

The Believer's Review of His Christian State

by Thomas Reade

Thomas Reade's sermon encourages believers to reflect on their Christian state, emphasizing self-examination, reliance on God's grace, and the pursuit of holiness amidst life's challenges.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 8:2, 1 Samuel 16:7, Psalm 23:5, Psalm 51:10, Matthew 12:36, Romans 7:24, 1 Corinthians 10:31, Galatians 5:6, James 2:26

Topics: "Christian Growth", "Spiritual Reflection"

Description

Thomas Reade preaches on the believer's review of their Christian state, emphasizing the importance of reflecting on one's faith journey, acknowledging both blessings and trials as opportunities for growth and dependence on God. The sermon delves into the experiences of true believers who long for holiness, struggle with indwelling sin, and find solace in Christ's grace and power. It highlights the need for self-examination, genuine faith, and love for Christ as the foundation of Christian actions and conversations, urging believers to seek continual growth in faith, love, and obedience.

Transcript

69. THE BELIEVER'S REVIEW OF HIS CHRISTIAN STATE

"Remember how the Lord your God led you through the wilderness for forty years, humbling you and testing you to prove your character, and to find out whether or not you would really obey his commands." Deut. 8:2

Thousands live with no appreciation of the hand that supports them. They revel amid the bounties of Providence; and rebel against his chastening rod. They "regard not the work of the Lord," nor consider "the operation of his hands." "God is not in all their thoughts." Not so, the true believer in Jesus. In prosperity, he can say with David; "You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You welcome me as a guest, anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings." And with him, he can also say in adversity; "I know, O Lord, that your judgments are right, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me."

In the Psalms of David, we find all the varied experience of a child of God. The mere religionist knows nothing of the internal workings of the renewed mind. The difference is indeed great, between the outward form, and the inward power of godliness. The former, while destitute of the latter, is like the body without the soul; it is a lifeless carcass. Hence we find David always breathing after the quickening influence of the

Spirit. The hundred and nineteenth Psalm is full of these divine breathings. As David was a man after God's own heart, so he was made well acquainted with his own heart. He abhorred the idols of the heathen. He never fell into the sin of idolatry; yet he could exclaim with grief; "My soul cleaves unto the dust; quicken me according to your word;" and with brokenness of heart confess, "I have sinned against the Lord."

This is the common complaint of all true Christians. They want an entire conformity to the mind of God. They pant after universal holiness. They labor to get their affections supremely fixed upon Christ and heaven. They long for the complete victory over indwelling sin, and the perishing vanities of the world. Yet, they find, to their inexpressible grief, that when they would do good, evil is present with them; not indeed as a thing indulged, but as mixing itself with all their aims and desires, so that they are constrained to cry out, "Woe is me! for I am undone." "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" They feel a force drawing them down to earth, when they would soar above.

This experience greatly humbles the Christian pilgrim, while traveling through the wilderness. He sees that he has no righteousness of his own; that of himself he can do nothing; and that it is of the Lord alone, that he has either righteousness or strength. This conviction of inward pollution, unseen by the eye of man, drives him to the blood of sprinkling. It makes Christ unspeakably precious. He is fervent in supplication for the supply of the Spirit, through the intercession of his great High Priest; and feeling his inability to think one good thought, or exercise one holy affection, without the grace and power of Jesus, he sits daily at his feet, to hear his word, to receive out of his fullness, to imbibe his spirit, and to copy his example.

Such is the experience and practice, not of one, but of all the faithful servants of Jehovah. They have many trials; for, "many are the afflictions of the righteous," but they have also many consolations. Thus writes Paul, "All praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the source of every mercy and the God who comforts us. He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When others are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us."

Oh! that I may be found among these chosen vessels of the Lord. I have to mourn over deadness, lukewarmness, and earthly-mindedness; though, through grace, I abhor these evils! I am grieved that my heart is so cold, when God is so kind! Yes, I am grieved, that I grieve so little. What a paradox is my experience! In the midst of conflict, this is my comfort; when I am sensible of my weakness, and lean upon Christ, then I am strong- when I am tried, and trust wholly in the Lord, then I am supported- when I am sorrowful, through manifold temptations, and look unto Jesus, then I am exceeding joyful. O! what a blessed religion is the religion of Jesus Christ, when it has its empire in the heart; when the Redeemer is enthroned in the affections; when the will is brought into a willing subjection to the Prince of Peace.

