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THE
IMPORTANT QUESTION
“ARE YOU SAVED?”

ANSWERED

BY A REFERENCE TO GOD'S WORD AND THE
LIVES AND TEACHING OF THE HOLY APOSTLES
THERE RECORDED.

BY THE

REV. THOMAS MAY, M.A.

(*Late Vicar of Leigh, Kent.*)

“We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.”—*I. Cor. i. 23, 24.*

“Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.”—*II. Cor. ix. 15.*

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Presented to his friend, John Gilbert Talbot M. D.

&c. &c. &c.

With the Author's truest & grateful regards.

Leigh Parsonage

May 2nd 1878

TO THE LEIGH FLOCK,

WHOM THE AUTHOR TENDED MORE THAN HALF A CENTURY, THIS TRACT IS BEQUEATHED, WITH MUCH AFFECTION, AS A PASTORAL LEGACY, SUPPLEMENTARY TO HIS CHRISTIAN COURSE, BY THE EX-VICAR, ON HIS 80TH BIRTHDAY.

LEIGH PARSONAGE,

MARCH 21ST, 1878.

“ARE YOU SAVED?”

IF this question be put with a view to elicit the reply, “I know from my own feelings, that I have passed from death unto life, and that I cannot relapse into sin, nor miss eternal salvation,” it is indeed a most improper question. Such self-confidence can only minister to what is one form of that “Pride of life” (*ἀλαζονεία*) which the Beloved Disciple tells us is one of the three great temptations that are in the world (1. John ii. 16). Of this same “Pride” St. James is speaking when he says, “Now ye rejoice in your boastings” (*ἀλαζονείαις*); and adds, “all such rejoicing is evil” (James iv. 16). Such vain conceit would appropriate to itself “the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,” without running “with patience the race that is set before us.” “If any man strive for the mastery,” St. Paul tells us, “yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully”—follow the rules prescribed for the Christian competitor (II. Tim. ii. 5). And the Lord Jesus himself forewarns His disciples,—“he that *shall endure unto the end*”—not he who did run well and was hindered, not he who is wearied and faints in his mind as he nears the term of his earthly existence; but,—“he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved” (St. Mark xiii. 13). Again, unto the angel of the church of Smyrna,

St. John is commanded to write, "Be thou faithful *unto death*"—not faithful for a season only, too confident that thou shalt never fall from thy steadfastness, but,—“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” St. Paul gives his brethren a caution, very necessary in the present day, “Ye have need of *patience*, that *after* ye have done the will of God (not before), ye might receive the promise.” “By your *patience* save ye your souls,” was our Lord’s admonition to His disciples, for so it may be understood, when He foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, and the impending troubles of God’s rebellious people (St. Luke xxi. 19). And Christ is “the author of eternal salvation unto all them”—but only to them—“that obey Him” (Heb. v. 9). “Be not weary in well doing;” “and the Lord” will “direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the *patient* waiting for Christ” (II. Thess. iii. 13. 5).

The doctrine of the Church of England respecting *Personal assurance and Final perseverance* is thus set forth in her XVIth Article of Religion:—“After we have received the Holy Ghost we may depart from grace given, and fall into sin, and by the grace of God we may arise again and amend our lives. And, therefore, they are to be condemned which say that they can no more sin as long as they live here, or deny the place of forgiveness to such as truly repent.” (See the Articles of Religion in the Book of Common Prayer.)

A more profitable inquiry than that referred to above seems to be involved in the following questions:—

1. Is Christ dwelling in your hearts by faith ? (See Eph. iii. 15). An answer may be deduced from two texts of Holy Scripture ; “ Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His ” (Rom. viii. 9) ; “ Hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us ” (I. John iii. 24).

2. “ Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed ? ” (Acts xix. 2). If we have been duly baptized, I conceive we may at once answer in the affirmative, and say that we have received the Holy Ghost. “ He,” said the Baptist, speaking of the Lord Jesus, “ shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost ” (St. Mark i. 8). We have all been baptized “ into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ” (St. Matt. xxviii. 19).

3. But the question recurs in another form ; Are you *now* in the enjoyment of the communion of the Holy Ghost ? or, to recur to the words of our first question, Is Christ now dwelling in your hearts ?

