

The Testimony to the Soul's Conversion

by Bishop W. F. Mallalieu

Bishop W. F. Mallalieu's sermon emphasizes the transformative experience of conversion through personal testimony and assurance of salvation.

Scripture: Isaiah 1:18, Isaiah 45:22, Jeremiah 29:12, Matthew 11:28, John 3:16, Acts 3:19, Acts 16:31, Romans 10:9, 2 Corinthians 5:17, 1 John 3:14

Topics: "Assurance Of Salvation", "Personal Conversion"

Description

Bishop W. F. Mallalieu preaches about the assurance of salvation and the transformative power of God's grace in the believer's life, emphasizing the need for a personal experience of pardon, justification, and regeneration. Methodism teaches that through conversion, one can be conscious of the threefold experience of pardon, justification, and regeneration, and that this personal knowledge is essential for a genuine relationship with God. The testimony of consciousness, intellect, and the witness of our own spirit play crucial roles in confirming one's salvation, as seen through the peace, joy, and love that come from being in Christ.

Transcript

I ask the blood-bought pardon sealed,

The liberty from sin,

The grace infused, the love revealed,

The kingdom fixed within.

My restless soul cries out, oppressed,

Impatient to be freed;

Nor can I, Lord, nor will I rest,

Till I am saved indeed.

Thou canst, thou wilt, I dare believe,

So arm me with thy power,

That I to sin may never cleave,

May never feel it more.

-- Charles Wesley.

Send us the Spirit of thy Son,

To make the depths of Godhead known,

To make us share the life divine;

Send him the sprinkled blood to apply;

Send him our souls to sanctify,

And show and seal us ever thine.

-- Charles Wesley.

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. -- 2 Cor. v, 17.

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. -- 1 John iii, 14.

When we speak of conversion, we mean, and this is the common acceptance of the term, that all that is included in the terms pardon, justification, and regeneration is included in the term conversion. Now, Methodism has constantly and strenuously declared that, in this experience, this threefold experience of pardon, justification, and regeneration, the one having the experience must be cognizant of the fact; and just at this point Methodism has differed with many most excellent Christian people who have claimed that it has not been within the scope of human knowledge to cognize either the fact of pardon, justification or regeneration; but the doubts and fears and uncertainty of these good people have not deterred Methodists from declaring that they know that they have passed from death unto life.

Methodists have held that there is a fourfold evidence of the experience of personal salvation involving the direct testimony of the Holy Spirit to the adoption of the regenerated soul into the heavenly family. First of all, there is the testimony of consciousness. The mind cognizes its own states and condition. It distinguishes between joy and sorrow, between pleasure and pain, between assurance and fear, between expectation and disappointment, between hope and despair. In the threefold experience already alluded to, joy takes the place of sorrow, pleasure takes the place of pain, assurance takes the place of fear, expectation takes the places of disappointment, and hope takes the place of despair. It is impossible that the mind in its normal condition should not distinguish these radically different conditions or states. Then, again, the Scriptures represent the change involved, as a change from darkness to light, from sickness to health, from death to life. From these various and striking illustrations the absolutely necessary inference is that the person who passes through these experiences must know that he has done so. His consciousness testifies to the reality of the experience. Or, if we use a short, plain, Saxon word, we say that our feelings are changed; we feel the peace, the joy, the comfort, and hope that we never knew while in a state of sin. With this newly-found experience the convert can but sing:

How happy every child of grace,
Who knows his sins forgiven!
"This earth," he cries, "is not my place,
I seek my place in heaven, --
A country far from mortal sight;
Yet O, by faith I see
The land of rest, the saints' delight,
The heaven prepared for me."
O, what a blessed hope is ours!
While here on earth we stay,
We more than taste the heavenly powers,
And antedate that day:
We feel the resurrection near,
Our life in Christ concealed,
And with his glorious presence here
Our earthen vessels filled.
O, would he more of heaven bestow,
And let the vessels break,
And let our ransomed spirits go
To grasp the God we seek;
In rapturous awe on him to gaze,
Who bought the sight for me;
And shout and wonder at his grace
Through all eternity!
-- Charles Wesley.

Certainly, it would be well if Christian people would more thoroughly familiarize themselves with the teaching of John Wesley in matters relating to personal religious experience. Let us notice a few of the many things he says concerning the testimony of our own consciousness to the fact of our conversion:

TESTIMONY OF OUR OWN SPIRITS

God has made us thinking beings, capable of perceiving what is present, and of reflecting or looking back on what is past. In particular, we are capable of perceiving what passes in our own hearts or lives; of knowing what we feel or do; and that either while it passes, or when it is past. This we mean when we say that man is a conscious being; he hath a consciousness, or inward perception, both of things present and past, relating to himself, of his own tempers, and outward behavior. -- Wesley's Sermons, Vol, II, p. 101.

