

~Other Speakers M-R: Thomas Reade:

## 15. CONVERSION OF THE HEART TO GOD

"Turn me again to you and restore me, for you alone are the Lord my God." Jeremiah 31:18

What a wonderful work is the conversion of the heart to God. How far beyond the conception and power of the natural man. It is the work of God. Repenting Ephraim prayed, "Turn me again to you and restore me, for you alone are the Lord my God."

Almighty Father! begin, carry on, and complete this work in me, a worthless sinner. But may I ask so great favor? Your word encourages, yes, commands me to ask it of you. "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call you upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." On what plea can I ask this blessing? On your own infinite mercy. You have revealed yourself in your word, as "a just God, and yet a Savior;" "just, and yet the justifier of him that believes in Jesus;" "as faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Oh! my soul, what undeserved love is this! When God created man, he formed him to show forth his praise. Infinitely happy in himself, he communicated of his own happiness to his creatures. He made man in his own image to manifest his glory. But Adam sinned, and fell! The Almighty, through the riches of his grace, in order to counteract this introduction of moral evil, devised a plan before the foundation of the world, in the execution of which his glory would be displayed, and those of his creatures restored to happiness who sought for mercy in his own appointed way. Jesus, the Savior, was revealed. In the fullness of time, he came forth from the Father, took upon himself our nature, suffered in our stead, made satisfaction to offended justice, and, just before his return to glory, declared, for the unspeakable consolation of perishing sinners- "He that believes, shall be saved." "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

What adequate return could man render to the Lord for all his benefits? What compensation could he make for all this costly sacrifice? None. He was a debtor who had nothing to pay, therefore the Lord, for Christ's sake, frankly forgave him. Has man, then, no return to make? Yes, he has- a return of gratitude and love. This is what the Lord requires. "My son, give me your heart." We can give him nothing more, and he will accept of nothing less. But how must we give him our hearts? Through his own grace; through the constraining influence of His Spirit. If we love him, it is because he has first loved us. Both the will and the power to turn unto the Lord, and to give him our hearts, is the work of his grace. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Our duty is plainly revealed; we must pray without ceasing, in the name of Christ, for every promised blessing. Whatever God has promised, may be the subject of our prayer, and the object of our pursuit. If we are true believers, the Land of Promise is ours. We may walk through the length and breadth of it, and say- This is freely given to me. Oh! how rich are the inheritors of the promises.

But, how can we know when our souls are converted to God? When we are enabled, through the Spirit, to make a full surrender of ourselves, body, soul, and spirit, to the God of our salvation. Then we may feel assured that the work of Conversion has been wrought within us.

Lord, convert me by your grace. Lead me to the Cross. Fill me with your love, and fit me for your heavenly kingdom. O my soul! what progress have you made in your Christian course since first the Lord of all grace brought you, by his Spirit, into the good old way?

What are your views of God?

Do you reverence his Greatness, his Majesty, and his Omniscience? Are you affected with his Holiness, his Justice, his Power, and his Truth? Have these awful attributes and perfections made you tremble in his presence, when you remember that all of them are directed against you as a sinner?

What are your views of Sin?

When you mourn over its effects, as displayed in the troubles and sorrows, the sicknesses and deaths, which desolate the earth, are you far more grieved at the dishonor which sin brings to God, by lifting its rebellious arm against the Majesty of heaven; and by sinners crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame? Is sin beheld by you, as the greatest evil, from where all misery takes its rise? Are you convinced of its deceiving, hardening, and polluting nature, of its baneful, unprofitable, deadly fruits?

**What are your views of Yourself?**

Have you seen yourself a sinner, a rebel, an apostate creature, deserving of nothing less than eternal fire? And has this view of yourself, humbled you in the sight of that God who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity who hates all unrighteousness, and has declared, that the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all those who forget God?

Have you been convinced of your utter inability to fulfill the righteousness of that law which reaches to the thoughts and intents of the heart; which will accept of nothing less than a sinless obedience, making no allowance for the least deviation from its requirements, but pronouncing him cursed who continues not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them? Has a deep conviction of your own sinfulness, and the utter impossibility of your ever appeasing the wrath of God, or of making an atonement for sin, made you cry out, "What must I do to be saved?" "O! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" How shall I escape the damnation of hell?

