

demption, it must be through a conviction of their individual need of redemption, of their utter inability, either in whole or in part, to help or redeem their own souls; and thus, through this ignorance of the utterly depraved character of human nature in God's sight, a tempting bait is offered to the natural pride of man, and a league is formed with the willing traitor in his heart; he is seduced off the only ground where safety is to be obtained, and beguiled to certain ruin. Thus it is that men cry "Peace, peace, when there is no peace;" (1) that they remain pleased with themselves, and know not that they are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." (2) The plain meaning of the Scripture which testifies, "they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick," (3) is disregarded; and while in their ignorance of the deep root of their spiritual disease, they are ready to conceive it possible, yea, secretly believe that there really may be righteous men who need not the Gospel remedy; and they fail to perceive that they place themselves on the same ground on which stood the proud Pharisees to whom those words of our Saviour are applied, and forget that he has declared that if our righteousness exceed not theirs, we cannot enter into the kingdom of God. (4)

This too prevalent ignorance of the awful evil of sin, and of its universal dominion over human nature, has naturally led to a proportionate neglect or perversion of the doctrine of regeneration. The necessity of an entire change of heart by the operation of God's Holy Spirit has been well nigh lost sight of. Pride appears to be, as it were, the groundwork of the whole character of man. Until, therefore, he is utterly separated from any refuge in himself, his pride will make him cling to the fond though faithless vision of his native righteousness. Hence the completeness of that change which is necessary, is marked in striking language in the Scriptures. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be *born again* he cannot see the kingdom of God," was the declaration of Jesus Christ, solemnly announced to the amiable but ignorant Nicodemus. For "that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit." Again, "Verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (5) In conformity with their divine Mas-

(1) Jer. vi. 14.  
(4) Matt. v. 20.

(2) Rev. iii. 17.  
(5) Matt. xviii. 3.

(3) Luke v. 31.