WITNESS OF OUR OWN SPIRIT

The immediate effects of justification are, the peace of God, a "peace that passeth all understanding," and a "rejoicing in hope of the glory of God," "with joy unspeakable and full of glory." -- Wesley's Works, Vol. II, p. 385.

THE WITNESS OF OUR OWN SPIRIT, AND THIS ANTEDATES ANY WORKS OF OUR OWN

It is a consciousness of our having received, in and by the Spirit of adoption, the tempers mentioned in the Word of God, as belonging to his adopted children; even a loving heart towards God, and towards all mankind; hanging with childlike confidence on God our Father, desiring nothing but him, casting all our care upon him, and embracing every child of man with earnest, tender affection. -- Wesley's Works, Vol. I, p. 87.

TESTIMONY OF OUR OWN CONSCIOUSNESS, OR THE WITNESS OF OUR OWN SPIRIT

"Know ye not your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you?" It is by no means clear that they did not know this by a direct as well as a remote witness. How is it proved that they did not know it, first by an inward consciousness; and then by love, joy, and peace? -- Wesley's Sermons, Vol. II, p. 98.

THE WITNESS OR TESTIMONY OF OUR OWN SPIRIT

That no man can be justified, and not know it, appears farther from the nature of the thing; for faith after repentance is ease after pain, rest after toil, light after darkness. -- Wesley's Works, Vol. V, p. 195.

WITNESS OF OUR OWN SPIRIT AT TIME OF CONVERSION

And first, as to the witness of our spirit. The soul as intimately and evidently perceives when it loves, delights, and rejoices in God, as when it loves and delight' in anything on earth. And it can no more doubt whether it loves, delights, and rejoices or no, than whether it exists or no. If, therefore, this be just reasoning, he that now loves God, that delights and rejoices in him with a humble joy and holy delight and an obedient love, is a child of God. But I thus love, delight, and rejoice in God; therefore I am a child of God -- Wesley's Sermons, Vol. I p. 88.

WITNESS OF OUR SPIRIT AT CONVERSION

How, I pray, do you distinguish day from night? How do you distinguish light from darkness, or the light of a star, or a glimmering taper, from the light of the noonday sun? Is there not an inherent, obvious, essential difference between the one and the other? And do you not immediately and directly perceive that difference, provided your senses are rightly disposed? In like manner there is an inherent, essential difference between spiritual light and spiritual darkness; and between the light wherewith the Sun of righteousness shines upon our heart, and that glimmering light which arises from "sparks of our own

kindling;" and this difference also is immediately and directly perceived if our spiritual senses are rightly disposed. -- Wesley's Sermons, Vol. I, pp. 91, 92.

Closely following the testimony of our own consciousness, our own feelings, is what may be called the testimony of the intellect. In the Word of God there are certain conditions made known that are essential to salvation. In connection with these conditions we find the promises of God again and again repeated, assuring us in the most positive and explicit terms that the soul that complies with them will surely come to the experience of salvation. It is perfectly wonderful how gracious, emphatic, and abundant are the promises of God, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament:

Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else. -- Isa. xlv, 22.

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. -- Matt. xi, 28.

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. -- Isa. lv, 7.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. -- Acts xvi, 31.

Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart, and I will be found of you, saith the Lord. -- Jer. xxix, 12, 13.

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. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. -- John iii, 16, 17.

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. -- Rom., 9, 10, 11.

Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. -- Acts iii, 19.

Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. -- Isa. i, 18.

It is evident that natural temperament has much to do with our personal religious experience. We have the emotional and the intellectual. The emotional laughs or cries easily and frequently; the purely intellectual seldom laughs or cries. One acts on the impulse of the moment, the other acts only after investigation and consideration. Neither ought to expect an identical experience with the other when converted. This would be altogether unreasonable. But let either take the promises that have just been quoted, and go to God with them in the all-prevailing name of Jesus Christ, and, in answer to simple confiding faith, conversion will follow.

The intellectual temperament may not manifest the exuberant and exultant joy of the emotional temperament, but the person having it will just as certainly rest in the assurance that his sins are forgiven, for he has complied with the Divine conditions. It must be that an honest and sincere soul knows whether

or not he has complied with these plain and possible conditions; then, if he has, he has a right to believe, and say, this belief and affirmation being based on the sure promise of God, that his sins are forgiven, he is justified and regenerated, and has been changed from an outcast to a son, from an alien to a fellow-citizen of the saints, and has become a member of the household of God. This testimony is the result of a purely intellectual process, with absolute surrender to Christ and with unwavering faith as its foundation and inspiration. But it should be remembered that, often, when salvation is experienced in this way, the calm and sometimes icy methods of the intellect give way to wonderful manifestations of joy and gladness, that can only find expression in shouts, and tears, and smiles, and jubilant songs.

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