

The Doubting Soul

by Philip Doddridge

The sermon emphasizes the importance of sincere conversion, true repentance, and genuine faith in Christ, warning against false peace and the dangers of self-deception.

Scripture: Psalm 139:23, Jeremiah 17:10, John 14:21, John 16:8, Romans 6:6, 2 Thessalonians 1:11

Topics: "True Conversion", "Repentance Faith"

Description

Philip Doddridge preaches about the importance of self-examination in determining true conversion, cautioning against mistaking transient religious impressions for genuine faith. He emphasizes the need to sincerely assess one's views of sin and Christ, the willingness to surrender the heart to Christ's service, and the necessity of a deep repentance and faith that leads to a transformed life. Doddridge stresses that true conversion involves a complete surrender to Christ, acknowledging one's need for Him and relying on His righteousness for salvation.

Transcript

1. Transient impressions liable to be mistaken for conversion, which would be a fatal error.--2. General scheme for self-examination.--3. Particular inquiries--what views there have been of sin?--4. What views there have been of Christ?--5. As to the need the soul has of him;--6. And its willingness to receive him with a due surrender of heart to his service.--7. Nothing short of this sufficient. The soul submitting to Divine examination the sincerity of its faith and repentance.

1. IN consequence of all the serious things which have been said in the former chapters, I hope it will be no false presumption to imagine that some religious impressions may be made on hearts which had never felt them before; or may be revived where they have formerly grown cold and languid. Yet I am very sensible, and I desire that you may be so, how great danger there is of self-flattery on this important head, and how necessary it is to caution men against too hasty a conclusion that they are really converted, because they have felt some warm emotions on their minds, and have reformed the gross irregularities of their former conduct.

A mistake here may be infinitely fatal; it may prove the occasion of that false peace which shall lead a man to bless himself in his own heart, and to conclude himself secure, while "all the threatenings and curses of God's law" are sounding in his ears, and lie indeed directly against him: (Deut. 19:19,20) while in the mean time he applies to himself a thousand promises in which he has no share; which may prove therefore like generous wines to a man in a high fever, or strong opiates to one in a lethargy.

"The stony ground hearers received the word with joy," and a promising harvest seemed to be springing up; yet "it soon withered away," (Matt. 13:5,6) and no reaper filled his arms with it. Now, that this may not be the case with you, that all my labors and yours hitherto may not be lost, and that a vain dream of security and happiness may not plunge you deeper into misery and ruin, give me leave to lead you into a serious inquiry into your own heart, that so you may be better able to judge of your ease, and to distinguish between what is at most being only near the kingdom of heaven, and becoming indeed a member of it. 2.

Now this depends upon the sincerity of your faith in Christ, when faith is taken in the largest extent, as explained above: that is, as comprehending repentance, and that steady purpose of new and universal obedience, of which, wherever it is real, faith will assuredly be the vital principle. Therefore, to assist you in judging of your state, give me leave to ask you, or rather to entreat you to ask yourself, what views you have had, and now have, of sin and of Christ? and what your future purposes are with regard to your conduct in the remainder of life that may lie before you?

I shall not reason largely upon the several particulars I suggest under these heads, but rather refer you to your own reading and observation, to judge how agreeable they are to the word of God, the great rule by which our characters must quickly be tried, and our eternal state unalterably determined. 3. Inquire seriously, in the first place, "what views you have had of sin, and what sentiments you have felt in your soul with regard to it?" There was a time when it wore a flattering aspect, and made a fair, enchanting appearance, so that all your heart was charmed with it, and it was the very business of your life to practice it.

But you have since been undeceived. You have felt it "bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder." (Prov. 23:32) You have beheld it with an abhorrence far greater than the delight which it ever gave you. So far it is well it is thus with every true penitent, and with some, I fear, who are not of that number. Let me therefore inquire farther, whence arose this abhorrence? Was it merely from a principle of self-love? Was it merely because you had been wounded by it? Was it merely because you had thereby brought condemnation and ruin upon your own soul?

Was there no sense of its deformity, of its baseness, of its malignity, as committed against the blessed God, considered as a glorious, a bountiful, and a merciful Being? Were you never pierced by the apprehension of its vile ingratitude? And as for those purposes which have arisen in your heart against it, let me beseech you to reflect how they have been formed, and how they have hitherto been executed. Have they been universal? Have they been resolute? And yet, amidst all that resolution, have they been humble?

