

“...he [Holy Spirit] will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16:8)

Do you think that you are a good person?

Here is what God says:

- “God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” (Psalm 53:2,3)
- “For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.” (Ecclesiastes 7:20)

Do you think that you are a righteous person? (That you always act in ways that are upright, moral, virtuous?)

Even if you dare say ‘yes’, the Bible says:

- “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6)

What will you say to God on the Day of Judgment?

- “every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” (Romans 14:12)

How will you stand before a Holy God on the Day of Judgment?

- “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” (Revelation 20:11-15)

How this all came about:

- Adam and Eve sinned by disobeying God in the Garden of Eden. The result is that we, their descendants, are born with a sinful nature and also commit sin ourselves. Our understanding became darkened, our hearts became corrupted, our will became perverted, and our nature became earthly, sensual, and devilish. We are unrighteous and hell-bound sinners.
- This is how Thomas Brooks put it: “But when Adam fell; we fell. When he lost all; we lost all. There are five things we lost in our fall: Our holy image - and so became vile; Our divine sonship - and so became children of Satan; Our friendship with God - and so became His enemies; Our communion with God - and so became strangers; Our happiness - and so became miserable.” (A Cabinet of Choice Jewels, or, A Box of Precious Ointment, 1669)

Hell was prepared for Satan and his demons; and those people who do not repent (make a 180° turn from the ‘broad way leading to destruction’ [Matthew 7:13] to the “narrow” “way of salvation” [Matthew 7:14; Acts 16:17]) and believe the Gospel and who are not “begotten of God” (“born again”) (1 John 5:18) will also perish forever “Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:44) and where there is “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 22:13).

The Gospel: God in His great mercy has prepared a way back to Himself for those who repent and believe, who want to take Him as Lord, and obey Him, and who want to be saved from sin.

- The Lord Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin, and thus didn’t inherit man’s sinful nature. Thus, the Lord Jesus, God in the flesh, could shed his blood (Matthew 26:28) and die on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins, because “...without shedding of blood is no remission [forgiveness of sins]” (Hebrews 9:22)

“That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:15). He came to “save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21b).

- “Conceive of a criminal in jail under sentence of death, and at the same time infected with a fatal disease. In order to his being saved, he must be both pardoned and cured. For if he is only pardoned, he will soon die of his disease. And if he is only cured, he will soon be executed. Such is the emblem of the sinner's case; by actual sin he is condemned to die, by inherent depravity he is infected with a spiritual disease. In **justification** he is pardoned; in **sanctification** he is cured; and the two blessings, although distinct, are always united, and are both necessary to salvation. Thus you see justification changes our relation to God; but sanctification changes our spiritual condition. And regeneration, or the new birth, means our first entrance upon a sanctified state.” (JA James, The Anxious Inquirer after Salvation, 1843)
- The Bible says if we don’t repent and believe the Gospel we will perish forever (Luke 13:3). God “commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30) The Bible says: “repent ye, and believe the gospel.” (Mark 1:15)

Biblical repentance and Holy Spirit wrought conviction of sin:

- “It must first be stated that any work of genuine religion is, from first to last, carried on in the soul by the Holy Spirit”; but only as we read the Bible, pray for salvation, and obey what we understand. “Hence the very essence of religion seems to be a spirit of vigorous exertion--blended with a spirit of unlimited dependence upon God in earnest prayer.” (JA James, 1843)
- **Conviction of sin is a spiritual illumination wrought by the Holy Spirit in my heart** that not only have I sinned, and that against God (Psalm 51:4), but that my very being is sin. **Knowing intellectually that I was born a sinner and have committed sins because of my sinful nature is not conviction of sin.**
- Repentance is a determination of the will to turn one's heart from sin to God (1 Thessalonians 1:9). Repentance is to start obeying God. Repentance requires action: it is sins acknowledged, despised and abandoned. It is making restitution for wrongs. Repentance is to surrender to God, an admission that God is holy and right while I am a lost sinner; it is a commitment to live a new life in Christ. Repentance is a self declared sinner's cry to God for mercy. Repentance is “*Godly sorrow*” (2 Corinthians 7:10) for sin, worked by the grace of God in a person’s heart by the Holy Spirit. Repenting of individual sins and being very sorry for the consequences and reforming, without the Holy Spirit’s conviction, illumination of the root of the problem, and without “*repentance toward God*” (Acts 20:21) is ‘worldly sorrow’ that still leads one to hell (2 Corinthians 7:10).
- “*He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.*” (Proverbs 28:13) Thomas Brooks writes: “It argues horrid hypocrisy, damnable folly, and astonishing impudency - for a man to beg the pardon for those very sins that he is resolved never to forsake! Look! He who has not repented of all known sin, he has not yet sincerely repented of any known sin, nor as yet experienced the sweetness of forgiveness of sin.” (A Cabinet of Choice Jewels, or, A Box of Precious Ointment, 1669)

