



# **Answer from the Holy Scriptures to the Four Most Important Questions**

A Sermon by George Müller of Bristol

Many years since I received a letter from a Christian lady in Ireland who for many years had been concerned about her soul and considered a consistent Christian, but who habitually had been without the assurance that she was a child of God, that she had obtained the forgiveness of her sins, that she should be saved, and that she belonged to the elect of God. In this letter that lady requested me to write to her how she could come to an assurance about these points. Now as I know from experience, through my service among thousands of the children of God during the past forty-eight years, how many there are who are in a similar state of mind to that Irish lady, it has appeared well to me to answer these various points.

Before going any further, I request the reader earnestly to consider that “the world passeth away, and the lust therefore: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever” - I John ii. 17. All, all of this world passeth away! Whatsoever you may possess, whatsoever you may enjoy, whatsoever you may be according to your rank, position, and education, in so far as that which you possess or enjoy is in connection with this world; your possessions and your enjoyment are not only subject to change, but one day all this will be taken from you; and this may take place very soon. Consider the solemn statement of the Holy Scriptures: “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” - Heb. ix. 27. Is it not on that account of the utmost moment that we should soon, yea, while we are yet young, not only come so far that we know how we can ascertain whether we are children of God or not, whether our sins are forgiven or not, whether we shall be saved or not, and whether we belong to the elect of God or not; but that we also with earnestness seek to be able to say upon Scriptural ground: I am a child of God, I am born again, my sins are forgiven me by God, I shall not perish but shall have everlasting life, and I belong to the elect of God.

You can easily suppose, dear reader, how great the peace and the joy of that heart must be, which at all times and under all circumstances, even in severe illness, in the greatest danger of losing life, and in the prospect of death, can say: God has forgiven all my sins, I am his child; let come what may, whether I live or die, all will be well with me, I am on the road to God. You may not enjoy such a state of heart; but you can easily see how peaceful the heart must be, if in the prospect of death and of the judgment to come one need not trouble, because one is prepared for eternity. Through carelessness, the love of pleasure, or even infidelity, men may seek to banish the thought of eternity, death, the judgment at the return of the Lord Jesus, the immortality of the soul and of the resurrection; they may also, by the permission of God, be able for a time to succeed in this; yet in the silence of the night, or when life is in imminent danger, or when heavy sickness comes, the voice even of a conscience that was lulled into sleep, hardened or overpowered, will speak, and will be heard. Often and often, when you least may wish to hear it, God tells you, through His holy word: “Thou art a sinner”.

Know, dear reader, that the writer was for the first twenty years of his life a great sinner, a very great sinner; but that he has now had for forty-nine years peace with God, through faith in the Lord Jesus, and that he has enjoyed this peace during all this time, that he is a child of God, that his sins are forgiven, and that for more than forty-five years he has never questioned that he is a child of God, that he has been born again, that his sins are forgiven, that he shall be saved, and that he belongs to the elect of God. Perhaps you say, I should like to know how I can attain to this, that I may have good reason to say this of myself, and therefore the writer answers what follows.

First of all, you have to seek to learn and afterwards to hold fast, that one cannot through a dream, through any powerful impression, nor through this, that it was to us as if a stone fell from our heart, nor even through this, that our spiritual experience resembles the experience of this or that one, come to the assurance that we are born again, that we are children of God, that our sins are forgiven, that we shall be saved, and that we belong to the elect. As in all spiritual matters, so in this particular also, the Word of God alone is to be our rule and guide. Through the revealed will of God alone, which is made known to us in the Holy Scriptures, can we come to the knowledge regarding these most important points. Howsoever much you may seek to obtain peace and rest regarding these points, yea, howsoever much you may supposed that you have obtained rest for your heart regarding them, if this peace and this rest are not built upon the good foundation of the Word of God, this peace and rest will not last long. Although the writer owes it alone to the grace of God that now above forty-five years his own heart has not had the least doubt regarding these point, it is nevertheless also true that the means whereby this uninterrupted peace had been granted to him, was this, that in childlike simplicity he has been clinging to the Word of God, and that through it alone, without reference to anything else, he sought to come to a certainty on these points.

