divorce, drunkenness, perversion and depravity. As the Scripture has declared, “*There is none righteous, no, not one ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:10, 23).

## WHERE DID SIN ORIGINATE?

The question is where did sin come from? Has it always been in the world? If not, where did it get its start? To find this answer, we must go back to the Garden of Eden. When God created man and placed him in Eden, he was perfect and without fault. Being made in the image of God, he possessed the power of choice. Without choice, he would not be a free moral agent. Man was given the freedom to obey God’s commands or to disobey them. Indeed, he possessed unlimited opportunity of development and expression. God told him to have dominion over the Earth and to subdue it (Genesis 1:28). Man was given this dominion with the understanding he must pass this one test. Adam chose to disobey; he failed the test, and the human race has suffered the consequences ever since. God said disobedience would bring death, and because of it, the world has been turned into a vast graveyard. Disappointment, disillusionment, suffering, misery and heartbreak have been the story of the human race from Adam’s day until now. The disease of sin, inherited from Adam, has been passed on to every generation. Every member of the human race is a sinner (Romans 5:12).

It is this thing called “sin” which has prevented man from attaining his potential, his hopes and ideals. It is sin that has caused every civilization to fail. Through his own efforts, man has made numerous attempts to build a utopia on Earth, but sooner or later, in every case, he failed. As the world hangs in the balance, its present, tragic state is an eloquent witness to the fact that man is further from his goal than ever before.

## WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED “SIN?”

Sin was in the Garden of Eden—man’s preference to choose his way rather than God’s way. It is the placing of one’s affection upon his own desires, rather than upon God and His will.

Choice of self-will is how Satan fell. He was created a perfect and holy being, but he decided to substitute his own will for the will of God and to build around him a kingdom of his own making. He fell spiritually, and then, was cast to Earth where he has become this vicious creature.

It is the ability of mankind to exercise their power of free choice, for the gratification of their own selfish purposes that has caused the misery in which the world finds itself today. Even though man speculates that there is an “upward urge” in nature and that the processes of “evolution” will in time make supermen out of the human race, without Christ, all will go down.

We dare not take a light view of sin. Sin is a violation of the law of God. The corrupt nature of man causes him to think of sin lightly and to make a joke of it. Jesus said that from this evil nature in man comes forth every kind of iniquity. “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man” (Mark 7:21-23).

Some suppose that certain sins are not as bad as others. While it is true that some sins may be more flagrant than others, all sin is deadly. The world thinks of a criminal who robs or murders as being exceptionally wicked, while the man who cheats a little, swears a little, lies a little and doesn’t go to jail is a pretty good fellow. However, sins, whether they are large or small, are the expressions of man’s fallen nature. Perhaps the subtlest danger that the individual faces is the feeling that he is not as bad as others, and therefore, needs no salvation. Actually, unbelief, in God’s estimate of sin, is an insult to His truthfulness. By turning a deaf ear to the Gospel, which declares that all men must repent, one insures his own doom.

Usually, the sinner doesn’t realize the danger of sin. He is inclined to condone it and excuse himself by saying that others not only do the same things, but even worse things. Sin has a peculiar effect. It grips a man and becomes a part of him. The Bible tells us Moses chose “rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin” (Hebrews 11:25). Sin gives pleasure for a season, but it is only for a season. There is a time when sin turns on its victim and becomes the master.

There is a story of a wild beast tamer who lived in London. The tamer secured a boa constrictor when it was little. He cared for it until it became enormous in size. At the close of his exhibition, the animal

glided forward on the stage and at the appropriate command, he rose up and wrapped himself around the man, fold upon fold, till at length the tamer was hidden from sight. All that was seen was the horrible head of the monster waving in the air. The audience cheered wildly, until they were suddenly stilled with horror. A scream of agony had come from within the serpent. They heard the bones of the tamer crack, one by one, until all was still. The serpent had become the master. The man had toyed with the snake too often. This is a true picture of what sin does with its victims.

## WHAT HAPPENS TO THE MAN WHO DIES IN HIS SINS?

What really happens to the sinner who dies without Christ? Does he cease to exist? Does his soul sleep, or is he somewhere in a state of consciousness? Is there such a place as hell? It is understandable the unconverted person is not particularly eager to accept the prospect of hell. However, it is also clear, whether one believes in it or not, the situation is not changed.

Admittedly the subject of hell is one of the most difficult in the Bible with which to deal. Billy Graham says he usually devotes one evening to a discussion of the subject during his campaigns. He adds, however, that for days afterward there are many letters to the editors of the newspapers from people who argue the pros and cons of the subject.

There are those who teach that if there is a hell, it is not everlasting. Yet, it should be pointed out, the same word that is used to denote the eternal bliss of the righteous, is also used to describe the eternity of unbelievers.

