

GOD'S ANSWERS to MAN'S EXCUSES

THE *Gospel* OF JESUS CHRIST

Are *YOU* Born Again?

"I DON'T NEED GOD."

Job 34:14-15 - If He should determine to do so, if He should gather to Himself His spirit and His breath, all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust.

"I'M A GOOD PERSON."

Luke 18:19 - No one is good except God alone.

"I'VE ALWAYS TRIED TO LIVE A GOOD LIFE."

Romans 3:10-12 - There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become useless; there is none who does good; there is not even one.

"I DON'T SEE ANYTHING WRONG WITH THE WAY I'M LIVING."

Proverbs 30:12 - There is a kind who is pure in his own eyes, yet is not washed from his filthiness.

"EVERYBODY ELSE IS DOING IT."

Exodus 23:2 - You shall not follow a multitude in doing evil.

"I WOULD HAVE TO GIVE UP TOO MUCH IF I BECAME A CHRISTIAN."

Mark 8:36-37 - What does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? For what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

"THERE ARE TOO MANY HYPOCRITES IN THE CHURCH."

Romans 14:12 - So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God.

"I TRIED CALLING ON GOD, BUT HE DIDN'T ANSWER."

Isaiah 59:1-2 - Behold, the Lord's hand is not so short that it cannot save; neither is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, so that He does not hear.

"I'LL REPENT LATER."

Proverbs 29:1 - A man who hardens his neck after much reproof will suddenly be broken beyond remedy.

"I'M JUST NEUTRAL ABOUT JESUS."

Matthew 12:30 - He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters.

"IT DOESN'T MATTER WHICH RELIGION YOU FOLLOW, AS LONG AS YOU ARE SINCERE."

Proverbs 14:12 - There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.

THE CHARACTER OF GOD

THE HOLINESS OF GOD

Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, and You cannot look on wickedness with favor. **HABAKKUK 1:13** But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear. **ISAIAH 59:2**

THE JUSTICE OF GOD

For the LORD is righteous, He loves righteousness; the upright will behold His face. **PSALM 11:7** But the LORD of hosts will be exalted in judgment, and the holy God will show Himself holy in righteousness. **ISAIAH 5:16**

God is a righteous judge, and a God who has indignation every day. If a man does not repent, He will sharpen His sword; He has bent His bow and made it ready. **PSALM 7:11-12**

THE DEPRAVITY & CONDEMNATION OF MAN

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. **ROMANS 3:23**

For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment... **ISAIAH 64:6**

For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, 'CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM.' **GALATIANS 3:10**

THE GREAT DILEMMA

He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous, both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD. **PROVERBS 17:15**

Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly? **GENESIS 18:25**

GOD'S ACTION

WHILE MAINTAINING HIS HOLINESS AND JUSTICE, the Bible also affirms that God is love, and that in love He has responded to the plight of man.

MOTIVATED BY LOVE

God is love. By this the love of God is manifested in us, that God sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. **1 JOHN 4:8-10**

THE CROSS OF CHRIST

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. **ROMANS 3:23-26**

THE RESURRECTION

He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification. **ROMANS 4:25**

THIS IS ONE OF LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS. Jesus Christ said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (**John 3:3**).

It is **not** enough to reply, "I belong to the church; I suppose I'm a Christian." Thousands of nominal Christians show none of the signs of being born again which the Scriptures have given us—many listed in the First Epistle of John.

NO HABITUAL SINNING

FIRST OF ALL, JOHN WROTE: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin" (**1 John 3:9**). "Whosoever is born of God sinneth not" (**5:18**).

A person who has been born again, or regenerated, does not habitually commit sin. He no longer sins with his heart and will and whole inclination. There was probably a time when he did not think about whether his actions were sinful or not, and he did not always feel grieved after doing evil. There was no quarrel between him and sin; they were friends. But the true Christian hates sin, flees from it, fights against it, considers it his greatest plague, resents the burden of its presence, mourns when he falls under its influence, and longs to be completely delivered from it. Sin no longer pleases him; it has become a horrible thing which he hates. However, he cannot eliminate its presence within him.

