

How To Become A Christian

by Manford George Gutzke

Do you know what it takes to become a believer in Jesus Christ?

"And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." The word "Christian" is very much the same in ordinary usage as the word "wife." Every wife is a woman but not every woman is a wife. No woman can ever become a wife by herself. So every Christian is a human being but not every human being is a Christian; and no human being can become a Christian in himself or by himself. By the way, the word "Christian" is never used as an adjective in the New Testament. It is used only as a noun. There are Christians. There is no reference in the Bible to a Christian home or a Christian family or a Christian nation; nor is there reference to a Christian manner, style or conduct. You cannot use the word "Christian" that way and be really Biblical. You can talk about the home of a Christian. You can talk about the family of a Christian. You can talk about the nation of a Christian. I am indebted to my own son for bringing to my attention that no one ever called himself a Christian in the New Testament. Other people called them Christians.

Now Peter does say that if any man suffers as a Christian, let him rejoice in certain things. We want to think about how to become a Christian, which would be the popular way of referring to becoming a believer in Christ. But I will say that I am going to discuss how to become a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ; because the kind of person people would call a Christian is a human being who has committed himself to Jesus Christ, as a woman commits herself to her husband to become his wife.

So we raise the question again; what does it take to become a believer in Jesus Christ? The first thing to note is faith. To be acceptable to God one must "believe that God is and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." It is necessary at the very outset that a person believe in the reality of God as revealed in the Scripture. Right at this point we will have to take exception to a common practice among people and we will have to differ with a certain large company of folks. Any number of people start out thinking that you can get to the point of being a Christian if you believe in God; but the word "God" is what they mean by it. Even if they mean "the Creator", and even if they mean "the Great Power"; even if they mean "the Mighty Force" which keeps the universe going, not one of these is good enough. A person must think about God as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In other words, the soul that would come to God through Christ must believe in the reality of God as revealed in the Scriptures. If such a person does not have in mind God as He is revealed in the Bible some other necessary things will not follow. For instance, in the matter of having faith in God, one must believe in the law of God; that God has His own way of being and doing and He will not accept anything contrary to that. God is sovereign. God is in control. The law of God was set forth in the Ten Words that Moses received on Mt. Sinai, or the Ten Commandments as we commonly refer to them. If any person ever intends to start dealing with God he must have in mind that God is like the Ten Commandments, and that is what God requires of everybody. He must believe in the law of God, in right and wrong as God defines it in the Scriptures.

At the same time that person must accept responsibility for his conduct. I am responsible before God for the way I do. I am responsible before God for the way I think. I am responsible to Almighty God

for what I do with what I have. I must expect the judgment of God upon me: how I do, how I do with things, how I do with people, how I do with God. I must accept responsibility for my conduct. As surely as I do something will follow that I don't have to bring on; it will come to me: guilt. I will be conscious of the fact that I am not doing what I am supposed to be doing when I do wrong. Because of guilt I can realize the fact of condemnation. If I don't have in mind that God will destroy the wicked, if I don't have in mind that God will destroy that which is not according to His will, then I don't understand the God of the Bible, and there is no use talking to me about becoming a Christian. I must accept the fact of condemnation, the prospect of being destroyed, if I remain in my sins before God. All of this is involved in faith. It is a matter of having read this in the Scriptures, of having understood it as it is set out in the Bible where I can grasp it and accept it to be true. This is a matter of recognizing the spiritual situation as it is, and that I, as a human being in this world, in myself am naturally alienated from God.

It is true this is the first thing I must keep in mind, but fortunately I don't have to close the book at this point; the next thing I can think about is the grace of God.

"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" (John 3:16).

May I go over that again just to point out: ". . . . should not perish" as he would because of his sins, and ". . . . should not perish" because of the condemnation he is under. He can get out from under that condemnation. He can get clear from that judgment upon him if he will turn to God in Christ Jesus. Paul tells us "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Roman 5:8). This is a basic truth for us to rest upon.

God is benevolent. He wills to be good to me. He wants to help me. He is gracious. I don't have to pay Him first; I don't have to pay Him at all. What He gives to me He gives as a gift, and He gives me what I can never earn; because God really cares. "God is love" (I John 4:8). This makes possible the plan of salvation. The very idea of salvation is not something that man does. It is something God does. Salvation is all based upon what Christ Jesus has done. The truth of the matter is that in the grace of God, Christ Jesus came into this world and died for my sins. I will not try to explain it in detail, but I will just indicate to you that God has matters set up in such a way in His government of the universe, that the soul that sinneth it shall die. Sin will bring on death, but God has arranged to allow a substitution; someone else can take my place. As a matter of fact it is His Son who will come to take my place. When Christ Jesus came into this world He died for me in my place. He carried away my sins. He took away my sins in His own body, and thus I now have nothing against me; my guilt is gone because Christ Jesus died for me. He reconciled me to God in His death for me.