There are others who teach that those who reject Christ will have a second chance. We can only say that if this is true, the Scriptures are strangely silent about it. On the other hand, the Scriptures, again and again, make such statements as "Today is the day of salvation ... Today is the accepted time ... Today if you will hear His voice!"

It seems evident that there needs to be a clearer understanding of what hell is and why men go there. Some extremists have taught that a man should be willing to be cast into hell if it is for God's glory. Certainly, this is a grave error, for it makes God a fiend who takes pleasure in the death of sinners. Actually, the opposite is true. Jesus said, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). The Bible plainly teaches that God Himself has made available every resource, including the crucifixion of His own Son, that

all men might be saved.

Let us consider some of the questions generally asked about death. Atheism believes that when a man dies, he dies like an animal—that is all there is to him. Such a view, however, is contrary to human instinct and the experience of those who have watched people die. The Bible itself is very emphatic in its teaching that the human spirit is conscious after death. Jesus told the thief on the cross that “... today you will be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43). He spoke of Abraham and Lazarus and the rich man as being conscious after death. Paul also agrees to this saying, “... absent from the body ... present with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8) Because of the lack of space, we cannot quote from the many passages of Scripture that teach this truth. We can only say the evidence is so overwhelming that the Church, as a whole, through all ages, has consistently taught that men are conscious after death.

The question really is not whether the dead are conscious, but whether they are in a state of peace or a state of unhappiness. Many believe in Heaven for the righteous, but they are not sure what happens to the sinner. Could God be so unkind as to shut them out of Heaven? We ask, will the sinner be happy in Heaven with his sins? While on Earth, where does he go for companionship? Does he love to be in the house of God? Is he found at the prayer meeting? Does he rejoice with those who rejoice when sinners are converted? Or does he prefer the companionship of sinners and the worldly-minded? A man’s actions in this world give the answer to where he will be in the next—the ungodly wish to be with the ungodly, and the godly with the godly. That is the law of attraction and repulsion. The law is true in this world and in the world to come.

Death works no fundamental change in a man’s nature. If he loves evil before death, he will be attracted to evil afterward. If a man loves the company of the redeemed in this world, he will be drawn to them in the world to come.

If the sinner, who dies in his sins, goes into the presence of the holy and the redeemed, he would be extremely unhappy. He would feel completely out of harmony in an atmosphere of worship. He would rather be with those who are like himself—impure and unholy. This is why Jesus, talking to the unconverted Jews who would not accept His claims, said, “I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come” (John 8:21).

When a man dies, his spirit must go somewhere. Where does it go? Remember, like attracts like. The righteous washed in the blood of Jesus are drawn into the realms of the righteous. The sinner is drawn to the

realms of the sinful and the impure. If the righteous were to go to the region of the unconverted, their suffering would be intense. For this reason, God has set a gulf between the wicked and the righteous.

Hades is a place where the unconverted go. The law of attraction draws those who are not washed in the blood of Christ into the region of the sinful. So it was with the rich man whom Jesus told about in Luke 16:19-31. While he lived on Earth, he was clothed in purple and fine linen and dined sumptuously everyday. It is not mentioned whether he was a criminal or a bad man in the way the world views or considers bad. No doubt, he was looked upon as a successful businessman. The rich man was so completely absorbed with his riches and worldly possessions that he had no time to make preparations for the world to come.

By contrast, a beggar named Lazarus, who lay at his gate full of sores and in rags, had no one to look to but God. At his death, the angels carried him to Paradise.

The rich man also died and was buried, probably being honored with a luxurious funeral. That marked the end of the rich man as far as Earth recorded the story; however, Christ carried his story still further. The Lord alone could open the veil of the world beyond. The kindest and tenderest lips that ever spoke to men tell us the rich man went to Hades. There he suffered, not from physical flame, but from the fires of evil that exist in the regions of darkness.

The rich man in spiritual form possessed faculties that corresponded to those he had while in his physical body. He could see, for he saw Abraham afar off. He could feel; he could hear; he could converse; he could taste; he experienced remorse. Vainly, he sought to have Lazarus carry a message to his five brethren, so they could change and not come to the place where he was. The rich man also didn't express any hope of escaping from that place. There was a great gulf fixed between him and the abode of Lazarus.

Essentially Hades, or hell, is a place of separation from God, a region of banishment from all that is good. It is a land of night or darkness; and the descriptions the Scriptures give of hell suggest no hope of the conditions improving in the future. If this is the case, the Bible gives no hint of it.

What happens to the Christian after death? As we have noted, Lazarus was carried by the angels to a place of the righteous called Paradise. Paul tells of a man being caught up to Paradise, or the third Heaven, and the things he saw were so glorious he was forbidden upon his return to Earth to reveal them (2 Corinthians 12:1-4). The Book of Revelation describes the New Jerusalem as the future home of the

Church. The description given in Revelation 21 and 22 indicates the resources of an infinite God have been drawn upon to make it a Paradise beyond the capacity of the human mind to imagine.

