

gospel as a divine message, leading one to say he cannot believe without more evidence to show the Bible to be from God. Or, finally, it may arise from experience—from a real conviction of sin and desire of salvation produced by the Spirit of God, but accompanied with a sense of heart-resistance to the gospel in some of its features, causing a terrible struggle between felt need and felt inability to believe. One or other of these causes, or a combination of them, may have to do with the despondent state of mind described to us, so that no one answer that a fellow-man may give will suit it in all its phases.”

The replies of correspondents, each of whom views the difficulties stated from the stand point of his own experience, show that, although they need to be somewhat differently dealt with, all have a similar origin, viz., in an unbelieving heart. J. C. fears from his own blind gropings for more than two years, that they are more or less inclined to be saved by works.

“I suppose they are prepared to give up everything they think would offend God, to exercise self-denial, to seek God with their whole heart; that with them the one thing needful is the salvation of their souls, and for this great end everything that would oppose must give way. If so, most likely Satan now manages to persuade them that God ought to pardon them, and give them peace because of their earnest sincerity. But they will never find peace with God on such conditions,—simply because they are seeking by works and not by faith. It is necessary they should give up evil and seek God with their whole heart; but there is nothing in all this to merit God’s favour. They will have to go to God, lost, with nothing in themselves to recommend them to him. ‘God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life;’ whereas they appear to think something else is wanting to raise them from the City of Destruction. They must come to God through Christ; and from experience I can say, the moment they believe in Christ alone, they will find peace with God.”

Z. had alternated between the desire to be a Christian and the difficulties which stood in his way for years, until, on the last day of his dreadful experience, overwhelmed with a sense of his own unworthiness and alienation from God:—

“I retired,” he says, “to my bed-room, and threw myself, in the most violent anguish I had ever known, upon my face on the floor. How long I lay I scarcely know. But my ever-considerate servant came again, begging me to have some refreshment. After this I went to bed; and I well remember the Psalmist’s words, ‘Be still and know that I am God,’ being applied to my soul—not without healing balm, but—as a *command*; and I said, ‘Lord! do with me as thou wilt; only save me:’ and I believe in my heart of hearts that I was, as Bonar expresses it, *giving up*, having no more strength to struggle. I sank in blessed despair into the arms of Jesus. God in His infinite goodness revealed Himself to my benighted soul, and sealed my pardon through the blood of Christ. Oh how I praised God, and the great Substitute who had borne my sins and purchased my freedom! How unjust had been my thoughts of my Father in heaven! I had almost felt, that, whilst I was so earnestly seeking *Him*, He was not willing to receive me. Oh! what a reflection to cast upon the Father, who, when the poor prodigal was still a great way off, *ran* and fell on his neck and kissed him.’