You ask now:

Question. By what passages, then, for instance, may I make out that I am a child of God, or born again?

Answer 1. The portion from the Word of God, which the writer would give in answer to the first question, is Gal. iii. 26, where it is written: "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus". The question here again is: Do I believe in the Lord Jesus? Do I depend upon Him along for the salvation of my soul? If so, I am a child of God, whether I feel it or not.

Answer 2. In John i. 11-13 it is written of the Lord Jesus: "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power (or the right, or the privilege) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God". The question here again is simply this: Have I received the Lord Jesus? ie, do I believe in His name? If so, I am born of God, I am a child of God, else I should never have believed in the Lord Jesus; for none but the children of God do believe in Him.

Perhaps you say, - I do not feel that I am born again, born of God; and I have therefore no enjoyment.

Answer. In order that you may have the enjoyment, which is the result of the knowledge that you are a child of God, that you are born of God, or born again, you must receive God's testimony. He is a faithful witness, He speaks nothing but the truth. If you receive this testimony of God, you, to whom by grace it is given to believe, cannot but be happy, from the fact that God Himself says that you are His child. But if you will wait till you feel that you are a child of God, you may have to wait long; and even if you felt it, yet your feelings would be worth nothing; for either it might a false feeling, or, though it were real, it might be lost the next hour. Feelings change; but the Word of God remains unalterably the same. You have, then, without having had a dream about it, without having had a portion of the Word in a more than usual way impressed upon your mind concerning the subject, without having heard something like a voice from heaven about it, to say for yourself: If I believe

what God says, I am a child of God. And then from the belief of what God declares, even that you are His child, springs peace and joy in Holy Ghost.

II Question. How may I know that my sins are forgiven? Have I to wait till I feel that they are forgiven before I may take comfort concerning the matter? Or, must I wait till I have in some powerful way a portion of the Word of God applied to my mind, to assure me of it? Or, must I wait till I feel as if a load were removed from my heart; or, as if I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Go in peace: thy sins are forgiven?

Answer. This point is again only to be settled by the Word of God. We have not to wait till we feel that our sins are forgiven. I myself have now been a believer for forty-nine years. How long it is since I have had no doubt whatever about the forgiveness of my sins I cannot tell with certainty; but this I am quite sure of, that ever since I have been in England, which is now about forty-five years, I have never once had a single moment's doubt that my sins are all forgiven; and yet I do not remember that I even once have felt that they were forgiven. To know that they are forgiven, and to feel that they are forgiven, are two different things. The right way to settle whether our sins are forgiven, is to refer to the Word of God alone with reference to it. In Acts x. 43 it is written concerning the Lord Jesus, "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins". All the prophets, speaking under the immediate power of the Holy Spirit, bore testimony that through the obedience and sufferings of the Lord Jesus, whereby He becomes our Saviour, all who believe in Him for salvation, who depend upon Him and not upon themselves, who receive Him to be the one whom God declares Him to be, should receive the forgiveness of their sins. The questions therefore to be put to ourselves are simply these: Do I walk in utter carelessness? Do I trust in my own exertions for salvation? Do I expect forgiveness for my sins on account of living a better life in future? Or do I depend only upon this, that Jesus died on the Cross to save sinners? If the latter is the case, my sins are forgiven, whether I feel it or not. I have already forgiveness. I shall not have it merely when I die, or when the Lord Jesus comes again; but I have it now, and that for all my sins. I must not wait to feel that my sins are forgiven in order to be at peace, and in order to be happy in the Lord; but I must take God at His Word, I must believe that what He says is true: and He says "That whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus should receive remission of sins"; and when I believe what God says, peace and joy will be the result.