There are two ways—the way of life and the way of death. Jesus spoke of them in Matthew 7:13, 14:

“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

Not all those who profess Christ will enter into the Kingdom of God. It will be for those who do God’s will. “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).

## HOW CAN CHRIST SAVE ME?

We have taken considerable space to show the consequences of sin and its effect upon the sinner in the world to come. Man cannot fully understand Christ’s place in the plan of redemption until he first sees sin as a deadly disease. It is only when he realizes its power to curse and ruin him that he begins to look for a way of escape.

Christ is the way of escape. He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6).

Men have tried every method apart from God to bring humanity back to the perfection of Eden, but none has ever succeeded. Man is fallen, ruined and cannot save himself. There is no solution unless there is someone who can pay the penalty of sin. Thank God there is One Who can—the Lord Jesus Christ!

Christ alone can pay the penalty. He alone is qualified to be the substitute to take the sinners place, but how is He able to do it? If Christ were to take the sinner’s place, He would have to become a man, to be made in the likeness of man. If He were to conquer temptation, He must be tempted at all points, just as we are (Hebrews 4:15). If He were to provide the price of redemption, He would have to pay it with His own blood. As Peter says, “... knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold ... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18,19).

Since the wages of sin is death, if Christ were to take the sinner's place, He must experience the sinner's death. He must die as the sinner dies—forsaken of God. Did Christ do all these things? Yes, and more! Born of the Virgin Mary, He grew to manhood, just as other sons of men do. When He became a man, He preached the Gospel, ministered to men's needs, healed the sick, was tempted in all points as we are, shed His blood, died on the cross as a ransom for many and then rose again.

There are those who shudder at the mention of the blood of Jesus being necessary to save mankind. They claim their emotional capacities are far too "refined" to accept such a "bloody religion." They cannot see the need of another dying for them. However, let us for a moment consider what happened in the year 1940 when the Nazi legions were trying to overcome England. France and the Low Countries had already fallen. It seemed, at the time, all was lost. Many said nothing could happen now that could save England.

Nevertheless, something did happen, and it saved the nation. It was the young men who went up in the Spitfires and engaged Hitler's vast air armadas, which were sweeping over Britain on their missions of destruction. The young men in desperate combat turned back the deadly bombers, and the nation was saved. The fact remains that there was a price to pay. Before the Battle of Britain was over, the flower of the British Air Force had been killed. They died so others might live. Did the people of England take lightly the sacrifice that these brave young men had made? Far from it! The nation realized they owed a debt of gratitude which could never be repaid. Winston Churchill in his immortal words expressed it best: "Never did so many owe so much to so few."

There is, however, one exception. The whole world owes its chance of salvation to one Man—the Lord Jesus Christ. He met the enemy single-handed and saved the day when all others failed. It is through Him that we have forgiveness of sin and pardon from eternal death.

So, we do sing the great invitation song:

Just as I am, without one plea,  
But that Thy blood was shed for me  
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Some are convinced that Christ can save them, but they are not sure He can keep them. They fear that somewhere down the road some temptation will come that is greater than they can bear. The answer is, we are saved by grace, and we are kept by grace. God has provided grace

for the whole journey, if we keep our eyes on Christ.

I remember reading about a little girl who was taking a long journey by train. In the course of the day, her train crossed a number of rivers. The water, which you could see in advance, always awakened doubts and fears in the child. She did not understand how it could be safely crossed. As they drew near, however, a bridge appeared and furnished the way over. Several times the same thing happened. Finally, with a sigh of relief and confidence, she said, "Somebody has put bridges all the way." It is the same for us. Christ has put bridges all along the way.

The fact is that salvation is more than reformation or turning over a new leaf. It is a supernatural experience. It is a feeling of being born-again.

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE BORN-AGAIN?

"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

Nicodemus, a religious leader of Israel, came to Jesus by night. In a rather patronizing manner, he conceded that Jesus might be a prophet. Christ, however, made no comment on this remark, but came to the point by showing Nicodemus his own need. Despite the fact that the Pharisee held a high ecclesiastical position, this did not insure his entrance into Heaven. Unless he was born- again, Jesus said, he could not enter the Kingdom of God. These words startled and bewildered the Pharisee. Later on, however, it appears that Nicodemus came to understand what Jesus meant, for he jeopardized his position in the Sanhedrin by going with Joseph of Arimathea and openly claiming the body of Christ for burial after His crucifixion and death.