I can now come into the presence of God and be acceptable to Him because Christ Jesus died for me. When I do so come God in His grace sends His Holy Spirit to enter into my heart. This includes also my regeneration. "But as many as received him (the Lord Jesus Christ) to them gave he power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12).. Paul says further that if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creation. So we can simply have this in mind: you and I may not feel it; we may not see it, but the actual fact is that as I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and accept Him as my Savior and commit my soul to Him, God does something to me. He doesn't merely change my mind. He doesn't merely change my outlook, or my experience. He does something to me. He recreates me. As I was a child of my parents I now become a child of God and then being such, God sends His Holy Spirit into my heart. I don't see Him coming. I may not feel Him. He is not physical but the Scripture tells me He is there, and I can know He is there. If I open my heart and believe the Word of God, it will come into my heart that the very presence of God is with me. This presence of God with me is the presence of Someone Who loves me and gave Himself for me. This is the basis of my relationship with God. When a person is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ,

worshipping God, being devoted to God, deep down in his heart loving and obeying God is natural.

To summarize this whole line of thought that I have tried to sketch here, something is true through the Lord Jesus Christ that we talk about in becoming a saved person. There is something God has done. He sent His Son for me. There is something I must do. I must receive Christ Jesus as my Savior, acknowledging my sin, confessing my sin before God and accepting Him as my Lord. There is something God will do. He will accept Christ Jesus in my place, and He will allow Him to take away my sin so that I am actually reconciled to God. Then God will give me His Holy Spirit. There is also something I must do for blessing in the future: I must obey Him. I must walk in Him: I must let Him have His way in my soul. Then God promises me that I will be blessed through the Lord Jesus Christ.

How To Grow As A Christian

Do you realize that after a person becomes a believer by accepting Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord he can then grow in faith?

"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" is the message for us in I Peter 2:2. The same passage in the Revised American Standard Version of the Scriptures reads: "Like new born babes, long for the pure milk of the Word that by it you may grow in respect to salvation." The rendition in the Amplified Version of the New Testament is: "Like newborn babies, you should crave, thirst for, earnestly desire the pure unadulterated spiritual milk that by it you may be nurtured and grow into completed salvation."

We have noted in our study thus far that a person becomes a Christian, a believer, by faith; by believing the Word of God about Christ Jesus. Now we shall consider what should happen after the believer accepts Christ. It is helpful for us in understanding what is happening to a believer and in a believer, to remember there are two worlds in which the believer is involved: the natural world and the spiritual world. There is the natural earthly world that we see all around about us where he was born as a child and where he lived as a boy and grew to manhood: a visible world; and there is a spiritual world: a heavenly world where God is, which is invisible, and the believer has something to do with that.

There are two principles involved: there is the principle of the nature of man, the way he is born into this world: which is called in the Bible, the flesh; and there is the principle in the heart of the man, the born again believer, as he is born again in Christ Jesus, which is called the spirit. The flesh operates by sight, by the senses: what you hear, what you see, what you taste, what you smell and what you handle. The spirit operates by faith – what you read in the Word of God, what is revealed in the Scriptures as the will of God. Salvation, as it takes place in the individual human being, is the result of the human being on earth believing the Word of God which comes from heaven. Although it is written in the form of the words of men, and appears in literature as if it were a word of man, it is nevertheless inspired. It originates in heaven.

". . . the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher" (Romans 10:8-14)?

There is a problem for a human being in the matter of believing the Word of God. It is not easy to do. We get some idea of the nature of the problem in reading what Paul has written about it.

"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (1 Corinthians 2:9-12).

Why is it, then, so difficult for a human being on earth to believe the Word of God, as it is written in the Scripture? To begin with, God is invisible; and the Word which comes through the inspired writer comes from the infinite eternal world of the living God. The Gospel is not a description of what man can do to get right with God, or what man should do to please God; but the Gospel is a description of what God has done for man, and what He will do for those who put their trust in Him. The ways of God are past finding out, so far as man is concerned.

But there is an authorized way for the human being to overcome this problem of understanding: this difficulty that a human being has when he reads the human words of the Scriptures but is unable to understand the real meaning because that is spiritual. The Christian has in him two natures: one of these natures must die and the other must live. The first is called the flesh and the other is called the spirit. When we have these two before us we can think of the situation as it is.

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Galatians 5:16-17).

The believer has in him these two principles: the natural principle which he has because he is a human being, the child of his parents and a citizen in the world; and also the spiritual principle because he has believed in God, has accepted Christ Jesus as his Savior, has been reconciled to God and has received from God the Holy Spirit. The one nature wants to go the way of the world; the other nature wants to go the way of God.

This need not be so very difficult to understand. Take myself for example: as you think of me as a human being. I have in me the natural disposition to fall to the ground. That is obvious. If I for any reason were to be stricken unconscious, or to suffer a stroke, so that my muscles were not operating because my brain did not have control over my muscles, I would slump to the ground. At the same time, I walk. I stand up and walk. Why? Because I have in me the spirit of life, which energizes me through the nerves that I have and the muscles that I have, so that I would pick myself up and walk around. My actual walking around in the flesh is a victory of the life in me over against the dead weight of my muscles and my bones and my body. I am belaboring this point but I think that you can get the idea I have in mind. My hand naturally falls down, but in my thinking and in my mind I can raise it up. I want to raise my hand, so I raise it. Do you realize that raising my hand shows my victory over the force of gravitation that would pull it down?

