

~Other Speakers M-R: Thomas Reade:

45. A CHRISTIAN INDEED

"Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit." John 1:47

We read of some who have a name that they live and are dead. It will profit us nothing to be called Christians, if we are destitute of the Spirit of Christ; if we have not the mind of Christ; if we have never put on Christ; if we are not made conformable to his death; if we know him not in the power of his resurrection. To call ourselves Christians, members of the Universal Church, which Christ purchased for himself, out of all nations, kindreds, people, and tongues, through his precious death upon the cross; and yet, to live in the habitual exercise of unholy tempers, unsanctified dispositions, and evil practices, is the height of hypocrisy and self-delusion!

Christ came into the world to save sinners. He came to purify unto himself, through the Spirit, a peculiar people, zealous for good works. All, then, who are saved by Jesus Christ, are redeemed from the power, as well as from the guilt of sin. They are made New Creatures, abounding in all the peaceable fruits of righteousness to the glory and praise of God. The true Church is not content with external reformation. Her members are not white-washed sepulchers. Christ, her Head, demands the heart, and will accept of nothing less than an internal, spiritual regeneration.

Have we, then, been born again, not merely by the sprinkling of water, which is the work of man, but by the renewing of the Holy Spirit, which is the operation of sovereign grace? Do we evidence our regeneration by bearing the image of Christ? Have we been made partakers of the divine nature? Are we grafted into Christ by faith? Are all our hopes of glory founded on his meritorious cross and passion? Have we received Christ into our hearts as our Prophet, Priest, and King? Do we come unto the Father, only by him? Is he the daily food of our souls? Is he all our joy, our glory, our righteousness, and our strength? These are most important questions. To talk of being living members of Christ without the scriptural marks of spiritual life, is as unreasonable as to grasp at a shadow, and then to maintain that we hold the substance.

Happy is the man who knows from sweet experience that he is a child of God; who feels the inward witness of the Spirit, by an increasing hatred of sin; an increasing enjoyment of peace; a growing love to the Savior; and an abiding assurance of his acceptance with God, through faith in the righteousness of Christ. What prospects of glory are unfolded to such a happy believer in the Holy Scriptures! He can rejoice in the blessed appropriation of the apostle's words; "All things are yours."

Lord! make me a member of Christ's mystical body; a branch of the living vine; a living stone in your spiritual building. Then shall I have joy and peace in believing; then shall I overcome my spiritual adversaries; then shall I triumph in death, and be glorified in You through a blissful eternity. Why should I not be such a Christian Indeed? It is your will that I should be such an one; for this is your will, even my sanctification. Oh! make me willing in the day of your power; subdue all my oppositions to your will; then shall mine be the comfort, and yours the everlasting praise.

The name of 'Christian' (like that of 'friend') is too often stamped on counterfeit coin. Hence it passes current in the world, until detected by an exposure of its base metal. Hypocrisy, in every age, has assumed a character not its own. "Burning lips," -burning with the professions of love and friendship, "and a wicked heart," -insincere and full of evil designs, are like "a pretty glaze covers a common clay pot." Thus an odium is brought upon Christianity, as if it sanctioned such baseness, while the enemies of the Lord triumph and blaspheme. Woe be to the man by whom the offence comes, "it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

Blessed Lord, deliver your servant, I earnestly beseech you, from hypocrisy and deceit. Your word declares, that "he that covers his sins shall not prosper," that he who tries to conceal them may be sure that his sin will find him out. Give me grace to confess and forsake my sins at the foot of the cross, that I may there find mercy, through the blood of Jesus, which speaks better things than the blood of Abel- the blood of Abel cried for vengeance- the blood of Jesus cries for mercy; "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Oh! save me for Jesus' sake. Hear his intercession in my behalf. Give me grace to walk as becomes the gospel of Christ, to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing; to walk worthy of him who has called me to his kingdom and glory.

To be a Christian in the Scripture sense of the word, is to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. "The disciples were

called Christians first in Antioch." How important, then, is the question; Am I a disciple of the Lord Jesus? Examine yourself again and again. O my soul, that you may determine a point on which your peace and safety so much depend; but examine with prayer for the illuminating grace of the Holy Spirit. Nothing is so common, and yet nothing more dangerous, than to deceive ourselves. Hence arises the Apostle's injunction; "Let no man deceive himself."

"Jesus came to seek and to save that which is lost."

Have I seen my undone state by nature? Have I seen the Holiness of God in the mirror of his divine law? Has the conviction of my guilt and misery laid me in the dust before him? Am I emptied of all self-dependence, self-seeking, and self-righteousness? Under a deep sense of my own helplessness and wretchedness, have I fled to Christ for life and salvation? Can I rejoice that through him there is blood to atone, righteousness to justify, grace to sanctify, strength to support, and consolation to cheer in every time of need?

"Faith purifies the heart."

Have I that faith in Christ which purifies the heart? Do I feel indwelling corruption to be the very grief and burden of my soul? Am I daily striving and warring against it in the strength of my Redeemer? Do I find its power grow weaker, and holy affections become more vigorous and powerful, more constant and natural, more ardent and abiding?

"Faith works by love."