The indwelling of the Spirit, or of Christ, is to be judged of by the production of the *fruit* of the Spirit. And St. Paul tells us, “ The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance ” (Gal. v. 22). St. Peter, likewise, having, in the opening of his second General Epistle, confirmed his converts in the hope of the increase of God’s graces, subjoins the exhortation, “ Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue ; and to virtue knowledge ; and to knowledge temperance ; and to temperance patience ; and to patience godliness ; and to godliness

brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity." The words that follow are according to the general teaching of both Apostles; the one, St. Peter, the Apostle of the Circumcision; the other, St. Paul, of the Uncircumcision. "For," adds St. Peter, in the very next verse, "if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things"—no matter what his professions may be—"is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren," continues the Apostle, "give diligence to *make your calling and election sure*; for if ye do these things"—not if ye call Christ 'Lord, Lord!' boast of Him as your Saviour, and do not the things that He says,—“ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

All this valuable instruction is included within the space of the first eleven verses of the first chapter of the Second Epistle General of St. Peter.

Let us now contemplate, from St. Paul's point of view, the doctrine of Salvation through the only merits of Jesus Christ, and by Sanctification of His Spirit. "By Grace are ye saved through Faith," saith the Apostle, "and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Eph. ii. 8).

"By *Grace* are ye saved." So far as God is concerned, the work of man's salvation is complete.

Our Saviour on the Cross declared, "It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost" (St. John xix. 30). "The Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him that appointed Him," finished there the work which His Father had given Him to do, and which he had willingly undertaken: "though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect"—"perfect through suffering"—"he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him." (See Heb. ii. 10; iii. 1; v. 8-9).

"Grace and truth"—the Truth made manifest in Him,—"came by Jesus Christ" (St. John i. 17). "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Tit. ii. 11-14).

But there is something required on man's part to secure his own portion in this salvation. "By grace are ye saved, through *faith*." Faith is the instrument of our salvation—the hand, as it were, whereby we lay hold of "Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith." And here, let me illustrate by adopting Bishop Hall's apt similitude of the *two hands* which upheld Peter, when, "beginning to sink, he cried" in the agony of despair, "Lord,

save me!" (St. Matt. xiv. 30). Now, the two hands alluded to are these. There was the hand of Christ's power that "caught him," and saved his life from destruction; and there was the hand of his own faith which grasped the power of The Lord our Righteousness, mighty to save—whose Name was called Emmanuel, or Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts xvi. 31). "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief" (St. Mark ix. 24).

Of St. Peter, in respect of his deliverance from a watery grave, it might be truly said, as it was said by "The Truth" Himself to the woman who was a sinner but had become a true penitent and believer, "Thy sins are forgiven;" and again, "Thy faith hath saved thee; Go in peace" (St. Luke vii. 48-50.) With the gentle rebuke, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" the great Healer cured Peter of his doubtings; and, for a season, he went on his way rejoicing in a consciousness of his fidelity to his "Lord and his God." But the time came—it was Satan's hour—when the Prince of Darkness renewed his attack upon Peter from the ambuscade of self-complacency and self-confidence. Hear the Lord's warning of his danger: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not" (St. Luke xxii. 31, 32). Which means that it be not utterly extinguished, so that there be not a spark left for the Holy Ghost to fan into a flame; in other words, that thy faith die not. We all know that Peter's

faith had come to its lowest ebb of vitality, when "he began to curse and to swear, saying, 'I know not the man'"—Christ Jesus,—“the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” But the prayer of the prevailing Intercessor revived his drooping soul. His conversion was secured. After our Lord's victory over sin and Satan, Peter was formally reinstated in his apostleship, which he seemed to have abdicated.

We have an account of his restoration in St. John's narrative of what occurred at the sea of Tiberias; when, for the third time, according to the Evangelist's reckoning of these appearances, "Jesus shewed Himself," in His glorified Body, "to His disciples, after He was risen from the dead" (St. John xxi. 15-18). At this manifestation St. Peter is singled out for a renewal of his commission to feed the flock of Christ, over which the Lord Jesus Himself, the *Lord* of Life, and the Lord, the Holy Ghost, the *Giver* of Life, had made him an overseer; and his "*triple confession*" (as St. Augustine observes) is made a counterpoise to his "*triple denial*;" that Peter's tongue may be an organ of love no less than of fear; and that the presence of Life—"The Life"—may not elicit less than the imminence of Death had done. Observe, also, the remarkable correspondence of the *triple injunction* here delivered to St. Peter,—“Feed My lambs,” “Feed My sheep,” “Feed My sheep”—with that addressed to him, like this, under his original name of *Simon*. His Master foresaw that the enemy's advantage over him would be only for a season, and that a very short one; for that the Lord, a few

hours after, would turn and look upon His frail disciple, and produce in him that "godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of."