Repent, believe the Lord Jesus Christ and believe in Christ, and expect salvation:

- Without Holy Spirit wrought conviction of sin and without repentance and believing, salvation is impossible, since repentance and believing precede God’s forgiveness of sins.
- JA James: “Once someone is brought, by the Holy Spirit, to conviction of sin and repentance; the person is also commanded to look to the Lord Jesus Christ and believe Him and believe in Him. We are as much commanded to repent as we are commanded to believe the Gospel”: “*repent ye, and believe the gospel.*” (Mark 1:15). To believe that the Lord Jesus is willing to save ME and to forgive ME. To believe means to commit myself to the Lord and to become one with Christ, and trust in Christ that His shed Blood is able to save me, as long as I abide IN CHRIST. “*And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ*” (1 John 3:23).

Do you know that the Bible also says that “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3)?

- Being 'born again' means ‘to be begotten’ ‘to be conceived’. It is not simply a label, but a reality. Regeneration is God making a (spiritually) dead person alive (Ephesians 2:1). It is God’s work; God’s miraculous work in the heart: “*Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*” (John 1:13); “*Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth,*” (James 1:18). It is receiving a new (divine) nature from God, having the Holy Spirit come to dwell in your heart. (This can only happen to someone whom the Holy Spirit convicts and who obeys God’s command to repent “*toward God*” [Acts 20:21] and to “*believe the Gospel*” [Mark 1:15].) The Bible calls this becoming a “*new creature*” (2 Corinthians 5:17). This is not make believe. The Holy Spirit will assure you of His presence, as you obey the Lord, as promised in the Bible: “*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God*” (Romans 8:16).

- Faith is not something that can be ‘worked up’. “*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God*” (Ephesians 2:8) Faith is a gift to a repentant heart. It is the Lord Jesus Christ who works faith (which in this case is the ability to receive the inner testimony/assurance of the Holy Spirit that my sins are forgiven and that I have become a child of God) in a person: “*Jesus the author and finisher of our faith*” (Hebrews 12:2). Faith is a fruit of the indwelling Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22).
- It is impossible to believe (savingly) without faith. Habakkuk 2:4 says: “*...the just shall live by his faith.*” I need the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ in me in order to be able to believe in Him.
- God creating a new nature in me and the gift of the Holy Spirit is free; however salvation costs me my old life as well as my old Self. The Lord Jesus Christ said: “*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.*” (Luke 9:23).

Do you know why the new birth is absolutely necessary?