In some such way as that, as far as a believer is concerned, he has in him the new life in Christ Jesus which prompts him to look up into the face of God, and the old life in human nature that prompts him to look around in this world as it is. Thus there is a conflict between the flesh and spirit, in which the believer is led by the Spirit to mortify the flesh. The word "mortify" is a rather unusual word but we can

know what it means. The meaning of the word "mortify" comes to mind when we think of a mortician. He is a person who deals with dead bodies. Mortifying the flesh means to deal with your flesh as if it were dead. A person reckons it dead by denying self. At the same time the believer must nurture the spirit. Paul has given guidance as to how this is done.

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:1-3).

That is the general situation the believer is in. If he is to grow as a believer he must increase and strengthen the things of the spirit, and decrease and deny the things of the flesh. If he is going to walk in the Spirit it will be like walking in the light: he will take time to worship God, to read the Bible, the Word of God, and to pray. As surely as he does these things he will be nurturing himself with the sincere milk of the Word that he may grow thereby. There will be more and more of the Spirit and less and less of the flesh.

How To Rejoice As A Christian

Do you know why it is that a believer in Christ can be unspeakably happy?

"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (I Peter 1:8). Peter is speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ. By the way, everything that the believer is aware of, and that affects his heart and mind, has to do with the person of his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. So that when Peter is talking about the Lord, he is talking about the very center of the believer's thinking and the very basis of his confidence.

It is a wonderful blessing when a believer has convictions about Jesus Christ. It is a glorious thing to have strong convictions about the person of Jesus Christ, which grow and are developed in the heart through communion with Him. Thinking about the Lord Jesus Christ with confidence is not based on reason. A person does not "figure Him out." When the Lord Jesus asked His disciples "Whom do you say that I am," and Peter answered: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God," the Lord said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."

What had flesh and blood not revealed to him? Flesh and blood had not revealed to Peter that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ. What does it mean to say that flesh and blood had not revealed to him? Human thinking, human reasoning, human consideration, evidence brought in by human beings, and testimony compiled by human beings, was not the basis on which Peter believed that Jesus was the Christ. He had an inner conviction inside himself that came from Almighty God. In the Book of Psalms there is an interesting sentence: "They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed" (Psalm 34:5). Many translators point out that it is clearer to say "They looked unto him and were radiant, their faces were not put to shame." Nehemiah said: "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (8:10). It is the presence of God in the heart that gives the believer strong conviction and great joy.

We are saying that when a believer, one called a Christian, has faith in the Lord Jesus Christ he has the basis on which he can be blessed in his spirit. We have seen that what makes a man a believer is his faith. We have studied this, and we have noticed that if a person is going to be a believer in Christ Jesus he must believe in God – the God of the Bible. He must believe in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ as set forth in the Bible and he must believe in Christ Jesus as He is presented in the Bible. He must believe

in the Holy Spirit of whom he reads and learns in the Bible.

By directing his attention to these invisible realities, when this human being on earth thinks about and believes in God, thinks about the ways of God and believes in the Gospel, thinks about Christ Jesus and believes in and trusts Him, thinks about and believes in the Holy Spirit – yielding to His inward presence – that person is filled with joy. And because he believes there is now no feeling of guilt. No wonder he can be joyful. He knows there will be nothing brought against him. He has all the joy a person has whose account at the store has been settled, whose bill has been paid. There is no guilt and he has no condemnation. He is not anticipating or fearing future judgment. We read in the Book of John: "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." He is actually free from any apprehension about what might happen to him tomorrow.

We read in Hebrews 12:2: "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross." We need to pause and remember that Jesus of Nazareth, facing crucifixion, facing total rejection on the part of men, and facing the disaster (if we may say so) of being put to death in this world, looked forward with joy because He was expecting to be with His Father. "For the joy that was set before him endured the cross."

In John 15:11 the Lord Jesus said to His disciples, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." It is obviously the purpose of the Lord Jesus Christ that His followers should have joy. They will have this joy if they follow the directives He gave in His Word. Just before this the Lord Jesus had told them to abide in Him and He would abide in them. It was after He had described this to them that He pointed out that in this way His joy would remain in them. When the Lord Jesus Christ comes into the soul it is with a certain joy. The joy Christ Jesus has is the joy of doing His Father's will; and when He is in the heart He spreads that joy in the believer. It is also true for the believer that looking into the face of the Lord begets joy. It is the joy that the bride has when she looks into the face of the bridegroom. It is the joy that the child has when it looks into the face of the parent. It is the joy a friend has when looking into the face of his friend. So, then, looking into His face, being conscious of His good will, being aware of His grace and mercy, realizing that He looks upon us with thoughts of pleasantness and peace begets joy in our hearts.

It is wonderful that the Lord Jesus Christ, Almighty God's own Son, actually cares about us. Another way in which our joy is fostered is when we give thanks always. In this connection you will remember the song, "Count your many blessings, name them one by one; and it will surprise what the Lord has done." By keeping in mind how God has blessed us we are filled with joy, not only because of what He has done but because He is our God. And He is not going to stop. This is our expectation. No wonder Paul writes: "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice" (Philippians 4:4).

How would one rejoice in the Lord? Let me say again: the only way in which we can rejoice is when we have joy. The very word "rejoice" has the syllable "re." When we repaint, it is something that we have already painted. When we rewrite, it is something that we have written. When we repair we are fixing something that has already been done. When we rejoice we are calling back to mind again the things that brought joy. Joy comes first. If we have had joy in the Lord, we can rejoice.

