

## Christian Retirement

By [Thomas Reade](#)

1837

### ON CONVERSION

Wherever we look, we behold some part of God's works; some remembrancer of his power and goodness. Then, why are our thoughts so seldom led "through nature, up to nature's God?" Here we discover the influence of sin, which so fills our hearts with the love of the creature, as to leave no room for the love of the Creator.

When the Savior was born into the world, there was no room for him in the inn. Just so it is with our depraved hearts. Yet, wonderful condescension! Jesus stands at the door and knocks, saying, "If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

And does not every heart fly open to receive the heavenly visitant? Alas, no! Satan puts on the threefold bar of unbelief, pride, and prejudice; while inbred sin, afraid of losing its darling gratifications, opposes every effort to admit so kind a friend. The flesh pleads hard for self-indulgence; the world spreads its painted baubles, its deceitful riches, its empty honors, its intoxicating pleasures; and thus the sinner is held in vassalage to the powers of darkness.

Is, then, the heart forever barred against the Prince of peace? Forever barred it would be, did not sovereign grace, by its almighty power, drive out the strong man armed, crucify each rebellious lust, and bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. When grace opens the sinner's heart, all the powers of the soul are made willing to admit the conquering Savior, and to acknowledge him to be the Lord. Old favorite sins now become hateful; darling lusts appear like inbred vipers. Satan is beheld in all his horrors, and vice in its true deformity. The world loses its charms. Heaven opens on the enraptured eye of faith. Holiness captivates the heart by its celestial beauties. Jesus is beheld with rising admiration, and becomes each day more precious to the soul. Such is the wonderful change wrought in the conversion of a sinner, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Unbelief gives way to faith; pride to humility; anger to meekness; impatience to resignation; hatred to love and sin to universal holiness. The idol, self, falls prostrate before Jesus Christ; and nothing is extolled, or trusted in, or pleaded before the throne of God, but the precious blood and righteousness of Emanuel.

All glory is now given to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and the Triune God is ALL in ALL.

It is to be feared that thousands, who call themselves Christians, will never be acknowledged as such in that great day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, and the real character of every professor of godliness distinctly known. Too many, it is to be feared, substitute a general acknowledgment of the truths of the Bible, for that faith in those truths which purifies the heart, and assimilates the soul to the image of Jesus.

It is no difficult thing to say, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord;" But, to feel all the love, reverence, and obedience, which, as creatures and redeemed sinners, we owe to our God and Savior, is not so easy to fallen nature. It is no way contrary to our carnal heart to profess, and even strenuously to contend for, those truths which we have been taught from our infancy to consider as sacred; or to extol that church, in whose bosom we have grown up from earliest years.

But, to exhibit the fruit of those doctrines, and to act agreeably to the spiritual formularies of our venerable establishment, is not so congenial to the natural state of our depraved hearts. So long as thousands, who bear the Christian name, live in all the gayeties and follies of the world; neglecting the Gospel, and manifesting a spirit in direct opposition to it; we cannot wonder that such multitudes, carried away by the potent stream of public example, rest satisfied with a faith which passes current in the world, which attaches no transformation to the character, which requires no self-denial, no painful sacrifices on the part of its possessors.

Many, no doubt, rejoice that they are preserved from such delusions as they suppose the people of God labor under, who debar themselves from what they term the innocent gayeties of life, and the delights of fashionable extravagance. These people pride themselves on their superior wisdom in being able to grasp both worlds at once; to acknowledge the importance of Christianity, and yet to enjoy those carnal gratifications which give such a zest to their existence. Thus they go on, like the rich man in the parable, faring sumptuously every day; and never find out their dreadful mistake, until, like him, they open their eyes in hell, being in torments!

How awfully blinded is the soul of man, until illuminated by the Holy Spirit of truth! Until his glorious light irradiate our minds, we can form no accurate ideas either of God or of ourselves. All is chaos and confusion. We do not even see men as trees walking. We are in a state of complete blindness, and all our conceptions are erroneous. We grope in the dark. We stumble even at noonday.