The new birth is not reformation; it is a transformation. Man does not get rid of his sins by whitewashing them; they must be washed in the blood of Jesus. Nothing can make a man able to enter the Kingdom of God. This being "born again" is what we call conversion. Jesus said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3).

People often try to do so many things when they begin to be concerned about their soul's salvation. Some seek to find peace by keeping the law, but the law is powerless to save. The Scriptures declare, "... by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight ..." (Romans 3:20).

Others try to obtain salvation by dropping off certain bad habits. To cease bad habits is good, but to attempt it without Christ is like trying to destroy weeds by cutting off the tops. The roots are there, and the weeds grow right up again and spread themselves, so the situation is often worse than before.

Some try to earn salvation by being “good.” Is a convicted criminal excused by promising not to repeat the deed? Suppose a man suddenly ceased all sinning—which no one can do in his own power—he would have to take into account the penalty of the sins he has already committed.

After being convicted of sin, a common error some make is the idea that if they try to do better, and little by little stop sinning, they will *work out* their own salvation. One does not get better by reducing the number of sins, but by repenting of them and believing in Jesus. D.L. Moody, the famous evangelist, said this in one of his sermons:

“People come to me and object because I declare that God can save a man at once. They tell me he must be saved gradually. A little at a time a man is brought into grace. This is nonsense. Suppose a man came to me and said, ‘Mr. Moody, I am in a terrible circumstance. I have stolen \$1500 from my employer. What shall I do?’ Shall I tell the man to think it over and not make any change in a hurry? Should I say that next year he should only steal \$1000 and the year following \$500, and in three or four years he will scarcely be stealing anything at all? Of course I would not tell the man that. Repentance and faith in Christ is an act of the moment.”

## WHAT IS CONVERSION?

The facts simply are that men must be converted; they must be born-again. They must receive new life. As the Apostle Paul said, “Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

It is the uniqueness and glory of Christianity that gives a completely new life to man. Some have led very sinful lives. They have been so evil that they can hardly forgive themselves. As they look back over the wasted years, they come to loathe their past. What is the answer? Only in Christ is there an answer. In Him, we die to the old life and are born-again to a new one. We become altogether new creatures in Christ Jesus.

Here is where some make a serious mistake. They do not think of themselves as sinners. Like the Pharisees, they consider themselves righteous. The greatest sin is not murder, theft or even committing

adultery, as wicked as these sins are. The greatest sin is the rejection of Christ as Savior. Christ forgave the murderer; Christ forgave the harlot, but what can He do for those who count His shed blood as a light thing? As the writer of Hebrews says, “Anyone who has rejected Moses’ law dies without mercy on *the testimony of two or three witnesses*. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?” (Hebrews 10:28, 29).

People have misconceptions when it comes to their conversion. Some may have a deep emotional experience when they are saved, and certainly emotions play a part in conversion. However, it is a mistake for a person to expect his experience to be exactly the same as another’s. There is one basic element necessary to all conversion: a change of heart. When one has previously lived his life according to his own will, he now desires to surrender it to Christ.

Some conversions take place as the result of a great crisis. Perhaps a person has experienced a great loss or disappointment. In the hour of need, he turns to God. Sometimes when a loved one is taken away, the emptiness of a life without God is realized. Circumstances may occur that produce powerful and dramatic conversions. Years ago, there was a man who was known to be notoriously opposed to the Gospel, and yet, he was suddenly changed, transformed. He became one of the most faithful followers of Christ. This man was the Apostle Paul.

It is also true that there are many people who do not have such a dramatic experience, but have also been truly converted. Sometimes, such persons become troubled because they have not felt what others seem to have experienced. It is often the case that earlier in life, these had become Christians. This explains why they have not gone as deeply into sin as others may have. This should not alarm them. There is no advantage in one’s having waded through the dregs of sin before he comes to Christ.

A real change of heart is the one and only element in conversion that is important. Many have an intellectual belief in the Gospel. They give mental assent to the claims of Christ, but their convictions have never gone deep enough to make a difference. The churches are full of people who have not really been converted. Their lives have not been fundamentally changed. They have never experienced a real love for Christ, nor a deep hatred of sin, nor has there been a definite committal of their lives to God.

What does it really mean to believe in Christ? There is the story

about a famous tightrope walker who crossed Niagara Falls on a cable. It has been told many times, but it illustrates our point.

When the famed performer announced his daring plan, people thought he was crazy. Many said he would lose his life in the attempt, but there was an old lady who declared she knew him. She was certain he could make it safely across, and make it he did! Next, he announced he would walk across the cable pushing a wheelbarrow ahead of him. Once more the crowd doubted, but the old lady was confident. "I believe he can do it," she said. Again, the man made it. Now, for the third time, he said he would cross with a person in the wheelbarrow! To his surprise, he could find no one willing to fill this role. Finally, someone suggested that he ask the old lady who had so strongly believed in him; she might accept his offer. However, nothing from Heaven or Earth could persuade her to get into the wheelbarrow. *She had head faith, but not heart faith.* She believed he could make it safely across with anyone else in the wheelbarrow, just not her. There are many people who have head faith, but not heart faith in Christ. They believe that He is able to save others, but is not able to save them.