How would we have joy in the Lord, over and over again? By doing His will, which includes having reverence to God, giving honor to one's parents, being considerate of others being kind one to another, showing charity to the poor. All this seems to be a matter of just doing the right thing. This is exactly true. Doing the right things will qualify me for fellowship with the Lord, and fellowship with the Lord will qualify me for looking into His face with joy.

So the believer should honor God, be kind to all men, helpful to the poor, because this is in His will; and looking into His face, the joy will come from seeing Him "Whom having not seen ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." This is the way the believer can be unspeakably happy.

How To Pray As A Christian

Can you understand why praying as a believer in Jesus Christ differs from praying naturally as a human being?

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26).

This is the way the Apostle Paul points out something that is very important for us to understand, so far as believers are concerned. It is natural for us to pray. It is probably true that all over the world 0 men pray in some fashion. When a person believes in any being or beings who could have power over him, whether it is one or whether it is a multitude, whether he believes in a living God in heaven, or whether he believes in idols or whatever it may be, it is natural, if that person has confidence in anything or any person, for him to talk to that person or to call on that thing for help. Praying could be practised from a sense of duty as if one *should* do this.

I am sure there are people who feel they ought to pray. With them it would be something like tax payments. A person ought to pay his taxes. With some persons praying may be like an insurance premium. A client ought to pay his premium that he might be insured. Then again, there can be praying that arises out of a sense of need. It is not unusual for a human being to feel that the world is too much for him, and that he is face to face with a situation that he cannot overcome. He may have a feeling of inadequacy; he may need help. Or a person may have a feeling of uncertainty; he may need guidance. We could go through various exercises of human consciousness in which a person is moved to ask for help. Such asking can be done by his using various means and methods, as he appeals to various sources of power, wherever he may think there is any.

Praying could be done also from a sense of pain. A person could hurt and like saying "ouch" such a person would pray. Praying could be from a sense of fear. A person could be so afraid that he would call out to whatever God there might be in order that he might have some help. Or praying could be from a sense of guilt. A person could, deep down inside himself, feel that he has not done right, and so he is now facing some sort of judgment from somewhere. His conscience might bother him and so he might pray that he might in some way escape the punishment he thinks he is due.

But none of these ways of praying that I have sketched here, and there could be many other ways of the same sort, are worthy for the believer in Christ. That is not the way a believer prays. As a human being, anybody – a believer or not – could pray for all the reasons I have listed. Anybody could have the feeling that in himself he needs help, and he could call out for help. But the situation is different for a believer who is now a child of God. The Holy Spirit in the heart of a believer will prompt the believer to pray in the will of the Lord.

When a person, a human being on earth, is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ and has accepted Him as Savior, God has made that person His own child, has adopted him into His family and regenerated him, given him a new heart, and has put His Holy Spirit within him. Now the Holy Spirit of God within the heart of a believer will prompt the believer to do certain things as the Lord Jesus Christ would do them, because it is the Spirit of Christ that is there. The Spirit of Christ in the believer will move the believer to pray as the Lord Jesus Christ Himself would pray to His Father in heaven. The born again believer will look up to God as Father. He will not so much think of God as the Almighty Creator, nor as the sovereign Power over all the universe nor as the Judge of all the earth, but he will look up to God as his Savior, and he will consider that Almighty God is Lord. Now in order to know how to pray, that he might know what to say, because the Spirit within him would prompt him to talk to his Father, he has for his guidance the Scriptural record and admonition.

In other words, the Spirit of Christ, who is within the believer, will lead him to pray as Jesus of Nazareth prayed. This is why the believer in Christ Jesus approaches God in prayer differently. He will come to God not as he would have come naturally. Naturally he would look upon Almighty God as Creator, as Power and as Sovereign and Judge. He would have all these things in mind, but he would feel his own need and he would come before God and confess his need to God. Thus it is evident he would be prompted by his own need. He would be led from within himself to feel he is hungry – he wants something to eat; he is tired – he wants a place to sleep; he is confused – he wants guidance. Any of these things would come to him out of his own consciousness without any revelation from God as to what God would have him do.

The believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, moved by the Spirit of God who was in Jesus of Nazareth, will call upon God as Jesus of Nazareth called upon God, as His Father. The Lord Jesus Christ turned to His Father always. All things are in the Father's hands. Thus the believer will pray always. This does not mean he prays every minute of every hour or every day of every week, but that in every case, whether it be a matter of physical needs, social needs, financial needs or personal needs he always turns to God. Thus he prays not only because of inward needs he may have but because of the revelation that has been given to him that everything is in God's hands.

So when the believer lifts up his heart to God to pray he is praying to the One who has everything in His hands. He therefore prays always, in everything. Anything that affects the believer concerns the Father, no matter whether it's big or little. If it is something that concerns the believer, something that troubles or allures him; if it is something he wants for himself or his family, or something he thinks Almighty God would want done, he looks up to God and asks Him. In everything he gives thanks. In everything by prayer and supplication, he lets his requests be made known to God.