**What are your views of Jesus Christ?**

Have you beheld him by the eye of faith as an All-sufficient Savior; as one who can relieve your needs, supply your necessities, expiate your sins, sanctify your nature, ransom you from hell, and raise you to heaven? Have you received Him as the Lord your Righteousness; by whose merits you are justified? Is he your only hope of glory, by whom you have access unto the Father? Do you believe that as man, he died for sinners, and that as God, he gave an infinite value to all his sufferings, thus glorifying the Law and his eternal Justice more than if ten thousand guilty worlds had undergone an everlasting punishment?

**What are your views of the Holy Spirit?**

Are you convinced that the great work of Conversion is his work? that it is the office of the Spirit to take of the things of Christ and show them to his people; to apply first the Law to our hearts to humble us, to kill all the noxious weeds of pride and self-love; to lay us in the dust before God; to fill us with self-despair; and then, to reveal Christ to us in all his free salvation and redeeming love? Have you felt the Spirit's power in drawing you from self to Jesus, from the world to heaven, from sin to holiness, from Satan unto God? Convinced that repentance and faith are the gifts of God, have you earnestly and perseveringly sought these promised blessings, pleading the merits of the Son, and imploring the gift of the Holy Spirit to work in you all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power?

If you have felt the constraining influence of divine grace, inclining you to seek the Lord Jesus and salvation through him; have you been faithful to these gracious motions of the Spirit? have you assiduously cherished these workings of grace within you? have they filled you with joy, and made you long for a complete redemption from all iniquity, for an abiding union to Christ by faith?

Are you, O my soul, waiting for the coming of Christ, as Anna and Simeon waited for redemption in Israel? Is every thing here below tasteless and insipid, without an assured saving interest in the work and love of Jesus, in his blood and righteousness, in his prevailing intercession with His Father in heaven? Do you delight in the word of God, in the ordinances of God, in the people of God- yes, in all who bear his image, who promote his glory, and speak his praise, out of every nation, and kindred, and people, and tongue? Are you looking for, and hastening unto, the coming of the day of God? Is the second appearing of the Lord Jesus a delightful expectation, when the universal Hallelujah will swell the chorus of his praise?

If these are your views, O my soul, if this be your daily desire, your daily walk, your daily hope and trust, then rejoice in the Lord always, who has so graciously drawn you to himself, and converted you from a barren desert into the garden of the Lord.

Blessed Jesus, make me sincere. You know that I desire to love you, to be separated from all sin. Unite me to Yourself; fill me with spiritual light; and enable me to go on from strength to strength, until delivered from the burden of the flesh, I appear before you in Zion.

How insensible is the human heart to heavenly things until touched by divine grace. How hard is my heart! Lord soften it. O that I could love my Savior above every other object in earth or heaven. Jehovah Jesus is the adoration of angels, and of the perfected saints in glory. Even on earth, though encompassed with infirmity, and seeing as through a glass darkly, the enraptured believer can say; "Whom have I in heaven but you? and there is none upon earth I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever." O that my heart may be given to the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the one God of my salvation. Never shall I feel true happiness until that blissful moment, when my will is lost in the will of God;

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**when all my fugitive affections are fixed supremely upon Him. Blessed Lord, hasten this moment so full of bliss. May it be now, for now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. Tomorrow may find me in eternity. O may I seek you, and find you today, as all my salvation, and all my desire.**

**Manifest yourself to me as you do not unto the world. Show me my saving interest in the blood of the Lamb. Give me that realizing faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Bestow upon me a broken heart, a lowly mind, a weanedness from the world, a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, a delight in your service, a love to everything which you love; a pleasure in everything which is pleasing unto You.**

**I live surrounded by Gospel light, and Gospel privileges. Yet, awful thought! I may pass by the Cross, on the way to endless misery. When invited by sovereign love to look and be saved, I may pass by on the other side; not submitting myself unto the righteousness of God. The gospel, though faithfully preached, may fall like rain on the sandy soil. I may perish within sight of the remedy. The cup of salvation may be brought to my lips, and yet I may refuse to drink it. O the blindness and infatuation of the human heart.**

**Such is the state of the unconverted sinner, living in the midst of gospel blessings. He sinks within sight of the harbor, dashed on the rocks of unbelief, self-righteousness, and the love of the world. Lord, save me from the power of unbelief. Enable me to look unto Jesus as my only Hope, to come to him as my only Help, to receive him as my only Savior, to rely on him as my only Righteousness, to prize him as my only Treasure, to love him as my only Beloved, the chief among ten thousand, the altogether lovely.**