When you have declared war with sin, was it with every sin? And is it an irreconcilable war which you determine, by divine grace, to push on till you have entirely conquered it, or die in the attempt? And are you accordingly active in your endeavors to subdue and destroy it? If so, what are "the fruits worthy of repentance which you bring forth?" (Luke 3:8) It does not, I hope, all flow away in floods of grief. Have you "ceased to do evil?" Are you "learning to do well?" (Isa. 1:16,17) Doth your reformation show that you repent of your sins? or do your renewed relapses into sin prove that you repent even of what you call your repentance?

Have you an inward abhorrence of all sin, and an unfeigned zeal against it? And doth that produce a care to guard against the occasions of it, and temptations to it? Do you watch against the circumstances that

have ensnared you? and do you particularly double your guard against "that sin which does most easily beset you?" (Heb. 12:1) Is that laid aside, that the Christian race may be run: laid aside with firm determination that you will return to it no more, that you hold no more parley with it, that you will never take another step toward it? 4.

Permit me also farther to inquire, "what your views of Christ have been? What think you of him, and your concern with him?" Have you been fully convinced that there must be a correspondence settled between him and your soul? And do you see and feel, that you are not only to pay him a kind of distant homage, and transient compliment, as a very wise, benevolent, and excellent person, for whose name and memory you have a reverence; but that, as he lives and reigns, as he is ever near you, and always observing you, so you must look to him, must approach him, must humbly transact business with him, and that business of the highest importance, on which your salvation depends? 5.

You have been brought to inquire, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the most high God? (Mic. 6:6) And once perhaps you were thinking of sacrifices which your own stores might have been sufficient to furnish out. Are you now convinced they will not suffice; and that you must have recourse to the Lamb which God has provided? Have you had a view of "Jesus as taking away the sin of the world?" (John 1:29) "as made a sin-offering for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him?" (2 Cor. 5:21) Have you viewed him as perfectly righteous in himself; and, despairing of being justified by any righteousness of your own, have you "submitted to the righteousness of God?" (Rom. 10:3) Has your heart ever been brought to a deep conviction of this important truth, that if ever you are saved at all, it must be through Christ; that if ever God extends mercy to you at all, it must be for his sake; that if ever you are fixed in the temple of God above, you must stand there as an everlasting trophy of that victory which Christ has gained over the powers of hell, who would otherwise have triumphed over you? 6.

Our Lord says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." (Isai. 45:22) He says, "If I be lifted up I will draw all men unto me." (John 12:32) Have you looked to him as the only Savior, have you been drawn unto him by that sacred magnet, the attracting influence of his dying love? Do you know what it is to come to Christ, as a poor "weary and heavy laden sinner, that you may find rest?" (Matt. 11:28) Do you know what it is, in a spiritual sense, "to eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man;" (John 6:53) that is, to look upon Christ crucified as the great support of your soul, and to feel a desire after bitterness as the appetite of nature after its necessary food?

Have you known what it is cordially to surrender yourself to Christ, as a poor creature whom love has made his property? Have you committed your immortal soul to him, that he may purify and save it; that he may govern it by the dictates of his word and the influences of his Spirit; that he may use it for his glory; that he may appoint it to what exercises and discipline he pleases, while it dwells here in flesh; and that he may receive it at death, and fix it among those spirits, who with perpetual songs of praise surround his throne, and are his servants forever?

Have you heartily consented to this? And do you, on this account of the matter, renew your content! Do you renew it deliberately and determinately, and feel your whole soul, as it were, saying Amen, while you read this? If this be the case, then I can, with great pleasure, give you, as it were, the right hand of fellowship, and salute and embrace you as a sincere disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ; as One who is delivered from the powers of darkness, and is "translated into the kingdom of the Son of God." (Col. 1:13) I can then salute you in the Lord, as one to whom, as a minister of Jesus, I am commissioned and charged

to speak comfortably, and tell you not that I absolve you from your sins, for it is a small matter to be judged of man's judgment, but that the blessed God himself absolveth you: that you are one to whom he hath said in his Gospel, and is continually saying, "Your sins are forgiven you;" (Luke 7:48) therefore go in peace, and take the comfort of it. 7.