Then again, the believer will pray humbly. Because the believer is moved by the Spirit of Christ within him, he will ask nothing for himself. That is easy to say but it is so very important it should be carefully considered. The believer will ask nothing for himself if he is moved by the Spirit that was in Jesus of Nazareth, Who said, "I do nothing of myself. My Father worketh hitherto and I work." Thus, when the believer comes into the presence of God, he will have in mind whatever God wills to do is acceptable to him.

When the believer bows his knees to God to pray because of a particular problem he will look up into the face of God and ask Him for what he feels is the thing that God would want him to have. He will pray as he is led by the Spirit; however, he will have in mind whatsoever the Father wants to do, that will be what he wants done. Whatever God wills to send to him will be acceptable. He will pray with thanksgiving. He will praise God because all things belong to God. He will pray to God sincerely. "Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matthew 7:7). He will pray to God confidently. "I know that Thou hearest me always" is the way the Lord Jesus Christ prayed. He will pray to God obediently. "Not my will but Thine be done." And he will pray to God spiritually, as led by the Spirit of God.

No doubt many persons fail to pray because they feel unworthy; they feel ignorant and insignificant. But this is an error on their part because in so doing all attention is upon self. Of course, the believer is unworthy and of course he is ignorant and insignificant, but when the believer prays he properly prays in the name of the Lord, and Christ Jesus is worthy and He knows all things and He is the Father's beloved Son. The believer comes in His name to ask Almighty God to glorify Himself in hearing his prayer.

How To Witness As A Christian

Do you realize that each believer in the Lord Jesus Christ has the responsibility of telling others about what Christ has done for him?

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

These familiar words indicate to us the straightforward revelation from Almighty God as to what He would have His followers do. ". . . ye shall receive power . . ." to do their work. The Lord Jesus came into this world as Jesus of Nazareth to seek and to save the lost. He saves only those who believe on Him. Now how could anyone ever believe in Him whom they have not seen? It was over 1900 years ago that Jesus of Nazareth was here. How is anyone today ever going to believe in Him?

Paul raised that question when he wrote "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" People who are hearing may not understand but they can believe, if other believers will tell. It is personal testimony that counts in the world. "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so" (Psalm 107:2). The whole matter is based upon the simple fact that God is invisible. Only those who know Him and are in communion with Him can tell others what He does; unless they tell, nobody else will know. It is just that important. Somewhere, someone must follow this line: "This poor man cried, the Lord heard him and delivered him out of his troubles." As surely as this is done and people who are believers, who have received the blessings of God, tell it, other people will hear. If other people hear and believe they will be saved. That is the way it works.

Many believers seem to think Acts 1:8 is an elective; as if this were something extra. They seem inclined to think that if any believer just feels like he really wants to do something in witnessing he might do this, or if he really feels that he could do something he could perhaps act this way; it would be a fine thing to be done. All of which is true as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. The simple fact is "you are my witnesses." Every single person who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ and has any experience of salvation, wherein Almighty God actually does something for him, has a responsibility to tell it so that other people will know it. Almighty God wants to save men. He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to everlasting life. They are going to be saved through faith, and faith cometh by hearing. Someone is going to have to tell it. The amazing truth is this: each believer is to say it in his or her way. There is no set pattern or procedure. When thinking about witnessing as a believer there is not some certain way that he must do it.

Paul, for example, was one of the great witnesses for Christ. He witnessed for Christ to the Jews as we read in Acts 13:16-41. Here Paul used Scripture. He took the Bible to show the Jewish people that Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled the Old Testament Scriptures because it had been prophesied in the Old Testament Scriptures the day would come when God would send His Savior, and the will of God would be done in that way. On another occasion (Acts 17:22-31) when the Apostle Paul talked to the Greeks on Mars Hill at Athens he quoted no Scripture. Strangely enough, he did use one of their poets. In other words, when talking to the Greeks he talked the language that they could understand. He talked in the way they could be led. In this way he witnessed to the Greeks, quoting their own ideas, showing them as their own thinkers had believed, this coming of Christ would be in line with the reality of the whole universe. Also, in Acts 14 Paul witnessed to the Gentiles. These people were not sophisticated as were the Greeks, and not trained in the Scriptures as the Jews. They were just people living without either Bible knowledge or philosophical ideas. To these people Paul used nature when he witnessed. He did not quote Scripture nor did he use philosophical arguments. He used nature to support his claim that Almighty God was

benevolent and they could put their trust in Him, and that He was personal.

On another occasion Paul had the opportunity to witness when he was standing before the Jewish council. When he stood before that body of learned men who were not only acquainted with the Old Testament Scriptures, but were skilled in the law of Old Testament revelation, Paul used their law and he made an appeal to them to act according to the law they themselves knew.

When the Apostle Paul was writing to believers such as the Galatians, he used his own experience. The point he wanted to make there was that the Gospel he was preaching was true. He told how the Lord had led him. Here he was talking to people who believed in God and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. They could understand this line of testimony. It is notable that Paul's method in these various situations, his pattern of witnessing, was derived from the situation he was in. There was nothing extraordinary or unnatural about this actually, although it is significant.