It is profitable to take a retrospective view of the path of life; to retrace the various movements of Providence; the many vicissitudes of this chequered scene. This will help to strengthen faith, as well as to deepen humility. Moses, in the book of Deuteronomy, records the Lord's mercies, and Israel's transgressions, to awaken the gratitude, and to promote the humiliation of the Church in the wilderness. David, in his songs of Zion, recapitulates the dealings of the Lord with his people, "so the next generation might know them--even the children not yet born--that they in turn might teach their children. So each generation can set its hope anew on God, remembering his glorious miracles and obeying his commands. Then they will not be like their ancestors--stubborn, rebellious, and unfaithful, refusing to give their hearts to God." How good it is, when the dealings of the Lord are handed down from generation to generation; when his praises are sung by children's children.

The review of our Christian state is both humbling and elevating. When we look at the rock where we were hewn; and at the Rock on which we are placed, we may well exclaim, "What has God wrought!" From the heart every true believer can say- Blessed Lord, with deepest abasement of soul, I desire to approach your divine Majesty. In myself, I have nothing but sin. In how many ways have I offended you. My conscience testifies against me. My own heart condemns me. When I contemplate your Holiness, Justice, and Truth, must I not fear before You? But, in the midst of the throne, I behold "a Lamb slain;" I hear a voice of mercy proceeding from it; "God is just, and the justifier of him which believes in Jesus. " "Salvation is of the Lord." I behold, by this revelation of grace, a way of access opened to poor perishing sinners, through faith in the blood of the Lamb. Lord, give me faith in your dear Son. Enable me to cast myself, without reserve, upon your covenanted mercies in Christ Jesus. In him, alone, is eternal life. In him, is treasured up grace, mercy, and peace. Oh! for a heart to believe unto righteousness. This heart is your gift, through the operation of the Holy Spirit. You know my wickedness, and wretchedness, my frailties and follies, my helplessness, and total alienation from you, through original and actual transgression. You know from what height of happiness I am fallen; into what depth of misery I am plunged.

Oh! sovereign love! Oh! matchless grace, which pitied me in my lost estate. To redeem my soul from hell, the Eternal Word becomes incarnate, bears my griefs, carries my sorrows, is wounded for my transgressions, is bruised for mine iniquities, and dies upon the cross, being made a curse for me. This is a mystery which heavenly minds cannot fathom; but which can be received into the heart by faith.

How precious is saving faith. It is the hand which receives the gift of grace; the hand which places the crown on the head of Jesus, ascribing glory and honor to the Lamb who was slain. Through faith, I am complete in Christ. Through faith in his blood, all my sins are forgiven. Through faith in his righteousness, I have peace with God. But when I review my Christian privileges, I must put to my heart, an all-important question: Have I true faith, "the faith of God's elect?" Jesus has said, "By their fruits you shall know them." "The tree is known by his fruit " Here, then, is an unerring criterion, whereby to form a judgment of my real state in the sight of God. I must, then, examine myself whether I am in the faith.

What are the fruits which I habitually bring forth? What is the general tenor of my thoughts? When sinful thoughts arise, do I cherish them? Am I fond of retaining them? Or, can I say, in sincerity, I hate every sinful thought, affection, and desire. Have I obtained the mastery over my imaginations, so as to be able to suppress them when contrary to purity and holiness? Alas! they struggle to gain the mastery. Like a bold enemy, they rally again and again, until I am sometimes ready to cry out with David; "I shall perish one day by the hand of Saul." But, at these seasons, I find prayer a never-failing weapon, which puts to flight the armies of the aliens; and thus proves the truth of that gracious promise; "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me."

Have I delight in communion with God, in secret retirement, meditation, reading the Scriptures, and prayer? Can I say with humility, I do delight in these seasons of retirement, when, apart from the noisy world, I can hold sweet communion with the Father of spirits? But alas! I do not always enjoy that sweet and soul-enlivening communion with God, which I long and pray for. I have to lament over much unbelief, coldness of affection, and wandering thoughts. Still, though often discouraged, through the workings of indwelling sin, I would not give up these secret retirements. I am convinced, that no true happiness can be found, but in God. No salvation, but in Christ. No strength to resist sin, and grow in heavenly-mindedness, but through the Spirit. For this reason, Satan tries hard to drive me from a throne of grace, well knowing the power of prayer-

"For Satan trembles when he sees,
The weakest saint upon his knees."

I will therefore wait upon God, trusting to his promise, that he will never leave me, nor forsake me; but cause the light of his countenance to shine upon me, that I may be filled with joy unspeakable, and full of glory; and be able to say, like Peter, at another manifestation, "It is good for me to be here."

AM I CAREFUL OF MY WORDS?

Through divine grace, I have been preserved from corrupt conversation, from lightly using the sacred name of God, or venting unkind and uncharitable expressions, in spleen or anger. But, oh! what a load of guilt lies upon me for "idle words," those multiplied sins of the tongue. Though cheerful conversation is innocent, when it does not degenerate into levity, yet the Christian has need to guard the door of his lips, when he remembers the words of his Lord; "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment for by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned."