Again, in Acts xv. 8,9, it is written with reference to us Gentile sinners: "And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost even as He did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith". Here we see how the guilt is to be removed from the heart, how we can get a clean heart, obtain the forgiveness of our sins, - even by faith in the Lord Jesus. Depending upon the sufferings of the Lord Jesus in the room of sinners, His sufferings are considered by God as endured by us. In Him (if we believe on Him) we are considered to have hung on the accursed tree, and therefore were punished in Him; on account of which, God, though perfectly holy and just, can forgive us our sins for Jesus' sake, as well as reckon us righteous, through faith in the Lord Jesus, who in the room of those who believe on Him fulfilled the law of God.

III Question. How may I know that I shall be saved?

Answer. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." - Rom, x. 9. The question therefore is

simply this: Do I confess with my mouth the Lord Jesus? Do I own Him by the confession of my mouth before men? And do I believe in my heart that Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified was not left in the grave but was raised up again by God on the third day? If these two points are found in me, I shall be saved. For while there may be the confession of the Lord Jesus with the mouth without the person being finally saved, there does not go along with this the believing in the heart that God has raised Him from the dead, without the person in whom both are found being finally saved, for in none but the children of God are these two points found united together.

We have particularly to observe, that it is not written: If thou shalt say that God has raised Him from the dead; but if thou shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. I have, then, to take God at His word, which states that if I do confess the Lord Jesus with my mouth, and do believe in my heart that God has raised Him from the dead, I shall be saved, though I do not feel it, though I am utterly unworthy of salvation, yea, though I am altogether deserving condemnation. I must not wait till I feel that I shall be saved before I take the comfort which this message is intended to give; but I must believe what God says in this verse, and out of that peace and comfort will flow into my soul. Should, however, one or other of the children of God believe in his heart the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, if at the same time has never made confession of the Lord Jesus with his mouth, he cannot be surprised that the assurance about his salvation is wanting to him; yet if both be found in you, my dear reader, God has been gracious to you, you are His child, you shall be saved.

Further, in John iii. 16 it is written: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life". Notice here in particular:

Not a single sinner who seeks salvation in God's appointed way, however great and many his sins have been, is excluded.

The promise is positive concerning my salvation, if I believe in the Lord Jesus.

I have only to believe in the Lord Jesus. However it may have been with me hitherto, if only now I trust in and depend upon the Lord Jesus for salvation, I shall have everlasting life.

Further, in John iii. 36 it is written: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life: but the wrath of God abideth on him". As assuredly as I depend upon and trust in the Lord Jesus for the salvation of my soul, I shall be saved, I have already everlasting life; for He died to deliver those who believe on Him from the wrath of God, under which all men are in their natural state. But if I do not believe in the Lord Jesus, the wrath of God, which rests upon all men in their natural state, will finally destroy me, if I remain without faith in the Lord Jesus; for then I reject the only one remedy in refusing to take Jesus as my substitute, who bore the punishment that He might deliver the sinner from it, and who fulfilled the law for God that He might make the sinner who believes on Him a just one before God.

Further, in Acts xvi. 30, 31, it is written: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

IV Question. How may I know that am one of the elect? I often read in the Scriptures about election, and I often hear about election; how may I know that I am chosen one, that I am predestinated to be conformed to the image of the Son of God?

Answer. It is written: “As many as were ordained (ie, appointed) to eternal life believed.” - Acts xiii. 48. The question therefore simply is this: Do I believe in the Lord Jesus? Do I take Him to be the one whom God declares Him to be; ie, His beloved Son in whom He is well pleased? Do I trust in Him alone, as it regards the salvation of my soul? If so, I am a believer, and I should never have believed, except I had been appointed by God to eternal life - except I had been made by God to be a vessel of mercy. Therefore the matter is a very simply one: if I believe in the Lord Jesus, I am a chosen one - I have been appointed to eternal life.

Again, in Rom. viii. 29, 30, it is written: “For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called’ and whom He called, them He also justified’ and whom He justified, them He also glorified.” How are we justified, or constituted just ones before God? By faith in the Lord Jesus—Rom. iii. 20-26. Therefore if I believe in the Lord Jesus, it follows (on account of the inseparable connection of all the precious things spoken of in these two verses) that I have been foreknown by God, that I have been predestinated by Him to be conformed to the image of His Son, that I have been called, that I have been justified, and that in the sight of God I am already as good as glorified, though I am not as yet in the actual possession and enjoyment of the glory.