A teacher in high school would move along a certain level, but if he were teaching grade five students he would move along a different level. In each case the teacher wants the student to learn something. It is an elemental principle in all matters of communication of this kind that you proceed from the known to the unknown: you talk to people about what they can understand, what they know about, and lead on from there to what you want to tell them. This is what Paul was doing.

There are other witnesses from whom we can learn how to proceed. Whenever I think about witnessing for God, talking to human beings about what Almighty God can do, I am reminded again of that young Jewish maid who was a prisoner of war and was serving in the home of Naaman, the Syrian, who was a leper. Naaman was a great man in the army, a leader of the King's host, but a leper. It was that young Jewish maid in the kitchen who made the remark that she just wished her master would go and see the prophet who was in Israel. And on the basis of this comment of hers, Naaman went to see Elisha.

When you think that through you will find that this young Jewish maid did not seek an audience with Naaman and present any philosophical arguments to prove to him that Elisha was a very capable man of God. She did not proceed to tell Naaman, the Syrian, that his pagan beliefs were wrong. But she knew that God had blessed Elisha with a certain power, and she was convinced that if Elisha were involved in the matter her master could be healed. And it turned out that way.

When Peter was in the presence of the Jewish Council, who were accusing him of certain things, he was defending himself. He was seeking to share with them something from God, and as he did he appealed to their own reason. He knew that these men believed in the God of Abraham, they believed in the Creator of the world and they believed in the revelation that was in the Old Testament. Yet they were opposing the preaching of the Gospel. When Peter witnessed to them he did not simply tell them that he was right and they were wrong. He appealed to their reasoning about the Scriptures and tried to show them that what he was saying was in line with the things they believed (Acts 3:12-26).

In Peter's first epistle we read:

"Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives" (I Peter 3:1).

The word "conversation" means manner of life. ". . . Without the word. . ." is witnessing going on when the person is not talking at all, not saying anything that has to do with the revelation of the Gospel, but living it out. Peter goes on to say:

"While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (I Peter 3:2-4).

In this passage is set forth this amazing thing: wives could witness to their husbands by their manner of life. It is a very trite expression, I know, to say "Your actions speak louder than your words." People will vary that and say, "What you do is so loud I can't hear what you say." In any case, so far as witnessing is concerned, it is true that acting it out may often do far more effective witnessing than saying so many words that may only irritate.

We can think also of the Samaritan woman who went back to her village after talking to Jesus of Nazareth at the well. These were her words: "Come see a man which told me all things that ever I did." May we keep this in mind with reference to witnessing. If I have had any experience with the Lord, it won't make much difference what I say. Words won't count.

Saved From What To What?

Do you understand what the Gospel means by the word "saved?"

The word "saved" is a Bible word. In fact, it is used mostly in the New Testament, and it is very difficult to have any conception of what the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is unless one has some conception of the meaning of the word "saved." The very title, the very name we give to Jesus Christ, is that He is the "Savior," and we say that the work He performs is "salvation." Luke wrote "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). When the Philippian jailer asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Paul and Silas gave him an answer that is clear and concise: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31). In his letter to the Romans Paul stated "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9).

One of our problems which arises when we try to understand this word is caused by our tendency to develop a doctrine. We are inclined to develop ideas from the very words we use. The word "saved," which has all manner of connotations, is generally taken almost as our text in our own minds. Instead of looking into the Scriptures to see what it means to be saved, we are inclined to scan the common usage of the word "saved" and make up our doctrine, our teaching, on that basis. But this is actually unwise. In our conception of being saved we often use certain illustrations to bring out our idea. For instance, we will describe how a ship might be sinking at sea, with the passengers and crew facing death by drowning. We tell about how the lifeboats are put to use, and both passengers and crew are saved. There is an element of truth in that, a very real part of truth.

We might use an illustration where we picture a child in a burning house. A fireman rushes in and manages to rescue the child and we say the fireman "saved" the girl. Or perhaps we tell of a mountain climber who has been scaling a very high mountain and is suddenly lodged on a narrow ledge. He does not seem to be able to go up or down, and we wonder what we can do as we undertake to "save" him. We drop a rope to him from the top so that he will be able to take hold of it and be drawn up into safety and security. That gives us the idea that being saved is a matter of escaping some destruction that is about to come upon us. And this seems to serve, to tell us really the truth about one aspect; namely being saved from hell.

This line of presentation shows a large element of truth; it is one that has always been very important to me: the idea of being saved from hell. In that connection we may use an illustration like this: we think of a prisoner who is facing persecution. He is pardoned and, of course, when we think of his joy and relief, we say that is the way it is when a person is saved from the fate of destruction. Now there is a sense in which all of this is dramatically true. This aspect could be understood as being quite true so far as

the word "saved" is concerned; but the Gospel means more when it uses the word "saved" than just being delivered from some impending doom.

Some light will come to us when we make a study of the word "saved" and the word "salvation." We could look at the word "salvation" and then look at the word "Savior." The words seem to come from the same root, and they imply the same operation. After all, it is the Savior who produces the salvation. But did you notice how salvation is based on the word "salve," and Savior is based on the word "save." Is there any way in which these two could be seen together: that the words "salve" and "save" could refer to the same spiritual experience? Martin Luther in his translation of the Bible into German used for salvation the word "Heilung," which is the word that is translated "healing" in English. Then he used the word "Heiland" when he spoke about the Savior and that means "healer." Martin Luther was translating this from the original languages: Hebrew in the Old Testament and Greek in the New Testament, languages with which he was familiar. He was interpreting the text when he gave the German words. So he spoke of the Lord Jesus Christ as the "Healer" where we would say Savior, and when speaking about His work he spoke about the "healing" where we would speak about salvation.