But if you are a stranger to these experiences, and to this temper which I have now described, the great work is yet undone: you are an impenitent and unbelieving sinner, and "the wrath of God abideth on you." (John 3:36) However you may have been awakened- and alarmed, whatever resolutions you may have formed for amending your life, how right soever your notions may be, how pure soever your forms of worship, how ardent soever your zeal, how severe soever your mortification, how humane soever your temper, how inoffensive soever your life may be, I can speak no comfort to you.

Vain are all your religious hopes, if there has not been a cordial humiliation before the presence of God for all your sins; if there has not been this avowed war declared against every thing displeasing to God; if there has not been this sense of your need of Christ, and of your ruin without him; if there has not been this earnest application to him, this surrender of your soul into his hands by faith, this renunciation of yourself, that you might fix on Him the anchor of your hope: if there has not been this unreserved deification of yourself, to be at all times, and in all respects, the faithful servant of God through him; and if you do not with all this acknowledge, that you are an unprofitable servant, who have no other expectations of acceptance or of pardon but only through his righteousness and blood, and through the riches of divine grace in Him; I repeat it to you again, that all your hopes are vain, and you are "building on the sand." (Matt. 7:26) The house you have already raised must be thrown down to the ground, and the foundation be removed and laid anew, or you, and all your hopes, will shortly be swept away with it, and buried under it in everlasting ruin.

The soul submitting to Divine Examination the Sincerity of its Repentance and Faith.

Lord God! thou searchest all hearts. and triest the reins of the children of men! (Jer. 17:10) Search me, O Lord, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Psa. 139:23,24) Doth not conscience, Lord! testify in thy presence, that my repentance and faith are such as have been described, or at least that it is my earnest prayer that they may be so? Come, therefore, O thou blessed Spirit! who art the author of all grace and consolation, and work this temper more fully in my soul.

O represent sin to mine eyes in all its most odious colors, that I may feel a mortal and irreconcilable hatred to it! O represent the majesty and mercy of the blessed God in such a manner that my heart may be alarmed, and that it may be melted! Smite the rock, that the waters may flow: (Psa. 78:20) waters of genuine, undissembled, and filial repentance! Convince me, O thou blessed Spirit! of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment! (John 16:8) Show me that I have undone myself; but that my help is found in God alone, (Hos. 13:9) in God through Christ, in whom alone he will extend compassion and help to me!

According to thy peculiar office, take of Christ and show it unto me. (John 16:15) Show me his power to save! Show me his willingness to exert that power I teach my faith to behold him as extended on the cross, with open arms, with a pierced, bleeding side; and so telling me, in the most forcible language, what room there is in his very heart for me! May I know what it is to have my whole heart subdued by love; so subdued as to be crucified with him; (Rom. 6:6) to be dead to sin and dead to the world, but alive unto

God. through Jesus Christ. (Rom. 6:11) In his power and love may I confide!

To him may I without any reserve commit my spirit! His image may I bear! His laws may I observe! His service may I pursue! And may I remain, through time and eternity, a monument of the efficacy of his Gospel, and a trophy of his victorious grace! "O blessed God! if there be any thing wanting towards constituting me a sincere Christian, discover it to me, and work it in me! Beat down, I beseech thee, every false and presumptuous hope, how costly soever that building may have been which it thus laid in ruins, and how proud soever I may have been of its vain ornaments!

Let me know the worst of my case, be that knowledge ever so distressing; and if there be remaining danger, O let my heart be fully sensible of it, sensible while yet there is a remedy! "If there be any secret sin yet lurking in my soul, which I have not sincerely renounced, discover it to me, and rend it out of my heart, though it may have shot its roots ever so deep, and have wrapped them all around it, so that every nerve shall be pained by the separation! Tear it away, O Lord, by a hand graciously severe!

And by degrees, yea, Lord, by speedy advances, go on, I beseech thee, to perfect what is still lacking in my faith. (1 Thess. 3:10) Accomplish in me all the good pleasure of thy goodness. (2 Thess. 1:11) Enrich me, O Heavenly Father, with all the graces of thy Spirit; form me to the complete image of thy dear Son; and then, for his sake, come unto me, and manifest thy gracious presence in my soul, (John, 14:21,28) till it is ripened for that state of glory for which all these operations are intended to prepare it Amen."

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/philip-doddridge/the-doubting-soul/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net