

July, 1735, about the middle of the day, her mother heard her speaking aloud in her closet, and her voice seemed to indicate deep distress. She listened, and overheard the words—“Pray, blessed Lord, give me salvation! *I pray, beg—pardon all my sins!*” After a while she came out, and when asked by her mother, what troubled her, she sat sobbing by her side for a long time, before she would make any answer. Mrs. Bartlet then referring to the prayer she had overheard, said, “Phœbe, dear, are you afraid that God will not give you salvation?” To which she earnestly responded, “Yes: I am afraid I shall go to hell!” Her mother endeavoured to quiet her; but she continued crying bitterly, till at length, she suddenly ceased sobbing, and presently with a smiling countenance said, “Mother, the Kingdom of Heaven is come to me!”

Say not, in the face of such abundant evidence to the contrary, especially in these latter days, that children are incapable of experiencing deep and thorough *conviction of sin!*

Another essential feature of genuine conversion, is *trust in Christ*. No person who has made trial of the heart of a child, can doubt the susceptibility of the most youthful learner, to impression concerning the love, and power of Jesus Christ. The chief difficulty is to discriminate between mere impressions on the imagination, which in the child are particularly vivid; and enlightened views of the relation of Christ’s mission and work, to the pardon, and salvation of the sinner. Nothing is more easy, than to interest children in the story of the Saviour’s life, death, and resurrection. It may produce intense excitement of joy, or grief, and awaken the religiousness of their nature in enthusiastic devotion, without any spiritual apprehension of the moral meaning of the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; or any humbling of their hearts to seek mercy, and acceptance before God, for Christ’s sake. Much that is said to children, and written for them, now-a-days, is essentially defective in this respect. They are addressed as sweet innocents, and are encouraged to regard themselves as already loving Christ. A sickly sentimentality is substituted for the impressive Bible doctrines of man’s utter depravity; the absolute hopelessness of his condition as a sinner; and his entire dependence on the sovereign mercy of God in Christ, for pardon, and renewal. These truths are as indispensable, in dealing with the youngest child, as with the adult. Any religious feelings awakened independently of these humbling doctrines, are entirely superficial, and delusive. No child can savingly know Christ, without an accompanying discovery of his own sinfulness. *Hence the importance of looking, with special care, for the first criterion—A SENSE OF SIN!* This will impart an unmistakable zest, and heartiness, to the child’s exercise of thought, and affection towards Christ. A genuine trust in the Saviour, is, commonly, *more strongly characterized* in the child, than in the adult, by *singleness of eye, and confidence of hope*. But for fear of being tedious, numerous illustrations might be adduced. Phœbe Bartlet, whose remarkable conviction of sin, at the age of four years, was previously referred to, afforded a striking instance of simple faith in Christ. From the hour she found peace, she possessed an overflowing love towards God in Christ. Her tears would still sometimes flow; but from a very different cause, as she herself said in reply to her mother’s inquiry, one morning, whether she had not been crying last night. “Yes (said Phœbe) I did cry a little, for *I was thinking about God, and Christ,—and they loved me.*” Her mother asked her whether to think of God, and Christ loving her made her cry. She answered—“*Yes, it does sometimes.*” Had not the Father revealed Himself, and His Son, to that babe!