From this declaration of Christ, it is evident that words are declarative of our true spiritual state. "By your words you shall be justified." James expresses the same of works; "By works a man is justified." It is the same as if they had said, "The tree is known by his fruit." The meritorious cause of justification is the righteousness of Christ, apprehended by faith, which is the instrument; while good, works are the fruit which evidence and declare our being justified in the sight of God; for, "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

Surely, I have cause to cry out with the publican; "God be merciful to me a sinner." If I were to be judged, only for the words which I have spoken from childhood to old age, oh! how could I appear before the all-seeing, heart-searching God? David felt the force of this truth, "You God see me," when he penned his beautiful Psalm; "O Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my every thought when far away. You chart the path ahead of me and tell me where to stop and rest. Every moment you know where I am. You know what I am going to say even before I say it, Lord."

Do I love, when suitable opportunities occur, to talk upon religious subjects, not controversially, but experimentally and practically? Am I desirous, at all times, to render conversation profitable and instructive, good to the use of edifying? Is Jesus, that endearing name, often on my tongue, not from mere profession, or vain display, but from a heart-felt love to Him, whom angels worship, and whom saints adore? "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." Can we imagine Paul to have been in the circle of Christian believers for weeks and months, and never to have dwelt upon the theme nearest his heart- the dying love of Christ, except when engaged in the act of public preaching? And yet, alas! how seldom do some ministers of the gospel make Jesus the Alpha and the Omega of their discourses, either publicly, or, like the Apostle, from "house to house." May not Jesus say to such, "I have somewhat against you, because you have left your first love?" Or, rather, "because you are destitute of the first love, which was manifested by the warm-hearted members of my primitive Church?" Both ministers and people have cause for deep humiliation on this account. "Those who honor me," says the Almighty, "I will honor." "If we deny him, he also will deny us."

Lord, make me faithful. Preserve me from false-heartedness and faint-heartedness. Keep me from the extremes of vainglory, and the fear of man. Clothe me with humility.

Do I seize opportunities for speaking a word in season; either of reproof, exhortation, or encouragement? A consciousness of my own depravity, mixed with an undue feeling of shame, often keeps me from being faithful in the performance of this duty. To speak about Christ to worldly people is difficult; but not impracticable, when the truth is spoken in love. Nothing wins its way to the heart so much as genuine Christian love, which is ever clothed with humility. It often disarms the violence of opposition; and disposes the worldling to listen to the voice of reproof; yes, even to confess the error of his way. O! that I may have grace to perform this, and every other self-denying duty; leaving consequences with God.

HOW ARE MY ACTIONS IN GENERAL?

If there are none that are openly vicious and immoral; or, such as bring a scandal on religion; or, make the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme; to God be all the praise. I may be punctually observant of all outward duties, which respect the sanctuary and the family; be chiefly associated with religious people; be actively engaged in promoting religious institutions; and yet be destitute of love to Christ, without which, all my doings are worth nothing. It is the principle, which gives the quality to the action. This our Lord has clearly declared in the sermon on the Mount.

Let me examine into this matter. When I perform the various commanded duties, is it from a desire to be seen of men? Or, does it spring from the force of education, habit, and custom? Or, from a change of sentiment, through the influence of the circle in which I move? If so, I am a tree without fruit.

True faith works by love; love to Christ and love to holiness. It is most important, that this be well established in the mind; that this point be settled on Scripture grounds. If I perform my duties from a principle of love to God, and delight in Him, then I have a clear scriptural evidence that I am his; for if I love God, it is because he has first loved me. Then I have a clear proof, that I have a saving interest in the work of Christ's redemption; for love is the fruit of faith, and the solid evidence of my acceptance with God; for whom he justifies, them he also glorifies; and what is our glory, but to be like him here in holiness, and to dwell with him in glory everlasting. Surely these will be the meditations and aspirations of every true believer in Jesus.

Blessed Lord! create in me these holy, heavenly desires, and endeavors to please you. Kindle the flame of love, and cause it to burn continually on the altar of my heart. Let it be like the fire of the sanctuary, which was never to go out. Increase my faith and love, my hope and desire, my ardent longings after you. O make me sincere, on every review of my Christian state and character. Make my heart pure; freed from unhallowed affections, and sinful imaginations. Let my conversation be pious and profitable; my actions be agreeable to your will, in every relation and department of life. Implant right principles in my soul, and keep me, through the merits of Christ, and the grace of the Spirit, to your everlasting kingdom.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/thomas-reade/the-believers-review-of-his-christian-state/>

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