This uncovers an important aspect of the work of the Lord. The Psalmist wrote ". . . and forget not all his benefits . . . who healeth all thy diseases" (Psalm 103:2-3). This is part of the work of the Lord. Being saved includes the element of being healed of diseases; something that is wrong inside, as it was in the case of the leper. You will remember how the leper came to the Lord and said, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me whole." He said: "I will." And immediately the leper was cleansed. Many of us have felt in our own heart a sense of joy to know that when the Lord begins to work in us one of the things He does is to heal the diseases of our souls. You may wonder what would be a disease of the soul. Jealousy, envy, anger, hatred, any kind of malice, and any feeling wherein you are separating yourself from another person are really diseases of the soul.

For example, a person can be in such a state that he becomes critical of others. When he is critical of other people, it seems as though his heart and spirit get that habit until finally he becomes critical of everybody but his friends. Later, and this has happened over and over again, he becomes critical even of his friends and, finally, even of God. He easily becomes critical of anyone who preaches the Gospel. This is a disease, and being healed of this disease is like the leper being cleansed.

We can see another aspect of being saved when we think of what happened when they brought the man with the withered arm to the Lord Jesus Christ, and He restored the arm to its natural state; or when they brought a lame person to Him and He enabled the lame person to walk. This is being restored. This is also part of salvation, and it can happen to us. In another way, we can think about being saved as including the element of being reconciled to God after one has become an alien because of sin, or an enemy because of inward unbelief in his own heart.

The word "saved" includes everything that has ever been done for the believer or to the believer by Jesus Christ. We get some idea of what the Lord Jesus Christ does to needy persons when we read the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Here we can learn how the Lord Jesus Christ worked in people and for people by His grace and by His power, helping them and healing them, restoring and bringing them to God. Men have tried to understand this work of salvation, and in the course of their studies throughout history they have developed several doctrines that are designed to set out a description of what it means to be saved.

Justification refers to the experience of the removal of guilt. Everything that was between the soul and the Lord has been taken away so that actually, although the sinner has done wrong, his record is spotty and bad, Christ Jesus takes away the sin, removes the guilt, and in so doing removes from the believing sinner the fear of death. In other words, we are to think of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ as bringing pardon to the guilty sinner. Christ Jesus died as his substitute. Christ Jesus carried away his sins and so far as the believer is concerned that is one reason why his conscience can be at ease and his spirit can be

relieved.

Sanctification refers to the removal of the condition of sinfulness. The sinner may have in him all manner of habits and tendencies that he has cultivated in the course of his lifetime or that he has inherited. Because they are there he finds himself doing things he should not do. He finds himself doing things that are wrong. He may spend energy and time in trying to control this desire or that tendency, trying in one way or another to keep himself from being too terribly bad, because if he were to allow himself to go he would be more and more wrong in what he is doing. But now he can be delivered from all that. There can be a removal of the condition of sinfulness. There can be a removal of the power of sin. Sin may be there as long as he lives in this world in his human body but it will not have any power over the believer because of what Christ Jesus has done. He has delivered the believer from the bondage of sin. Being set free, believers sing "chords that were broken shall vibrate once more."

It is a wonderful thing that although a person may be naturally disposed to be selfish, he can be so affected that he becomes generous. While he may naturally be disposed to be quick tempered and irritable, he can be inwardly disposed to be gentle and patient. He can actually be changed – not because he is that good and not because he has learned what to do – but because God works in him through the Lord Jesus Christ, who is working in him to deliver him from the power of sin and from this bondage. That is variously set forth in the general idea of sanctification. The believer can actually be made inwardly by the grace of God and by the working of the Holy Spirit into a person who wants to be well pleasing in the sight of God.

Glorification is the removal of barrenness; the removal of emptiness in the life. In glorification the presence of sin is taken away because actually God fills the believer and surrounds him with the evidence of His grace and mercy until the very nature of death – or the things that belong to death – are taken away. Thus the believer is actually glorified. He has moved out of darkness into light. His natural condition would be one of darkness. He would not know for sure what to do, he would not know how to do it, and would not even want to do it; but all this can be transformed by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God. The believer can be so affected that whenever he wants to do anything, he wants to do it as pleasing to God. Not only will he want to do it, but he actually will do it; he will think in terms of pleasing his Lord in the course of the way he acts and what he does. That will affect the way he acts toward other people, and it will affect the way he acts about his money, and the way he acts in worship. This will affect him when it comes to the matter of prayer. In all of these things he can be actually made into a fruitful branch of the Lord Jesus Christ by the grace of God.

What we are talking about is a very simple matter: what does it mean to be saved? It means that where once I was in darkness, now I am in light. Where once I was in death, now I am in life; and where once I was weak, now I am strong. It is the contrast between the natural man, the way I was when I was born into this 'world, and the saved man; the way I am with Christ Jesus in me.