How different from that cold assent of the understanding to the general truths of the Gospel, which satisfies an unbelieving world, is the faith which the Spirit of

God works in the hearts of his people. The believer in Jesus is the new creation of God. His mind is enlightened from above. His heart is made to feel its guilt and misery. He reads the word of God with an interest unfelt before. He reads it as a revelation of love from the God of mercy, proclaiming pardon to the guilty, peace to the miserable, and purity to the polluted. Every declaration bears, to his mind, the stamp of truth. He requires no other sanction than "thus says the Lord;" and, finding this, he reads with reverence, and seeks for grace to receive with all meekness the engrafted word which is able to save his soul. He finds his own character exactly portrayed in its sacred pages. He looks within, and is able to trace sin through the dark recesses and secret windings of his heart. He discovers those latent seeds of evil, those bitter springs of misery, unbelief, and pride and lust, and covetousness, which are continually pouring forth their deadly streams into his outward life. He traces all this evil to the fall of man, and finds that the deadly poison has contaminated the whole posterity of Adam. He owns himself a sinner, both by nature and practice. He justifies the righteous judgment of God, whose law he has broken, and whose tremendous curse he has so awfully incurred. He no longer tries to palliate his offenses, or invent soft names whereby to varnish over the deformity of sin. He frankly and fully confesses himself a rebel, guilty of death, and deserving of nothing less than eternal damnation.

Into this humble, broken, contrite state of heart, he is brought by the deep convictions of that Holy Spirit, whose office it is "to convince the world of sin." But does this divine agent leave him in this awakened state of agony and despair? Ah, no! How good, how gracious, how merciful is God! He wounds in order to heal; he kills in order to make alive!

When a person labors under a violent fever, every expedient is tried to reduce the wasting malady. The means used, seem, for a time, to increase the weakness and debility of the patient: but he is thus weakened only that he may eventually become strong. No sooner is the consuming fever abated, than cordials and restoratives are freely administered, which, given before, would have augmented the dangerous symptoms, and thus have hastened on the fatal consequences of the disease. Thus, our heavenly Physician humbles and subdues the proud heart of the sinner, and destroys the feverish thirst and burning desire after sinful gratifications, before he imparts the reviving cordials of pardon and peace to restore the sin-sick soul to spiritual strength and vigor.

Then the bloom of health begins to appear in the sweet tints of peace and joy, of love and humility, of meekness and heavenly-mindedness, which beautify the soul, and cause the believer to shine in the image of his divine Redeemer.

The happy believer now knows his malady and his remedy. He takes with gratitude those medicines which Infinite Wisdom prescribes. He daily feeds upon Christ by faith, and daily derives strength from this gracious source of blessedness. He feels his own weakness, and experiences the power of Jesus.

He loathes himself and truly loves his Savior, in whose righteousness he appears all lovely in the eyes of his heavenly Father. As a pilgrim, he journeys onwards under the guidance of that Holy Spirit who dwells in him as in a temple, and who has promised to keep him by his mighty power through faith unto salvation. The world fascinates no longer. The mask falls from its face, and he beholds the idol in its natural deformity. He sees the emptiness of human applause; the madness of ambition; the deceitfulness of riches; the folly of extravagance. Every thing beneath the sun assumes its true character while he views it through the medium of God's holy word.

He learns to form a proper estimate of temporal things. He prays for grace to use the world as not abusing it; to be moderate in the enjoyment of all created good; knowing that the fashion of this world passes away. Has the believer no enjoyment of life? Is he destitute of all rational delights because he makes the Lord his portion? It would be an impeachment of the goodness of God, to suppose his service a mere Egyptian bondage.

The true believer in Jesus has the sweetest enjoyment of life. He can eat his food with singleness of heart, praising God. He can taste the sweets of Christian friendship and domestic life; he can enjoy all the endearing charities of husband, father, brother; he can feel his heart expanding towards the poor; and find his joy in pouring the balm of consolation into the troubled breast; he can delight in all the beauties of natural scenery, and relish all the charms of sound philosophy; he can rejoice in every opening prospect for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, through institutions devised by Christian wisdom and conducted in Christian simplicity; he can weep in his best moments over the ruins of the fall, not only as felt in his own heart, but as beheld in the abject condition of the millions of mankind; he can rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Say, then, can such a man be miserable? can such a man be destitute of sources of real enjoyment? He lives by faith; he longs for heaven; he desires to be daily conformed to Jesus, and to glorify him more, whether it be by life or death. To him, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Such is the character of the converted sinner. Oh how precious, how divine, how rare a character!

"Lord, impart this grace unto me, who am less than the least of all your mercies, until faith shall end in the glorious fruition of yourself in your everlasting kingdom of light and glory."

Blest Savior, condescend  
To dwell within my heart;  
Oh, be my advocate and friend;  
Bid every sin depart.

Incline my soul to love  
The path of life divine;  
In concord let my passions move,

Let all my heart be thine.

Preserve me by your care;  
Protect me, lest I stray;  
Keep me from Satan's' deadly snare,  
From every devious way.

Let angel-guards surround,  
And shield my soul from ill;  
While traveling over temptation's ground,  
To Zion's holy hill.

When death the message brings  
To call me hence away,  
O may I stretch my joyful wings  
To heaven's eternal day!

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