We have noticed two occasions on which the faith of the foremost of the Apostles, notwithstanding his self-confidence, failed him in the time of tribulation, even in the hour of extreme bodily danger. The same brave man who "drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear," is put out of countenance by the challenge of a maid-servant; and, cowardly, tells a lie. Simon Peter might be called a lion-hearted man ("the righteous is bold as a lion"); but, on the occasions alluded to, he verified the saying of the Wise Man, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." All his vain boastings, however, vanished before his conviction of sin, when "he went out, and wept bitterly." We are told, moreover, that "Peter was grieved," when, for the third time, the risen Saviour asked him, "Lovest thou Me?" He feared that his omniscient Lord might detect in him some insincerity of profession, of which he was himself utterly unconscious. He had learned a lesson of self-distrust, and of entire confidence in the knowledge and wisdom of God.

There is a very general agreement among ancient Ecclesiastical writers that St. Mark, the disciple and companion of St. Peter, collected the materials for his Gospel from the discourses of that Apostle. St. Mark records the message which the Angel (who appeared to the women at the sepulchre, notifying that Jesus of Nazareth was

risen) instructed them to convey to the disciples, couched in these remarkable words, "Go your way, tell his disciples and *Peter*, that he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him, as he said unto you" (St. Mark xvi. 7). Observe, Peter is here spoken of as detached from the Twelve. Is he taken at his word? We remember what occurred on the eve of the Crucifixion;—"Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also *one of this man's disciples*? He saith, *I am not*" (St. John xviii. 17). But the Lord had not forgotten Simon Peter, though Simon had forgotten himself, and disowned his Lord. He is included in St. Mark's account of the warning given of the faithlessness of all the disciples, "Jesus saith unto them, *All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered*" (St. Mark xiv. 27). And he is included in the promise that immediately follows, "But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee" (v. 28). Whether a disciple or not, at the time the message was delivered to the women, Peter, being mentioned by name, is reassured that he shall witness the fulfilment of his Lord's most gracious promise of a manifestation, in his glorified Body, to all the surviving offenders in that memorable night, when the Son of Man "was betrayed, and given up into the hands of wicked men, to suffer death upon the Cross."

We have anticipated the result of this manifestation of the risen Saviour at the Sea of Tiberias to Peter in particular. He "that stumbled was girded with 'much' strength." The once faithless

servant of that Divine Master, "Who took upon Him the form of a servant," proved himself "faithful unto death," and secured for himself "the crown of Life."

But there was to be another meeting at a *mountain* in Galilee (and, probably, this was the meeting signified by the Angel), when all the surviving Apostles would be assembled, and receive their final commission to "preach the Gospel to every creature." St. Mark, not improbably writing at the dictation of St. Peter, gives the terms of this commission in these memorable words: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (St. Mark xvi. 16).

In St. Matthew's record of the Apostolical Commission we have the clearest revelation hitherto vouchsafed to us of the Name of God, into which we are to be baptized—the "Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Thus is the Church of Christ constituted; "built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also"—St. Paul is writing "to the saints that are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus" (Eph. i. 1)—"are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. ii. 20-22). Of this Church Christ is the Head, and Christians are members. Speaking to His disciples, Jesus tells them, "One is your Master, even Christ, and

all ye—members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones,”—“all ye are brethren.”

It has pleased this our Divine Master to ordain in His Church two Sacraments—that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord—as generally necessary to salvation. Both of them were declared so, in anticipation of their actual appointment.

