

THE WESLEYAN.

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"LET US CONSIDER ONE ANOTHER TO PROVOKE UNTO LOVE AND TO GOOD WORKS."—HEBREWS X. 24.

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DIVINITY.

[FOR THE WESLEYAN.]

THE GREAT QUESTION BRIEFLY ANSWERED:

"WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?"

Of all the enquiries which either the curiosity—the hopes—the fears, or interests of men have ever prompted them to institute, this,—as it relates to man's eternal welfare and happiness—i. e. without controversy, the most important. It is truly "the Great Question"—a question which has, indeed, been proposed and answered a thousand and a thousand times since man became a fallen creature: but, unlike questions of merely temporal interest, it is as vital and momentous as ever. Should these remarks meet the eye of such an enquirer, let him be assured that the Gospel of the grace of God can, and alone can, truly and satisfactorily answer his question, and furnish such a reply as can give peace to the conscience and salvation to the soul. But—

Who is the enquirer?—Is it asked by men of seriousness and sincerity—influenced by a desire to be instructed, and with purposes of obedience? or by individuals curious or careless, as was Pilate when he enquired of the Saviour, "What is truth?" and then, like him, hurry away, not waiting for a reply; or making the answer returned, the subject of cavil or ridicule?

And there are men professedly Christian, who thus trifle with this great question and its great answer, and who treat the instructions and proclamations of the Gospel with neglect or contempt. Such, in fact, is the conduct of all, who are not serious and earnest in their enquiries about salvation: they are "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." With such triflers, however, we have now nothing to do, save, to warn them of the tremendous consequences of making light of any thing connected with the interests of the soul and of eternity. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked."

Who is the enquirer?—Is it the man whose mind is divinely illuminated, awakened, and convinced—who is made to see, to feel, and to confess the moral misery—the personal guiltiness—the utter helplessness—and the awful peril of his condition? Is it the enquiry of one upon whom, and upon whose path of error, transgression and darkness, "as he journeyed," like "Saul, suddenly there shined round about him a great light from Heaven;" discovering to him a state of moral wretchedness of which he was not previously aware, and of danger which he had not anticipated; and agonised and alarmed, does he exclaim and enquire, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?—what must I do to be saved?" The proper answer and counsel to such an enquirer is, (not an assurance that his fears are groundless, and that his soul is in safety, or that there is nothing for him to do in connection with his eternal salvation);—but, Go, sinful man, at once, and cast thy guilty soul, with penitence and shame, before the Mercy-seat,—acknowledge with gratitude the divine goodness in sparing thee amidst surrounding dangers, and deserved wrath. Confess, lament, forsake thy sins. Bring to God "the sacrifice of a broken spirit—a broken and a contrite heart he will not despise." "Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance." "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, saith the Lord; cease to do evil, learn to do well." "For God commandeth all men every where to repent;" and the Saviour himself declares, "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish."

Pray, then, for a gracious disposition to repent—for God alone can give "repentance unto life." "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Be assured that sin must be felt and confessed to be the greatest evil in the universe, either in the repentance or punishment of it.

Who is the enquirer?—Is it the humbled, penitent sinner—the self-abhorred—broken-hearted sinner? Is it the man whose every hope and desire of justification, either by works of law, or sorrows of penitence, has expired—and who, conscious that, how deeply and sincerely soever he may repent, and resolve upon future amendment and obedience, if the mercy of an offended God interpose not, and in a way consistent with the claims of the divine justice and holiness, he must perish in his sins? Does he, stripped of all self-righteousness, and stung with remorse, like the Philippian jailor, enquire, "What must I do to be saved?" The great, encouraging answer of the Gospel is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" and this is the only answer which infinite wisdom, and infinite mercy directs to be returned to such enquirers, and to such a question. Whether jailors, or prisoners—high or low—rich or poor; if truly penitent; they are commanded to "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved."

And how many sermons have been preached, and how many volumes have been written and published, to explain this one word, "Believe;" as describing faith in Christ? Without going critically into the subject, which the brevity and simplicity intended to be observed in these remarks forbid, we may assert, that no word in any language, comes nearer the original term *pisteuo*, than the English word *Trust*. If, therefore, the enquiring penitent knows what it is unhesitatingly and cordially to trust, or confide in an earthly friend of fidelity, kindness, and worth, who has never deceived nor disappointed him in the season of extremity and difficulty; let him learn, that to "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," is to trust, commit, confide his soul, with all its guilt and misery, to that Divine Saviour, who hath loved him and given himself for him—whose atonement is a rock on which a world of sinners may securely rest their hopes of eternal mercy—and whose infinitely meritorious sufferings and death, the Justice of the Almighty Governor of the world is willing to accept, and does accept, in the place of the eternal punishment of all who thus repent and believe—and are faithful in obedience to the end.—Let him learn also, that the blessed God is no "respector of persons"—that no sinner, whatever be the magnitude and aggravation of his offences, is excepted from the covenant of mercy in Christ Jesus: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Who is the enquirer?—Is it the man who, by unfaithfulness and sin, has forfeited his character and privileges, as a justified, adopted, regenerated believer; and having fallen from his high and filial relation to God, has become again a guilty and miserable creature? But is yet not so far fallen as to become hardened in iniquity, and left without concern about his fallen state.—Does he, in bitterness and terror, again enquire, "What must I do to be saved?"

"—What must be done
To save a wretch like me?"

The instructions, commands, and provisions of the Gospel, are as applicable to his present fallen condition, as to his former unconverted but awakened state. Let him tremble, but not despair—let him humble and afflict his soul before the Lord—let him again, and, if possible, with deeper compunction, bewail his sin, and bring the sacrifice of a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart—and O let him again come to "the blood of sprinkling"—to the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness—and venture to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." For "these things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks—I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." The divine promises to encourage the repentance, faith and hope of the truly awakened, penitent, and returning backslider, are "exceeding great and precious." The purposes of Jehovah declared towards him as a returning penitent, are purposes of mercy. "Go and proclaim these words towards the north, and say, Return thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God." Jer. iii. 12, 13.

Thus we find, that in every case, except in that of the careless, and the trifler; this momentous question, which the wisdom of this world has ever been unable to solve; admits, through divine revelation and mercy, of a satisfactory and most encouraging reply. Man, though lost, may be saved—saved freely, fully, gloriously, eternally saved. Go, then, ye ministers of Christ, ye messengers of mercy—"go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned."

Reader! for your instruction and encouragement, and with a view to your salvation, these plain, but scriptural, remarks have been penned. Brief and unadorned as they are, you will henceforth be without excuse if you remain ignorant of "the way of salvation." Happy would the writer be, could he believe that they would lead you to further enquiries of those who are able to "expound to you the way of God more perfectly;" and especially, should they lead you to the more serious and diligent reading and study of "the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

Finally, remember! This hour, and this world, is the time and place, when and where, as the language of enquiry and hope, it may be said, "What must I do to be saved?"—In the world to come, it can only be employed as an exclamation of horror and despair! Today, the enquiry may be instituted—answered, and followed by the grateful and joyous declaration—"O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me."—Tomorrow, the eternal wail may begin, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved!" Let, then, all other enquiries be postponed, or only subordinately pursued, until this great question be entered upon and settled. **ENQUIRE, REPENT, BELIEVE, AND LIVE FOR EVER.**