If he said that he had no sin, he would be lying (**1 John 1:8**). But he can say that he hates sin and that the great desire of his soul is not to commit sin at all. He cannot prevent bad thoughts from entering his mind, or shortcomings, omissions, and defects from appearing in both his words and his actions. He knows that "in many things we offend all" (**James 3:2**). But he can truly say, in the sight of God, that these things cause him grief and sorrow, and that his whole nature does not consent to them. What would the apostle say about you? *Are you born again?*

BELIEVING IN CHRIST

SECOND, JOHN WROTE: "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (**1 John 5:1**).

A man who is born again, or regenerated, believes that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour who can pardon his soul, that He is the divine Person appointed by God the Father for this very purpose, and beside Him there is no Saviour at all. In himself he sees nothing but unworthiness. But he has full confidence in Christ, and trusting in Him, he believes that his sins are all forgiven. He believes that, for the sake of Christ's finished work and death on the Cross, he is reckoned righteous in God's sight, and he may look forward to death and judgment without alarm (**Romans 4:20-5:1; 8:1**).

He may have fears and doubts. He may sometimes tell you that he feels as if he had no faith at all. But ask him if he is willing to trust in anything instead of Christ, and see what he will say. Ask him if he will rest his hope of eternal life on his own goodness, his own works, his prayers, his minister, or his church, and listen to his reply. What would the apostle say about you? *Are you born again?*

PRACTICING RIGHTEOUSNESS

THIRD, JOHN WROTE: "Every one that doeth righteousness is born of him" (**1 John 2:29**).

The man who is born again, or regenerated, is a holy man. He endeavors to live according to God's will, to do the things that please God and to avoid the things that God hates. He wishes to continually look to Christ as his example as well as his Saviour, and to prove himself to be Christ's friend by doing whatever He commands. He knows he is not perfect. He is painfully aware of his indwelling corruption. He finds an evil principle within himself that is constantly warring against grace and trying to draw him away from God. But he does not consent to it, though he cannot prevent its presence.

Though he may sometimes feel so low that he questions whether or not he is a Christian at all, he will be able to say with John Newton, "I am not what I ought to be; I am not what I want to be; I am not what I hope to be in another world—but still I am not what I once used to be, and by the grace of God I am what I am." What would the apostle say about you? *Are you born again?*

LOVING OTHER CHRISTIANS

FOURTH, JOHN WROTE: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1 John 3:14).

A man who is born again has a special love for all true disciples of Christ. Like his Father in heaven, he loves all men with a great general love, but he has a special love for those who share his faith in Christ. Like his Lord and Saviour, he loves the worst of sinners and could weep over them; but he has a peculiar love for those who are believers. He is never so much at home as when he is in their company. He feels they are all members of the same family. They are his fellow soldiers, fighting against the same enemy. They are his fellow travelers, journeying along the same road. He understands them, and they understand him. They may be very different from himself in many ways—in rank, in station and in wealth. But that does not matter. They are his Father's sons and daughters and he cannot help loving them. What would the apostle say about you? *Are you born again?*

OVERCOMING THE WORLD

FIFTH, JOHN WROTE: "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world" (1 John 5:4).

A man who is born again does not use the world's opinion as his standard of right and wrong. He does not mind going against the world's ways, ideas, and customs. What men think or say no longer concerns him. He overcomes the love of the world. He finds no pleasure in things which seem to bring happiness to most people. To him they seem foolish and unworthy of an immortal being. He loves God's praise more than man's praise. He fears offending God more than offending man. It is unimportant to him whether he is blamed or praised; his first aim is to please God. What would the apostle say about you? *Are you born again?*

KEEPING ONESELF PURE

SIXTH, JOHN WROTE: "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself" (1 John 5:18).