Whether a conversion is dramatic, or it occurs quietly, the end result will be the same. One's outlook on life will be renewed. There will be a change in affections. There will be a change in one's way of living. One does not change his way of life in order to earn salvation. Rather, his way of life becomes changed because he finds the service of Christ so much more attractive.

## HOW DOES ONE BECOME A CHRISTIAN?

We have seen the importance of conversion, for one cannot be a true Christian without this experience. The question is, how can one be converted? The answer is one word—repentance. Repentance means a turn-about, a renunciation of sin. It means a whole-hearted surrender of one's life to Christ.

Repentance has never been a popular subject because it presents a sharp conflict with mankind's pride. As a sinner, when one sees his guilt set before him, it is not designed to make him feel comfortable or happy. His position is much the same as a man in court who has been tried and found guilty. Here is the only difference: where the prisoner must serve his sentence, God has provided a Substitute for the one who has repented ... One Who will pay the sinner's penalty. The first step is, he must acknowledge his guilt; he must not take his sins lightly. Christ, giving His life in the sinner's place, is not a matter to be taken casually.

Two men who had been friends and companions in their youth met in a police court. One was the judge, the other was the prisoner. The case was tried, and the prisoner was found guilty. Would the judge, in consideration of their previous friendship, be able to change the judgment? No, he must fulfill his duty; justice must be done and the law of the land obeyed. He gave the sentence, fourteen days at hard labor or a fine of \$50. The condemned man had nothing to pay, so the prison awaited him. As soon as the judge pronounced sentence, he got up from the bench, threw off his robe, stepped down and paid the prisoner's fine. Then he said, "John, you're coming home with me to dinner."

One day, some people came to Jesus and told Him about certain Galileans who had been executed by Pilate. Jesus asked them if they thought these individuals had been exceptionally great sinners to have suffered like this in their death. He called attention to certain others who had perished because the tower of Siloam had fallen upon them. Were those people sinners above all others because these things happened to them? Notice the answer Jesus gave:

"And Jesus answered and said to them, 'Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all *other* Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish'"  
(Luke 13:2, 3).

Whether men die as the result of an accident, by natural death, or for some crime they have committed, their fate is the same—unless they repent.

Through out the Bible, repentance is preached. John the Baptist, the "voice of one crying in the wilderness," came preaching repentance. Jesus sent His disciples out, commanding them to tell men to repent. On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached, saying, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized ... and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

While repentance means to be sorry for our sins, it is deeper than that. Some feel remorseful over their sinful past, but not enough to change their ways. True repentance means sorrow for sin and a turning from it. There is a story of a farmer who prayed, "Lord, I am a sinner. I have stolen 47 loads of hay from Farmer Green. Lord, make it 50, as I am going after the other three loads tomorrow."

Peter committed a serious sin when he denied his Lord, but he truly repented. Judas, on the other hand, experienced great remorse over his

wicked deed, but did not repent.

Different churches have various ways of dealing with sinners. Some expect converts to spend long periods at the mourner's bench. Some have the candidates stand and pray. The method one uses does not make the difference. The thing that really counts is whether or not the person has truly repented. Has the Spirit of God reached deep into their conscience? Tears of repentance are a good sign. A powerful emotional experience often goes with conversion. The tax collector beat his breast and said, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" (Luke 18:13) The important question is, have we truly repented? Do we hate and loathe the sin we once loved? Are we determined to turn from it forever?

The work of the Holy Spirit is important in conversion. This is why prayer is so necessary in connection with revival effort. Without the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, a gifted speaker can produce an intellectual assent to the gospel truths, an effect similarly obtained by a brilliant political orator. Many great public speakers, who were known rebels, could make an audience laugh and weep at will, but they've never caused people to repent.

It is the action of the Holy Spirit upon the Word that breaks down the stony hearts and causes a man to see himself as he really is. Yet, conviction is not enough. Felix trembled as Paul preached of righteousness and judgment to come, but his convictions were not sufficient to cause him to turn from sin. Instead, he said to Paul, "*You almost persuade me to become a Christian*" (Acts 26:28). So, history tells us that Agrippa was never fully persuaded.