Does my faith work by love? Is Christ the first object of my desire, the very joy and rejoicing of my heart? Do I love God the father, who showed such love to me, in giving his only Son for my redemption? Do I love God the Son, who so willingly became man, that he might bleed and die for me? Do I love God the Holy Spirit, who so graciously applies this great salvation to my soul, and who brings me into the bonds of the everlasting covenant? Does my love to the ever-blessed Trinity manifest itself by a lively gratitude, a uniform obedience, and an earnest endeavor to promote the glory of God?

Lord, how defective is my obedience, how cold is my love, how feeble are my endeavors! What sin rises in my mind! What idle words pass my lips! What inconsistencies mark my actions! When I come to examine what I ought to be, yes, what I must be, if ever I am saved, and compare this with what I am, Oh! what cause do I find for humiliation and sorrow. What need do I see of a precious Savior, to work in me all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power. When viewed in the sight of my sins, how precious does Jesus appear. He is, indeed, the Unspeakable Gift.

Does my faith work also by love to man? Are my friends the friends of Jesus? Do I love all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, by whatever name they may be called among men, or in whatever country they may dwell? Is my heart so contracted that it can only contain those of my own religious communion; or, can it embrace the 'Christian indeed', though in some non-essentials he may differ from me? Do I love the image of Christ wherever I behold it? Are all the true, living members of Christ's mystical body regarded by me as brethren? Do I, with joy, anticipate the period when, saved by grace, I shall join the ten thousand times ten thousand and the thousand of thousands gathered out of all nations and kindred, and people, and tongues who shall swell the everlasting chorus with, "Worthy is the Lamb!"

Can I now sing in hope of this heavenly blessedness: "We praise you O God, we acknowledge you to be our Lord. All the earth worships you, the everlasting Father. The holy Church throughout the world acknowledges you, the Father of an infinite Majesty, your honorable, true, and only Son; also the Holy Spirit the Comforter." Can I, from the heart, pray for the good estate of the Universal Church, that it may be so guided and governed by the Holy Spirit; that all who profess and call themselves Christians, may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of Spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life? Is it my heart's desire that the Divine Majesty would inspire continually the Universal Church with the Spirit of truth, unity, and concord, that all those who confess his holy name, may agree in the truth of his holy word, and live in unity and godly love?

If this spirit of brotherly love, which breathes throughout the services of the Church of England, but influence all who call themselves Christians, we would behold a revival of primitive unity in the essentials of Christianity, and a return of that primitive charity which compelled even the persecuting heathens to exclaim; "See how these Christians love one another."

Does my faith work by love, even towards those who may despitely use me, and say all manner of evil against me falsely for Christ's sake? Do I love them so as to pray for them, and to be at all times ready to do them good? Is sin the only object of my hatred, both in myself and others? Can I pity the sinner while I abhor his sin? Is holiness the object of my wishes, and the subject of my prayers? While I cherish a love of

complacency towards all the children of God, do I feel a love of compassion towards his enemies and mine?

"Faith overcomes the world."

Does my faith enable me to overcome the world? Have I learned in the school of Christ, the shortness, the emptiness, the vanity, the insufficiency, the uncertainty of all earthly comforts, pleasures, honors, riches, and delights? Has this knowledge had a practical effect, by causing me to renounce the world both in heart and affection? While I am in the world, can I, with sincerity, say that I am not of the world? While my hands are engaged in the diligent prosecution of my lawful calling according to the will of God, is my heart totally disengaged, and disentangled from earthly idols, and wholly given up to God, through Christ?

Have I come out from among the carnal part of mankind, which in Scripture is called the world, though nominally Christian, and have I joined myself to that little flock, that part of the true Church who are traveling Zionward, and of whom Christ said; "It is my Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom?"

If faith has produced these blessed effects in any soul, or if these gracious operations of the Spirit are daily ripening and coming to maturity, then is that person a Christian indeed. He is a vessel of mercy afore prepared unto glory. He is an heir of God, and a point heir with Christ.

Oh! Almighty Savior, make me one of your disciples, a Christian indeed. Perfect the good work of your grace in me, and when you have prepared me for yourself, receive me into the place prepared for me. Impress my mind with this truth, that heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people; that all who are redeemed by your blood are made fit for the inheritance of the saints in light; that all who serve you here shall follow you, wherever you go; for with you is heaven, and joy, and love.

Oh! how rich, how extensive are your promises! The Christian parent may well rejoice, while viewing his offspring and your gracious purposes of mercy "I will pour my Spirit upon your seed, and my blessing upon your offspring; and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses." Oh! that the young plants in your vineyard may all become trees of righteousness, bearing abundant fruit to your glory!

You tender youths, whose opening day
Of life, will quickly pass away
Would you rich in virtue be,
Faith, and sweet humility,
Come to Jesus- near his side,
You will find a faithful Guide.
Allured by folly's tempting ways,
Forgetful of a Savior's grace,
Often the young, by promise fair,
Caught in pleasure's fatal snare,
Mourn their choice with bitter tears,
Through a range of following years.
Happy the youth whose first desires,
To Jesus and his grace aspires
Blessed portion shall he find,
Constant pleasures of the mind,
Peace, sweet peace, will Christ bestow,
Peace, which worldlings cannot know.
The Spirit dwelling in his heart,
Will every glorious gift impart,
Heavenly Wisdom he will give,
How to die, and how to live.
Thus shall pure and holy Truth,
Guide and guard the pious youth.
The Savior calls- O hear his voice,
Make him your delightful choice;
Then your soul shall surely know
Where the living waters flow;
From the Mount of Calvary,
Where He bled and died for thee.