(1.) For in prophetic allusion to the Sacrament of Baptism, not formally ordained till after the Resurrection, and just before the Ascension, Jesus said to Nicodemus, a Master in Israel, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (St. Johu iii. 5). He cannot be a Christian at all. *Baptism* is the door of entrance (*janua Ecclesiae*) into that Kingdom. You have heard how, on the mountain in Galilee, the Lord Jesus consecrated Baptism as the Sacrament of admission into the fellowship of Christ’s Religion: “Go ye,” said the Divine Head of the Church, “and make disciples of (*μαθητεύσατε*) all nations, baptizing them into the Name (*εἰς τὸ ὄνομα*) of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Through this means of Grace, he who would be Christ’s disciple is called by his Heavenly Father, through the Son, and by the Holy Ghost, to a state of salvation,—a state in which, if it be not his own fault, he will become an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven, or Kingdom of God, in its highest sense. By Baptism we are made members of the Church Militant; and, if we continue Christ’s faithful soldiers and servants unto our lives’ end, we shall be members of the Church Triumphant—“partakers of the

inheritance of the saints in light." In the Apostles' Creed, which is the first thing to be learned by the new-born babe in Christ, probably an infant in years, profession is made of a belief in "*The holy Catholic Church,*" with all its attendant advantages and privileges of "The Communion of Saints; The Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body; And the Life everlasting."

(2.) Again, in respect to the Lord's Supper: Jesus, knowing what He would do for the preservation of the Spiritual Life given in Baptism, pre-ordains another Sacrament—the Supper of the Lord,—that our growth in Divine wisdom, as in stature, may be provided for; and our souls strengthened and refreshed by the Body and Blood of Christ, as our bodies are by bread and wine. Notice the remarkable similarity of language in which our blessed Lord declares the necessity of every one who will be saved by the Gospel terms of salvation observing both the ordinances He was about to appoint in His Church. In His discourse with Nicodemus, He identifies the new birth with Baptismal regeneration: "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (St. John iii. 5). And in His great discourse at Capernaum, when He had just been speaking of Himself as the Bread of Life: "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you" (St. John vi. 53). The life communicated to you in Baptism will not *abide*; according to the principle on which the Holy Spirit deals out His gifts.—"For

whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance : but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath " (St. Matt. xiii. 12).

Be very careful then, dear brethren in the Lord, that ye neglect not the gift that is in you by "the washing of regeneration" in Baptism ; which gift, by being duly improved, will be a constant stimulant to you to seek *more* grace of the Almighty Lord Who is ever willing to give it, and who has provided the great Eucharistic Feast as a chief means for the "renewing of the Holy Ghost ; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour : that, being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (See Tit. iii. 5-7).

In the Acts of the Apostles, in the account given of the infant Church immediately after the great day of Pentecost, we read, in our English Bibles, "And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved" (Acts ii. 47)—*τοὺς σωζομένους* ; those that were being saved ; those that were being called to a state of salvation—placed in a condition in which God would give them the ability to "work out their own salvation with fear and trembling"—not to make their safety a matter of feeling ;—"for it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. ii. 12). And this is in perfect accordance with what St. Paul teaches us when he writes, "By grace are ye saved through faith ; and that not of yourselves : it is the gift of God" (Eph. ii. 8).

If, then, we look faithfully to the teaching of Christ's inspired Apostles, as contained in Holy

Scripture, and to the record of their lives, as recorded there, we shall not fail to learn what is the true and right answer to such a question as this, "Are you saved?" How would St. Peter and St. Paul have had their converts answer the question? Assuredly, they would have had them give some such answer as this: "No; I am not saved as yet, not actually saved; but I am *being* saved, as I hope and trust; I am in 'the way of salvation,' which the Apostles taught and showed to man" (Acts xvi. 17). On repentance and faith I was "baptized," as the Apostles required every one to be, "for the remission of sins," with the promise and pledge of "the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts ii. 38). "For the promise," they said, "is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, as many as the Lord our God shall call" (*Ibid.* v. 39). The "way of salvation," its promises, its privileges, and its duties, are, therefore, just the same as they were when the Apostles first preached on the great day of Pentecost, "with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." By my Baptism I have been, through God's mercy, "added to this Church" (v. 41-47); I have "continued stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer"; abiding thus in spiritual communion with Christ, through the appointed means and holy ordinances which He has ordained; in faith and patience, in self-distrust and holy fear, persevering unto the end, I humbly trust, through God's mercy, and Christ's merits, and the grace of His Holy Spirit, to obtain full inheritance of everlasting salvation, through our Lord Jesus Christ,