Conversion is something that altogether changes a man's life. Billy Graham, in his excellent book, *Peace With God*, makes this striking statement about casual professions of religion found in many of our churches today:

"We have hundreds of people in America who have their names on church rolls. They go to church and support its activities. They shake hands with the minister after the service, and tell him what a splendid sermon he preached. They may talk the language of the Christian, and many of them can quote a fair amount of Scripture that they have learned, but they have never experienced true repentance. They have a sort of "take-it-or-leave-it-alone" attitude toward religion. They turn to God and pray when they get into a tight place, but the rest of the time they do not give it much thought. The Bible teaches that when a person comes to Christ, a change takes place that is reflected in everything he does.

"There is not one verse of Scripture that indicates you can be a

Christian and live any kind of life you want. When Christ enters the human heart, he demands that He be Lord and Master. He demands complete surrender. He demands control of one's intellectual processes. He demands that one's body be subject to Him and to Him alone. He demands your talents and your abilities. He demands all your work and labor be performed in His Name."

## FAITH IN CHRIST—THE WAY TO SALVATION

The man who has repented is ready for salvation. Repentance is man's part. Having repented, he must allow God to do His part. Even the sinner who has repented cannot save himself. He must trust entirely on the fact that God has accomplished salvation for him—the finished work of Calvary.

What does the phrase "the finished work of Christ" mean? It refers to the Words of Christ on the cross when He said, "It is finished." That is, the plan of salvation at that moment had been fully completed. There was nothing more to do. Man cannot improve on it; he cannot make himself better; in no way can he merit salvation. Salvation is ours simply because it is a finished work of redemption at Calvary.

The acceptance of Christ must not be a temporary experiment. It must be a clear-cut decision. There must be full surrender of one's self to Christ. Like a good soldier called to serve his country amid hardship and danger, so the soldier of the cross goes forward never to turn back. He has burned all the bridges behind him. He is moved by an unalterable purpose that neither misfortune nor the many trials of life shall change. His resolution is that whatever comes or goes, live or die, sink or swim, his decision is to follow Christ as long as he lives. One should never say, "I'll try this out, and see if it is what I hope it is."

Jesus said, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). When a man allows indecision to enter his mind, he defeats himself and becomes easy prey for the enemy.

Faith is the thing that distinguishes man from the beast. An animal eats, drinks, mates, but has no capacity to know God. It does not have the ability to be consciously aware of its Creator. This is reserved only for man. It is sad that some men are without faith. They eat, they drink, they share the common blessings of life, but in the realm of faith, they rise no higher than the animal.

While he was in power, Nikita Khrushchev, in a mocking way told his astronauts when sending them into orbit, "to look around for God."

When they later replied they could not find God up there, they were told to keep looking—maybe they would see Him. Of course, they never saw God. Men without faith cannot see God.

The simplicity of salvation is seen in the conversion of the thief on the cross. As he watched the Savior suffer in agony, and yet, show His infinite compassion for humanity by praying for His enemies, he became convinced that Jesus was the Christ. He rebuked his companion, the other thief, for not showing any regret, and declared that while they suffered justly for their sins, the One Who hung between them was innocent. He then said to Jesus “Lord remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” The Lord replied, saying, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:42, 43). It was as simple as that. It is clear that the dying thief had not a single merit. Yet, Christ gave him a promise that he would be with Him that very day in Paradise. How could this be? It was because of the finished work of Calvary.

As we have said, some people seem to have no faith. However, the Bible declares all men are born with a measure of faith. We could not carry on the business of life for one day if it were not for faith. People unhesitatingly walk into a large jet plane to make a trip to a distant city. Should the crew fail to take due precautions, observe the safety rules, or follow explicitly the directions of the dispatcher, all of the passengers could lose their lives. Yet, the people have faith; they are confident that the crew, having been thoroughly trained in the art of navigation, will take them safely to their destination. All, whether saints or sinners, have faith; but some do not have faith in God.

Therefore, when we say that man has lost his faith, we mean that he has lost faith in God. Once he had faith. It is natural for a child to believe. Jesus said, “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3). It is after individuals become older and come in contact with doubt, skepticism and sin in their lives, that they lose faith.

Some feel they must understand everything about God before they accept salvation. This is a ridiculous theory. There are many things our finite minds cannot understand. We cannot comprehend how God created the world out of nothing. We cannot understand how God could have always existed. Yet, Creation shows there is a Creator. Time shows there has been an eternity. Faith in God is a simple thing. It is a simple trust in His goodness. God means what He says. His promise cannot fail, and He did not create man and give him the promise of redemption only to mock him. A God that has the power to bring into existence this great Universe

would not be guilty of being so unpredictable. As a father wants his child to trust him, so God wants His children to trust Him.

## WHAT IS FAITH?

One day, a little girl asked her father what the preacher meant when he talked about faith. He told her to wait for the answer. Several days later, he was doing something in the cellar. The entrance was a trap door. The child called down to him, “May I come down to you, Father?”

“Yes,” he said. The little girl started to enter when she found the ladder had been taken away.