There is one more important thing to keep in mind about being saved: it is not something I do. It isn't some extra good thing I accomplish. That is not what being saved is. It is being taken by the Lord and helped into something I could never have accomplished by myself. The natural man is under condemnation, doomed because of his sin; there is no man who sinneth not and sin is with everybody. Some people feel it, and they feel guilty. They are in a state of condemnation, which keeps them away from God, and so they are in the dark.

When a person is saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ that person is forgiven. There is always joy and gladness of heart when the soul is forgiven. The natural man in his own thinking feels himself in the dark, but he doesn't know for sure which way to go. The saved man is in the light. He didn't make the light, but God brings the light. The light shines into his heart and brings him into a new life that is in Christ Jesus.

Sometimes people have asked me what difference it made, after I had been an unbeliever and then

became a believer. I find myself using this illustration: back in the days when I was an unbeliever, even in my teens and afterwards as a young man, I was very much in my own heart and soul like a little child in a big warehouse at night in the dark, alone, and with noises in the building. Does that describe to you a picture in which you could be scared? Well, I was. After I became a believer I was still in the dark so far as this world is concerned. There is a lot about it I still don't know. As a matter of fact, so far as all of life and all of eternity are concerned, while I am in this world, I know very, very little. But I am not alone. Someone holds my hand. It is still dark and the warehouse is still big and I don't know for sure what all is in it nor what is going to happen. There are noises I don't understand. But I am not alone. Someone holds me by the hand: that is what it means to me to be saved. Even in the time of darkness of this world I am actually walking with Him in the light of His Presence.

The natural man is in bondage to sinful habits. Any natural person during the course of his life, no matter how carefully he has controlled himself and no matter how well he has been brought up, will have about himself certain selfishness, and there will be certain pride, certain vanity and certain suspicion of other people. There will be jealousy of other folks, envy, and also such things as actual hatred and covetousness. The person who is saved has the Lord Jesus Christ with him delivering him from this bondage. Does that mean the believer will never sin? No, it does not mean that. But there is deliverance.

"These things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

The believer, the person who is trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ and has been received by and reconciled to God does not want to do wrong, but he may. His human nature may prompt him and he may fall into sin, but he is not alone. He has an Advocate who holds him and brings him before the Father and restores him to the Father.

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25).

The saved person is actually delivered from sinful habits. If any believer has anything clinging to him from the past, if he has some inward tendency or disposition other than that which is good, he should turn it over to the Lord. Christ can deliver him from it. The natural man may think of what is right; even if he cannot be sure of it all of the time, yet sometimes in his fumbling around he may even hit upon what is right, but then he will find out something. In the first place, he could not do right if he wanted to, and what is more he, generally speaking, does not want to, because oftentimes the very thing that is right would be to deny himself and to yield and to give in to God. This the natural man cannot do. That would be like giving his life, and he will hang on to it some way, which is his weakness. But the saved man has "Christ in you, the hope of glory." The natural man lives in isolation as I have talked about it. He is alone and he realizes he is alone. This means he will have all manner of mistaken ideas cropping up in him because he is inwardly so much in isolation. The saved man is never alone. Before he starts thinking in the morning the Lord is with him. All day long the Lord is with him. When he goes to sleep at night the Lord is with him and while he is sleeping the Lord is with him. "The Keeper of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps." And all of this – the contrast between the natural man and the saved man – is actually making contrast between hell and heaven.

The natural man has only the prospect of going out into the dark to be destroyed and the saved man has the prospect of going into a life to be saved to the glory of God.

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3).

The saved man has this confidence in Christ Jesus all the way through. No wonder Paul says that "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (the actual word is a new creation), old things have passed away, behold all things are become new." And so, when we follow this line of thought we have in mind that accepting the Lord Jesus Christ, trusting in Him, results in being saved from fears. You may be concerned for your loved ones – their fortunes, their health – but you can trust the Lord. You are saved from being overly burdened about these things. You can be saved from fear about business. The believing man can trust Almighty God not only because God may do something special for him, which He may do, but he is able to trust God because now he has in him the spirit that looks up into the face of God and knows that God is his Father and he can say to himself that if God spared not His own Son but freely gave Him up for us all, how will He not freely with Him give us all things?

And so, the saved man goes on in his business with confidence. The saved man is saved from the fear of sickness. Sickness may come – it will come to all people at one time or another – and a saved man can be sick as well as any other man – but the saved man is not burdened by this because Almighty God knows about it and He has promised him that he will not be tempted beyond that which he is able but God will with every temptation provide a way of escape that he may be able to bear it. Even such a big thing as being afraid for the whole country and for the whole world, a saved man can think in terms of the Lord Jesus Christ looking up into the face of His Father and remembering that His Father made the whole world and He controls the whole world and the saved man is free from fear of the future and from enemies of the present. In all these things he puts his hand in the Lord's hand, and knows that he is more than conqueror through the love of the Lord Jesus Christ because he is saved to have fellowship and communion with God; he is saved to have confident assurance about God. God will take care of him. He is saved with confidence about tomorrow; Almighty God knows what the days ahead will be like and will watch over him. The Lord will take him by the hand and lead him all the way. Actually being saved is being brought from death unto life by the grace and the power and the mercy of God.