- A man “*cannot see the kingdom of God*” except that man “*be born again*” (John 3:3). There is no holiness without regeneration. It is “*the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*” (Eph. 4:24). And no heaven without holiness; for without “*holiness... no man shall see the Lord.*” (Heb. 12:14). Will the Lord Jesus prepare mansions of glory for those who refuse to receive him into their hearts and walk in His way of salvation here on earth? Will the old sinful nature, Satan’s image, gain entry to heaven? “*And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth*” (Revelation 21:27). It is only the Lord’s image through the new birth, His nature, the “*new creature*” (2 Corinthians 5:17), the “*heart of flesh*” (Ezekiel 36:26) that is acceptable to God. At the gates of heaven the question will be: “*Whose image and superscription hath it?*” (Luke 20:24) And if the answer is ‘Satan’s’, than the soul will be rendered to Satan.
- Heaven is not the sensual paradise that sinners make it out to be. Those who are not born from above, who are not “*strangers and pilgrims on the earth*” (Hebrews 11:13), would not be at home there since every corner is filled with what they least like —holiness, true holiness, perfect holiness.
- Without having gone through the new birth all of my attempts to please God are but religious motions and exercises; reformations and good works.
- While on earth a born again person is ‘stuck’ with his old nature, since he lives in a sinful body. So, the born again person has two natures—his old nature and his new nature. It is like he is a semi-detached house. Because of this the born again person is in a constant warfare: “*For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*” (Romans 8:13); “*Fight the good fight of faith*” (1 Timothy 6:12). (some points in this section adapted from Human Nature in its Fourfold State, Thomas Boston, 1676 - 1732)

Eternal Life is IN a Person (the Lord Jesus Christ):

- 1 John 1:2 says “*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)*” Note that it says “*that eternal life*”, the Lord Jesus

Christ.

• Eternal life is not in the letter of the Scripture; it is not simply intellectually believing a specific Biblical teaching, for *“the devils also believe, and tremble.”* (James 2:19). Life is in the Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:4). He said *“I am the resurrection, and the life”* (John 11:25).

• Eternal Life is not only something a person can be received into after death. It is a fellowship that he must be received into now here on earth, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ living in his heart. Also, he must continue to *“hold fast”* (Hebrews 3:6) until he dies; or he will not enter into *“rest”* (Hebrews 4:11).

• The Bible pictures the Lord Jesus Christ as the Bridegroom (Luke 5:35) and the church (born again believers) as the bride. The *“marriage supper of the Lamb* (the Lord Jesus)” will take place in heaven (Revelation 19:9).

• A born again believer becomes one spirit with the Lord Jesus, the Heavenly Bridegroom: *“But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.”* (1 Corinthians 6:17) The Bridegroom can only save His bride; he cannot save strangers. If you don’t know Him now as a personal internal reality, than He will say to you *“I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”* (Matthew 7:23) on that day. *“He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.”* (1 John 5:10). If one doesn’t have *“the witness in himself”*, than if he believes in God and believes the Bible’s teachings he is believing the way that the devils do (James 2:19).

Does this all seem very mysterious? Seriously consider:

• *“God will speak to the hearts of those who prepare themselves to hear”* (Tozer, The Root of the Righteous, p. 21) The Lord Jesus spoke in parables and similarly everything is hid and revealed only to the seeking honest heart by the same Spirit, the Holy Spirit, who inspired/wrote the Bible in the first place.

• *“And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.”* (Jeremiah 29:13)

⇒ **God will not teach the man who is not willing to obey.**

⇒ **God will not satisfy the merely curious.**

⇒ **God reveals Himself to a humble, repentant, seeking heart, who wants to take Him as Lord and wants to be His obedient servant.**

• The willingness to obey what we are taught must be there: *“Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth”* (Psalm 86:11).

• Salvation requires a preparation of the life: *“break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.”* (Hosea 10:12); *“to him that ordereth his conversation [manner of living] aright will I shew the salvation of God.”* (Psalm 50:23)

• *“Salvation belongeth unto the Lord”* (Psalm 3:8), the new birth is *“of God”* (John 1:13) and we can’t receive it unless it is given *“A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.”* [John 3:27]). And it is freely given, but only given and the ability to receive it given once the conditions (seek, repent – start obeying, believe the Gospel) are met and the Holy Spirit’s preparatory work of convicting (John 16:8) is complete and it’s ALL by God’s grace.

• *“And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him”* (Hebrews 5:9) There is no salvation apart from obedience. And the Lord Jesus Christ is the Author of salvation. The Lord must ‘write’ it so to speak, but He can only work in us as we respond by obedience. The Lord does nothing against our will.