“I can’t get down,” she said. “There is no ladder.”

“Jump down,” said her father.

“But I can’t see anything,” she replied.

“I will catch you,” said her father.

“Well, I can’t see you,” she replied.

“But I can see you,” was the reply. “Jump and I will be sure to catch you. My arms are wide open now.” The child no longer hesitated. She was sure her father was there ready to catch her, although she could not see him. She jumped and was safely caught in the arms of her father.

This is like our faith. The way seems dark. We cannot see God, but God is there, ready to receive us when we come to Him. As we accept Him by faith, we feel those everlasting arms encircle us and hold us fast.

When we come to Christ, the same thing happens. We do the believing; Christ performs the miracle of salvation. Indeed, it is a miracle. Something real takes place. We are passed from death to life; there is a new nature. “Old things are passed away, and all things become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

## GOD’S CALL OF LOVE

The most powerful incentive for man to turn to God is His wonderful call of love. “God so loved the world that he gave ...” God calls the sinner because He loves him.

A minister tells of a young man whom he met one day while riding on a train. He noticed that the youth seemed troubled and in a state of agitation. After a time, the minister entered into a conversation with him. He told the young man he had noticed he was troubled, and he would like to help him.

At first, the youth seemed reluctant to talk, but after a while, reached a decision to unburden his heart. He told that he had led a wayward life

and had caused his parents grief over his conduct. When they lovingly pleaded with him to change his ways, he had, in a burst of temper, told them he was leaving and would never darken their door again. He left them broken-hearted and sorrowing.

Like the prodigal son, he had pursued his own way for several years, satisfying himself in worldly pleasures, or so he thought. Again, like the prodigal son, evil times had come upon him, and he began to think of his mother and father whom he had treated so shamefully.

Reflection over his past misdeeds caused him to find fault with himself and become bitter. He felt a longing in his heart to return home and start life over. Then, he remembered how he had told his parents he would never enter their door again. He was tempted to think, after his treatment of them, they would never welcome his return. After some time, he decided to write his parents and confess his wrong-doing, offering to return if they so desired. Now, he was not sure if they wanted him. In the letter, he had informed them that he was returning on a certain train, but had bought his ticket for a more distant point. Since their home was near the railroad, he asked them to arrange a certain signal which he could see from the passing train. The signal was to be a handkerchief tied to a branch of a tree which grew between their house and the railroad. If the train passed, and he could see a handkerchief on the tree, the young man would know he was wanted. If he didn't see it, he would understand, and go on.

As the young man finished his story, the coaches were already nearing the town. Suddenly, he realized that when they came around the curve, he would be in view of his old home. Being overwhelmed with emotion, he said to his companion, "Oh, sir, look for me. I just can't. Please look and tell me what you see."

The minister peered through the car window and replied, "Young man, I see the cottage that you describe. I also see an elderly couple standing on the steps, shading their eyes, earnestly looking this way."

The young man answered, "Oh sir, but do you see a handkerchief upon the tree?"

The minister replied, "Quick son, look for yourself! There is not just one handkerchief on that tree, but there is a handkerchief tied to every limb!"

God has used every means possible to let men know His love for them. There is, as it were, a handkerchief waving on every bough of the Tree of Life. "Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17).

## HOW TO LIVE FOR CHRIST

What happens after you accept Christ? Just as a baby has to learn to walk in the natural world, so a baby or a beginner in Christ must learn to walk spiritually. Here are some things which are important to a young convert just beginning a Christian life.

*First of all, find a good spiritual church.* Christ said to His disciples, "... on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). Christ formed the Church, and believers should be a part of it. In other words, Christians should attend church. While it is good to listen to religious programs on radio or television, this does not take the place of attending the house of God. Some may drift from church to church. This is not good. It is important to find a church home where you will have the greatest opportunities for spiritual growth.

*Second, begin a regular prayer life.* No Christian can grow unless he is a person of prayer. God is a God Who answers prayer. It is one of the greatest joys of the Christian life to see prayers answered. Prayer must not be hit or miss. One must set a time, and pray daily. A life without prayer is a powerless life. The Early Church had its hour of prayer (Acts 3:1). Christ Himself gave much time to prayer. It may seem at first that our prayers are weak, but as you continue, you will find you can pray more effectively. In time, you will look forward to the sessions of prayer with joy and delight.

*Third, read your Bible regularly.* Jesus said, "*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God*" (Matthew 4:4). Just as your physical body needs food, so your soul must be fed. We grow spiritually by reading the Word of God. It is probably best to start by reading the Gospels and the Book of Acts. Genesis and Exodus can follow. Then, read the historical books and the Psalms. At first, you may not understand everything you read in the Bible, but do not be discouraged. As you continue to read, your interest will grow, and the Bible will become a never-failing source of blessing and edification.