The reason why persons who renounce confidence in their own goodness for salvation, and who only trust in the merits and sufferings of the Lord Jesus, do not know that they are the children of God, that their sins are forgiven, and that they shall be saved, generally arises from one of these things:

They do not know the simplicity of the gospel; viz, they do not know that simply through faith in the Lord Jesus, without the merit of works, we have the right, if we believe in the Lord Jesus, to appropriate to ourselves what God says of those who do believe, even that they are the children of God, that they are born again, that their sins are forgiven, that they shall not perish, and that they belong to the elect. Or,

They seek to settle it erroneously by their feelings. Or,

They wait for some powerful impulse, or a dream, or something like a voice from heaven to assure them of it, or for some passage being in a powerful way applied to their mind to assure them of it. Or,

Because they are living in sin.

Should the last be the case, then, however correctly we may understand the gospel, however much we may desire by the Holy Scriptures alone to settle these questions; yea, however much in former times we may have enjoyed the assurance of the forgiveness of our sins, or of our being the children of God, or that we shall be saved: in such a state of heart all peace would be gone, and would not return as long as we live in sin. There may be found much weakness and many infirmities, even in the believer who has assurance about these points; but the Holy Ghost does not comfort us, if we habitually indulge in those things which we know to be contrary to the mind of God. An upright, honest heart is of the utmost importance in all divine things, and especially with reference to the assurance about our standing before God.

In conclusion, I request you affectionately, esteemed reader, to ask yourself, How is it with me? If you are upright before God, what have you to say regarding yourself? Do you live in utter carelessness, and do you not think at all about eternity and the preparation for it? Of, do you think, I am yet young, and there is time enough when I am old, or when I am brought to my death-bed.

Dear reader, I beseech you, do not allow yourself to be deceived by the devil. I have no earthly advantage in warning you. The love of Christ constrains me. In love to the Lord, for what He has done for my own soul, I write this and other publications, that in my feeble measure I may do what I can to benefit my fellow-sinners or lend a helping hand to my fellow-believers. And thus it comes that this little book falls into your hands. Lay therefore to heart, dear reader, what I have said in love, and that is, if you postpone to care about your soul, when you are old, or when you are brought to your death-bed, it may be too late. You do not know that you will live till you are old, you do not know you will ever be laid on a death-bed. Ah! be not deceived by Satan. Perhaps you say, - I am not so bad as others; I hope to be saved because I have lived an upright and moral life. Dear reader, in this way no one can be counted righteous before God. However much this may commend you to your fellow-men, in the sight of God you are not righteous, but are a sinner. Hear what God saith by the Apostle Paul: "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." - Rom. lii. 19, 20. This portion of the Holy Scripture shows plainly that we cannot be justified before God through our own works, or by seeking to fulfil the law of God. And in order that you may see, dear reader, that you are not excepted, but that you also are a sinner, and therefore deserve punishment, hear what God says with reference to all men, as long as they are in their natural state, as long as they do not believe in the Lord Jesus. It is written in Rom. lii. 10-12: "There is none righteous; no, not one; there is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good: no, not one."

Perhaps you say, God will not deal severely with me. He is a merciful God, and He knows that we all have our infirmities and things to hinder us. Know, dear reader, that if God at any time would not have been severe - viz, if God at any time could have been less holy and just than merciful and loving and gracious - He would have been so when His only begotten Son, whom He loved with infinite love, who had been at all times obedient, was on the point of suffering punishment for us. He cried to God, but there was no answer. Why? Because God is holy. Either He had to punish us or Him as our Substitute. See Ps. Xxii. 1-6, particularly ver. 3. Be not deceived by man, nor by your fallen reason, which is at enmity with God since the fall of Adam, nor be deceived by Satan. I entreat you to ask God to show you that you are a sinner, and ask Him to give you faith in the Lord Jesus. I also ask you once more to read this little book with attention, and to ponder the portions of the Holy Scripture which have been referred to.



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