• The Lord Jesus said *“without me ye can do nothing”* (John 15:5). Being *“begotten of God”* (‘born again’) (1 John 5:18) is not a step-by-step plan on a tract. It is God’s work. A miracle. One can’t call up to God and ‘get saved’ by repeating a prayer. The Holy Spirit works in hearts and brings to conviction and repentance and to belief in the Gospel and to the ‘new birth’ (miracle), those who respond to God. It’s all mystery. John 3:8 compares the ‘new birth’ with the blowing of the wind - we can’t see it, don’t know where it came from, where it’s going... *“The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”*

• Being *“begotten of God”* (‘born again’) (1 John 5:18), being given and receiving

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forgiveness, the gift of the Holy Spirit, being made a *“new creature”* (2 Corinthians 5:17) is free; but costs me my old life and my old Self. Everything must go on the altar. The Lord Jesus Christ said: *“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”* (Luke 9:23)

• It is possible for one to say to himself *“Peace, peace; when there is no peace.”* (Jeremiah 8:11; Ezekiel 13:10) One must be careful not to preach ‘peace’ to his own soul, thereby deceiving himself, but to wait until the Lord does so (for it is His work as *“the Amen, the faithful and true witness,”* [Revelation 3:14]).

“Let no man deceive himself.” (1 Corinthians 3:18): The Bible doesn’t offer a ‘plan’ of salvation (like an insurance policy); but a “way of salvation” (Acts 16:17) which one must enter into through the Door (“Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.” [John 10:7]) the only possible Way (“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” [John 14:6]) and then “walk in it” (2 John 1:6) ; “Fight[ing] the good fight of faith” (1 Timothy 6:12) and “hold[ing] fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.” (Hebrews 3:6).

It is every individual’s responsibility to study the Bible and pray for the Holy Spirit’s illumination of what he reads:

• *“[The Bereans] were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”* (Acts 17:11) God invites us personally: *“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD”* (Isaiah 1:18).

⇒ Pray that the grace of God be with you and that He would convict you of sin and your unrighteousness and of the judgment to come (John 16:8); that you are lost and will perish.

⇒ Seek the Lord. (Matthew 6:33)

⇒ Pray for the *“fear of the Lord”*, as it *“is the beginning of knowledge”*. (Prov 1:7)

⇒ Pray to have your eyes and ears opened to God’s Truth. (Mark 8:18)

⇒ Pray that God would open the eyes of your understanding. (Luke 24:45)

⇒ Pray that you would see yourself as God sees you (dead in sin). (Ephesians 2:1)

⇒ Pray that God would make you hate sin and love holiness.

⇒ Pray to have a hunger and thirst for righteousness. (Matthew 5:6)

⇒ Pray for a *“broken heart”* and a *“contrite spirit”* (Psalm 34:18; 51:17)

⇒ Repent. Make a 180°. Turn from known sin in your life.

⇒ Pray with an obedient heart; pray for a willingness to obey.

⇒ Start obeying whatever the Lord shows you.

⇒ Pray for the gift of faith. (Ephesians 2:8)

⇒ Pray that God would make you a *“new creature”* (2 Cor 5:17)

⇒ Pray for the miracle of being *“begotten of God”* (‘born again’) (1 John 5:18)

⇒ Pray that God would take away your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26)

⇒ Read God’s Word (the Bible) and ask the Lord to illuminate It for you and teach you in your heart.

⇒ And if you don’t feel like it, set your will and seek the Lord anyway and pray that you would want to seek God and that the Lord would find you and that you would find the Lord Jesus Christ.

⇒ Believe the Gospel (Mark 1:15; 1John 3:23a, Matthew 21:32)

“The LORD make his face shine upon thee” (Numbers 6:25) as you seek and search for God as for hidden treasure (Proverbs 2:3-5; Matthew 13:44); and just think, *“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation”* (Hebrews 2:3). May the Lord be pleased to add His blessing.

*all Scripture quotations from the KJV

“God... commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world...”

(Acts 17:30)

“...the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.”

(Mark 1:15)

“...except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

(Luke 13:3)