*Fourth, witness for Christ.* Use wisdom in giving your testimony, but let the world know at once where you stand. It will respect you for it. Christ said, "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32). Also, never forget that you are a witness by the life you lead, as well as by your spoken word. It is remarkable the power that a young Christian's testimony has upon sinners.

Water baptism is a testimony; while it testifies to our death with

Christ, it is also a public demonstration of our faith. Jesus said, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16). Water baptism is your testimony to the world that you now belong to Christ.

There is no greater joy than winning souls to Christ. The Scriptures say, “Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever” (Daniel 12:3).

*Fifth, be a genuine Christian.* A Christian life is more than a profession; it is a possession. Many seem to think that true religion is merely having the correct theology. Although it is important to believe the right doctrine, theology alone or just head knowledge is not enough. We must have Christ in our hearts. We must love God with all our heart, soul and mind. We should go further than that; we must love our fellowman, our neighbor, as ourselves. Jesus said, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). There has been no better rule than the golden rule, “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them ...” (Matthew 7:12).

*Sixth, support the Gospel.* When Jacob received the vision at Bethel, he made a vow to pay his tithe to the Lord (Genesis 28:20-22). A special blessing was promised to the people of God who are faithful in giving their tithes (Malachi 3:6-8). Our command from the Lord is twofold: give toward the preaching of the Gospel, and preach the Gospel ourselves. Jesus said, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14). We should all be missionary Christians.

*Seventh, be a separated Christian.* By this statement, we do not mean that one should be peculiar or odd. Some people think it is spiritual to look mournful or sad. A true Christian should be radiant and cheerful. It is not God’s plan for His people to be sorrowful or melancholy. Jesus Himself said, “be not as the hypocrites of sad countenance.”

Christians will, however, have trials and sometimes they can be severe. There is a real devil that seeks to oppose and hinder the child of God. However, by faith you can overcome and live above his attacks. Do not go by feelings, for feelings are only temporary and can change. Instead, go by God’s Word which is permanent; it never changes. Ask God to fill you with His Spirit, for it is by the power of His Spirit that we are able to live an overcoming Christian life.

Once you’ve made the great decision, never turn back. Having done all you can, stand. There is real joy in serving Christ in this life, and in

the world to come, you shall inherit eternal life.

## ACCEPT CHRIST NOW

Have you accepted Christ? Many intend to make the decision to be saved sooner or later, but put it off until it is too late. Don't wait! Accept Christ now! So when you draw your last breath in the world, you won't regret that you didn't do it. Today may be your last opportunity.

Picture a young cragsman, away in the North, gathering seabird's eggs. He lets himself down by a rope to a ledge far below. As he stands on the ledge, the rope slips, and there it swings, far out above the abyss. It swings toward him again. It is nearer now than it will ever be again; and that is not very near. What can he do? Slowly the rope comes back. If he loses this chance, the next is going to be slimmer. The man braces himself for the swing; he leaps and lays hold of the rope. He almost faints on the ledge as he binds himself more firmly to be drawn up.

This is the way it is with the Lord. Christ is near to you today. Perhaps He has been nearer before, but He is near enough for you to grab hold of Him and all He has for you. Will you accept Him now?

## NECESSARY STEPS TO SALVATION

1. *ACKNOWLEDGE*: "... for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" (Luke 18:13). You must acknowledge in the light of God's Word that you are a sinner.
2. *REPENT*: "... but unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out..." (Acts 3:19). You must see the awfulness of sin and then repent of it.
3. *CONFESS*: "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). "... with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10). Confess your sins to God.
4. *FORSAKE*: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD ... for He will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7). Sorrow for sin is not enough in itself. We must want to be done with it once and for all.
5. *BELIEVE*: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). "...that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9). Believe in the finished work of Christ on the cross.
6. *RECEIVE*: "He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (John 1:11, 12). Christ must be received personally into the heart by faith, if the experience of the New Birth is to be yours. (Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International)

If you wish to accept Jesus Christ into your soul and life, it will help you to pray this prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father,  
I thank You that You love me.  
I ask Your Son, Jesus Christ, to come into my life.  
I know I have sinned and committed deeds displeasing to You.  
I ask You now to forgive me of these sins and to cleanse my life.  
Help me to follow You and Your teachings.  
Protect me from Satan and evil.  
Teach me to put You first in all my thoughts and actions.

Help me to love my fellow man as You have loved me.  
And, Father, show me step by step the plan You made for my life.  
I give You myself and my life.  
I worship and praise You, my Creator and Lord.  
I will continually thank You for sacrificing Your Son on the cross that I might have eternal life with You.  
Help me to win others to Christ.  
I await the return of Christ to take me to Heaven.  
Come soon, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Published by  
Christ For The Nations

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