

AM I A REAL CHRISTIAN ?

I ADDRESS myself in this paper to young people brought up under the sound of the Gospel. With Christian parents, and accustomed from childhood to attend places of worship, it seems to me that many of you think yourselves Christians because you know the Gospel.

And just there is the danger of a fatal mistake, because anyone who thinks himself a believer from birth may pass his whole life in the fond illusion that all is well with his soul, when the truth is very much the other way.

Therefore it seems necessary to address to you some words of warning, so that you may take heed to yourselves and know if you are really *born again*; whether you have really “passed from death unto life.”

It is a very great mistake for anyone to consider himself saved simply because he believes certain facts about Christ, facts which his parents taught him or which he learned at Sunday School. We may believe a lot about the doctor and still continue ill, if we do not *go to him for treatment*. And in the same way, to believe the facts of the gospel will not save us from unholiness and sin, unless our belief of those facts leads us to avail ourselves of the saving grace that is found in Christ, and so make personal proof of Him as our own Saviour. Therefore it becomes a very important

question : "When did your own conversion occur ?"

No one is born a believer, therefore everyone needs to be "born again" (John iii. 5). And what are the characteristics of born-again people ? As the Lord Jesus Christ taught us, one proof is that the person *sees the kingdom of God* ; that is, he perceives a sphere (in his own heart first of all) where the will of God is supreme.

Can you say truly that Christ's will rules your life ? That He reigns supreme in your heart ? Do you call on Him in the hour of temptation, to be saved from sin ? (Rom. x. 13).

We must distinguish between a merely intellectual belief of the truths of the Gospel and a sincere heart-faith in Christ as our own Saviour. It is only this latter that is of any good, and it is only one who really *wants* to be saved from his sins who can have this faith in Christ. The person who wants to remain ill does not trust the Doctor to cure him, and anyone who wants to continue doing his own will and going his own way does not trust Christ to save him from them.

But if you really have an ardent desire for a pure, holy and God-pleasing life, the Gospel tells you that in Christ you may find supernatural power to enable you to live according to His will. It is quite natural for each one to love his own will and wish to do it always, but when we remember that the bitterest experiences of our lives have come from going our own

way and doing our own will, we begin to wish to prove "that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." It is quite true there is no power with us to do it, but for that very reason we need to go to Christ, that He may work in us to will and to do of His good pleasure (Phil. ii. 13).

Another characteristic of one who is born again is that he is thankful to God for His great salvation. He often gives thanks to his Saviour for His dying love and His living intercession, and, filled with gratitude and love, he never thinks it a hardship to serve his Master.

Yet another characteristic of the true believer in Christ is that he is *dependent*. If he trusts the Saviour he distrusts himself and, knowing that he can do nothing well in his unaided strength, he is ever asking divine aid, so that he may walk and please God.

The life of a believer is a life that is transformed by the power of Christ, who dwells in him. He may continue with the same occupations, but he does all from other motives. All his desire is now to serve and honour his Lord, even in the humblest duties of life. He has learnt to say "no" to unbelieving companions when they tempt him to sin, as also he resists the flesh and the devil. I do not say that he is incapable of sinning, but if he sins he condemns himself, confesses the sin to God, and obtains the Father's forgiveness.

The believer wishes to speak of his Saviour to his fellow-believers, and also to win others to Him. It would be incredible that anyone should have obtained the greatest of blessings for himself, and not feel an earnest desire to share it with his fellows. When he does not know how to begin the conversation, he may offer a gospel tract or quote a passage of Scripture. However, he will always remember that the example of his life will speak louder than his words. But how shameful it is when they say : "We do not know whether So-and-So is a believer or not. He is in no way different from an unbeliever."

The believer in Christ *prays*. Not only in the prayer meeting, but much more in secret, in the privacy of his room, alone with his Saviour. He *sings*, not so much because he likes the music, but because he feels his heart overflowing with happiness, and he cannot contain his praise. He *spends his time*, his money, his strength in the Master's service, thinking it a privilege to sacrifice something for the sake of the One who for him gave His life.

However, it is not by imitating these characteristics of a believer that you can become one, any more than by tying apples on a hedge you can make it an apple tree. You must go to Christ, and, alone with Him, on your knees confess that you are lost, that you need His grace, that you wish to prove His salvation. STUART E. MCNAIR, *Brazil*.