A man who is born again is careful of his own soul. He tries not only to avoid sin but also to avoid everything which may lead to it. He is careful about the company he keeps. He knows that evil communications corrupt the heart, and that evil is more catching than good, just as disease is more infectious than health. He is careful about the use of his time; his chief desire is to spend it profitably. He desires to live like a soldier in an enemy country—to wear his armor continually and to be prepared for temptation. He is diligent to be a watchful, humble, prayerful man. What would the apostle say about you? *Are you born again?*

THE TEST

THESE ARE THE SIX GREAT MARKS OF A BORN AGAIN CHRISTIAN. There is a vast difference in the depth and distinctness of these marks in different people. In some they are faint and hardly noticeable. In others they are bold, plain, and unmistakable, so anyone may read them. Some of these marks are more visible than others in each individual. Seldom are all equally evident in any one person.

But still, after every allowance, here we find boldly painted six marks of being born of God. How should we react to these things? We can logically come to only one conclusion—only those who are born again have these six characteristics, and those who do not have these marks are not born again. This seems to be the conclusion to which the apostle intended us to come.

Do you have these characteristics? *Are you born again?*

—J.C. Ryle (1816-1900)

MAN'S RESPONSE

REPENTANCE BEGINS WITH A RECOGNITION and confession that what God says about us is true—we have sinned.

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You are justified when You speak and blameless when You judge. PSALM 51:3-4

A GENUINE RECOGNITION of our sinfulness and guilt will also lead to genuine sorrow, shame and even hatred for what we have done.

For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. ROMANS 7:15

Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from this body of death? ROMANS 7:24

APPARENT SINCERITY OF CONFESSION ALONE is never definite evidence of genuine repentance. It must be accompanied by a turning away from sin.

Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil. ISAIAH 1:16

...therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. MATTHEW 3:10

FAITH DEFINED

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. HEBREWS 11:1

... and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform. ROMANS 4:21

FAITH BASED ON THE PROMISES OF GOD

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. JOHN 3:16

'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved...' ACTS 16:31

EXAMPLE OF A BELIEVER

... worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh... PHILIPPIANS 3:3

THE BASIS OF GENUINE ASSURANCE

TRUE CONVERSION: A TRUE CHRISTIAN is a new creation and will live a life that reflects God's radical work of re-creation in his/her life.

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? MATTHEW 7:16

ASSURANCE IS BASED UPON SELF-EXAMINATION in the light of Scripture.

Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!

Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test? 2 CORINTHIANS 13:5

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. 1 JOHN 5:13

TEST OF BIBLICAL ASSURANCE

1 John 1:5-7 (Walking in the Light), 1 John 1:8-10 (Confession of Sin), 1 John 2:3-4 (Obedience), 1 John 2:9-11 (Love for the Brethren), 1 John 2:15-17 (Hatred for the World), 1 John 2:24-25 (Perseverance in Doctrine), 1 John 3:10 (Righteousness), 1 John 4:13 (Spirit's Testimony), Hebrews 12:5-8 (Discipline)

"MEN WROTE THE BIBLE."

2 Peter 1:21 - No prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

"THE BIBLE HAS LOTS OF CONTRADICTIONS."

Proverbs 14:6 - A scoffer seeks wisdom, and finds none, but knowledge is easy to him who has understanding.

"EVERYBODY WILL BE SAVED IN THE END."

Matthew 7:13-14 - Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it.

"THE IDEA OF CHRIST DYING FOR MY SINS MAKES NO SENSE TO ME."

1 Corinthians 1:18 - For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

"I BELIEVE IN GOD."

James 2:19 - You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.

"I'VE BEEN A CHRISTIAN ALL MY LIFE."

John 3:3, 6-7 - Jesus answered and said to him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, "You must be born again."'

"CHRIST IS MY SAVIOR, BUT NOT MY LORD."

1 John 2:4 - The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

"I HAVE PLENTY OF TIME TO GET RIGHT WITH GOD."

Luke 12:20 - But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you.'

"GOD COULD NEVER FORGIVE ME FOR WHAT I'VE DONE."

Mark 3:28 - Truly I say to you, all sins shall be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter.

~ CHARLES LEITER

QUESTIONS? PLEASE CONTACT: