

**OUR GREAT  
REDEEMER**



# OUR GREAT REDEEMER

*365 Days with J. C. Ryle*

Compiled by Bryan Schrank



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*Our Great Redeemer*  
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## The Life and Ministry of J. C. Ryle

When I came to pastor my current church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 1986, only a few of the people in our church were reading spiritual classics.<sup>1</sup> At a midweek evening class I was teaching, I held up a seven-volume set of *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels* by J. C. Ryle (1816–1900), encouraging fathers to read portions of these volumes as a starting point for families to engage in daily, intentional, God-glorifying family worship.<sup>2</sup> To my delight, over 150 families signed up. Soon, many in our church were talking about these books. Sixteen years later, a woman told me that she was still reading Ryle’s commentary on the Gospels and that every time she reaches the end of the Gospel of John, she starts again in the Gospel of Matthew. In his writing, Ryle has precisely the kind of spiritual appeal and broad readability that encourages readers to come back for more.

J. C. Ryle was an “evangelical champion,” wrote the nineteenth-century Baptist preacher C. H. Spurgeon, and “one of the bravest and best of men.”<sup>3</sup> Ryle was born in Macclesfield, a town in northwest England, on May 10, 1816.<sup>4</sup> The son of a wealthy banker, he became a good

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1. This preface is adapted from Joel R. Beeke, *Reformed Preaching: Proclaiming God’s Word from the Heart of the Preacher to the Heart of His People* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2018), 326–28, 31; and Joel R. Beeke and Douglas Bond, *Evangelical Heroes*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2023), 1–13. Used with permission.

2. J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, 7 vols. (1856–1869; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2009).

3. Cited in Gene Fedele, *Heroes of the Faith* (Gainesville, Fla.: Bridge-Logos, 2003), 204.

4. On Ryle, see M. Guthrie Clark, *John Charles Ryle, 1816–1900: First Bishop of Liverpool* (London: Church Book Room Press, n.d.); Ian D. Farley, *J. C. Ryle, First Bishop of Liverpool: A Study in Mission amongst the Masses* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2000); Marcus L. Loane, *John Charles Ryle, 1816–1900* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1983); J. I. Packer, *Faithfulness and Holiness: The Witness of J. C. Ryle* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2002); Bennett W. Rogers, *A Tender Lion: The Life, Ministry, and Message of J. C. Ryle* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2019); Eric Russel, *J. C. Ryle: That Man of Granite with the Heart of a Child* (Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2008); J. C. Ryle, *J. C. Ryle, a Self-Portrait: A Partial Autobiography*, ed. Peter Toon (Swengel, Pa.: Reiner, 1975); Peter Toon and Michael Smout, *John Charles Ryle: Evangelical Bishop* (Cambridge: J. Clarke, 1976).

scholar and athlete (he was a skilled cricketer) at the University of Oxford and appeared destined for greatness in the political or financial world of Victorian England. In his early years, Ryle absorbed his parents' elitist values without serious consideration of the things of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ. But God had a different calling for his life. In 1841 his father's wealth disappeared when the bank failed. Overnight, the family lost their money, their home, and their property valued at a half million pounds (over fifty million dollars today). For the next twenty years, Ryle assisted his father in paying off his family's massive debt.

He might have utterly despaired had not God already introduced him to more enduring riches. In the summer of 1837, while shooting, he swore out loud and was rebuked by a friend, who urged him to "think, repent, and pray." He began to do so, particularly when he fell ill later that year. One Lord's Day afternoon, he attended public worship and passed from death to life while hearing the Scripture lesson slowly and distinctly read from Ephesians 2: "By grace—are ye saved—through faith—and that not of ourselves—it is the gift of God."<sup>5</sup> Later in life, Ryle said that the truths of the sinfulness of sin, Christ's perfect substitution for sinners, the necessity of the new birth by the Holy Spirit, the indispensability of a life of holiness, the necessity of coming out of the world, and the supremacy of the Bible "seemed to flash on me like a sunbeam in the winter of 1837.... Nothing to my mind can account for it, but the free sovereign grace of God."<sup>6</sup>

Enriched in Christ and impoverished among men, Ryle found a new vocation. In 1842 he was ordained to the ministry of the Church of England and served country parishes in Suffolk. From 1844 to 1861, he was the rector of Helmingham (pop. 300), and from 1861 to 1880, the vicar of Stadbroke (pop. 1,300). His first wife, Matilda, died in 1848 after only three years of marriage; his second wife, Jessie, was in nearly constant poor health and died in 1860 after ten years of marriage. He married a third time in 1861 to Henrietta, who died in 1889, eleven years before Ryle passed away in 1900. Ryle also suffered from frequent ill health and prolonged financial troubles. Nevertheless, in 1880, at the age of sixty-four, he was appointed as the first bishop of Liverpool

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5. Toon and Smout, *John Charles Ryle*, 26–27.

6. Quoted in Packer, *Faithfulness and Holiness*, 28.

through the intervention of none other than Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli. Ryle served in Liverpool for the next twenty years.

Ryle was a devoted shepherd, a gifted writer, and a very effective administrator. As a bishop, he focused on raising the pay scale and pensions of pastors instead of building a cathedral. He promoted reading the Puritans and similar evangelical preachers from the eighteenth century. He became a leader of evangelical Anglicanism. Today, Ryle is best known for the more than two hundred tracts and twenty books he authored (many tracts at that time were booklets of fifteen to thirty pages). Perhaps most popular today, in addition to his *Expository Thoughts*, is his book *Holiness*, which consists of papers he wrote to advocate the biblical doctrines of sin and sanctification.<sup>7</sup>

When Ryle began his vocation as a preacher, his sermons, by his own admission, were too ornate and florid in style. By ministering to farmers, however, he learned to speak more simply and directly. He divided his thoughts into short sentences and his sermon material into small sections. He made applications in every sermon. He also preached with spiritual urgency, repeated key words, and illustrated abstract concepts with stories of shipwrecks, wars, and compassionate queens in order to personally engage his hearers.<sup>8</sup> He once advised, “Do not be above talking to the poor, and visiting your people from house to house. Sit down with your people by the fireside, and exchange thoughts with them on all subjects. Find out how they think and how they express themselves, if you want them to understand your sermons.”<sup>9</sup> The accessibility and practicality of his preaching and writing are evident throughout this devotional. Here you will have that valuable opportunity to sit, as it were, under the teaching of Ryle as he joins you by the hearth.

In Ryle we see simple, straightforward, understandable preaching and teaching that offered Christ to all and demonstrated the difference between saved people and the lost world. His preaching was biblical and

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7. This classic book is reprinted in many formats, including J. C. Ryle, *Holiness* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2011). The shorter first edition is contained in Packer, *Faithfulness and Holiness*, 89–246.

8. Farley, *J. C. Ryle, First Bishop of Liverpool*, 6–7, 34–37.

9. J. C. Ryle, *Simplicity in Preaching: A Few Short Hints on a Great Subject* (London: William Hunt, 1882), 43–45.

bold. He dared to tell people who did not live like the sheep of Christ that they were not saved. There was tenderness in his words and compassion for both the saved and the lost. He honored God and His Word, and God honored Ryle's preaching.

One of the greatest tributes given to J. C. Ryle was from his fellow Anglican minister Richard Hobson, writing shortly after Ryle's funeral:

From his conversion [in 1837] to his burial [in 1900], J. C. Ryle was entirely one-dimensional. He was a one-book man; he was steeped in Scripture; he bled the Bible. As only Ryle could say, "*It is still the first book which fits the child's mind when he begins to learn religion, and the last to which the old man clings as he leaves the world.*"

This is *why* his works have lasted—and will last: they bear the stamp of eternity. Today, more than a hundred years after his passing, Ryle's works stand at the crossroads between the historic faith and modern evangelicalism. Like signposts, they direct us to the "old paths." And, like signposts, they are meant to be read.

[J. C. Ryle] was great through the abounding grace of God. He was great in stature; great in mental power; great in spirituality; great as a preacher and expositor of God's most holy Word; great in hospitality; great as a writer of Gospel tracts; great as a Bishop of the Reformed Evangelical Protestant Church in England, of which he was a noble defender; great as first Bishop of Liverpool. I am bold to say, that perhaps few men in the nineteenth century did as much for God, for truth, and for righteousness, among the English-speaking race, and in the world, as our late Bishop.<sup>10</sup>

Dear reader, you hold in your hands a treasure trove of edifying material from Ryle's sermons from various times in his ministry. Like the families at my church, may you also discover the riches of J. C. Ryle's teaching and preaching over this next year. I trust that many people who would not otherwise read Ryle's work will find many spiritual treasures in the pages to follow that will aid on the pathway to glory. Above all, may you know the Christ whom Ryle so lovingly served, so joyfully glorified, and so boldly proclaimed.

—Joel R. Beeke

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10. Quoted in Packer, *Faithfulness and Holiness*, 13–14.



## Are You Ready for the New Year?

*And as it is appointed unto men once to die,  
but after this the judgment.*

— HEBREWS 9:27

Reader, I ask you a plain question at the beginning of a new year. Are you ready? It is a solemn thing to part company with the old year. It is a still more solemn thing to begin a new one. It is like entering a dark passage. We know not what we may meet before the end. All before us is uncertain. We know not what a day may bring forth, much less what may happen in a year. Reader, are you ready? Are you ready for death? It must come someday. It may come this year. You cannot live always. This very year may be your last. You have no freehold in this world. You have not so much as a lease. You are nothing better than a tenant at God's will. Your last sickness may come upon you and give you notice to exit. The doctor may visit you and exhaust his skill over your case. You may feel yourself drawing near to the coffin, and the grave, and the worm, and an unseen world, and eternity, and God. Reader, if death should come upon you, are you ready?

Are you ready for bereavements? No doubt there are those in the world whom you love. There are those whose names are engraved on your heart, and round whom your affections are entwined. There are those who are the light of your eyes, and the very sunshine of your existence. But they are all mortal. Any one of them may die this year. Before the daisies blossom again, any one of them may be lying in the tomb. Reader, are you ready?

Reader, if you are not ready, I beseech you to make ready without delay. I tell you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that all things are ready on God's part for your salvation. The Father is ready to receive you. The Lord Jesus is ready to wash your sins away. The Spirit is ready to renew and sanctify you. Angels are ready to rejoice over you. Saints are ready to hold out the right hand to you. Oh, why not make ready this very year?

## Do You Pray?

*Men ought always to pray.*

—LUKE 18:1

I have a question to offer you. It is contained in three words: Do you pray? Only you can answer the question. Whether you attend public worship or not, your minister knows. Whether you have family prayers in your house or not, your relatives know. But whether you pray in private or not is a matter between yourself and God. I beseech you in all affections to attend to the subject I bring before you. Do not say that my question is too close. If your heart is right in the sight of God, there is nothing in it to make you afraid. Do not turn off my question by replying that you say your prayers. It is one thing to say your prayers and another to pray. Do not tell me that my question is unnecessary.

Prayer is the most important subject in practical religion. All other subjects are second to it. Reading the Bible, listening to sermons, attending public worship, going to the Lord's Table—all these are very important matters. But none of them are so important as private prayer. Just as it is with the mind and body, so it is with the soul. There are certain things indispensable to the soul's health and well-being. Each must attend to these things for himself. Each must repent for himself. Each must apply to Christ for himself. And for himself each must speak to God and pray. You must do it for yourself, for by nobody else it can be done. To be prayerless is to be without God, without Christ, without grace, without hope, and without heaven. It is to be on the road to hell. Now can you wonder that I ask the question, Do you pray?

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## Practice Holiness

*Follow peace with all men, and holiness,  
without which no man shall see the Lord.*

—HEBREWS 12:14

It is as certain as anything in the Bible that “no man shall see the Lord” without holiness (Heb. 12:14). It is equally certain that it is the invariable fruit of saving faith, the real test of regeneration, the only sound evidence of indwelling grace, the certain consequence of vital union with Christ. Holiness is not absolute perfection and freedom from all faults. Nothing of the kind! The wild words of some who talk of enjoying “unbroken communion with God for many months” are greatly to be deprecated because they raise unscriptural expectations in the minds of young believers, and so do harm.

Absolute perfection is for heaven and not for earth, where we have a weak body, a wicked world, and a busy devil continually near our souls. Nor is real Christian holiness ever attained, or maintained, without a constant fight and struggle. The great apostle who said “I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Cor. 9:27) would have been amazed to hear of sanctification without personal exertion, and to be told that believers only need to sit still, and everything will be done for them! Such holiness, I know well, is not common. It is a style of practical Christianity which is painfully rare in these days. But I can find no other standard of holiness in the Word of God, no other which comes up to the pictures drawn by our Lord and His apostles. In an age like this no reader can wonder if I press this subject also on men’s attention. Once more let us ask, in the matter of holiness, how is it with our souls? How are we doing?

## Working Out Your Own Salvation

*Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*

—PHILIPPIANS 2:12

I address it to all who have manfully taken up the cross and are honestly following Christ. I exhort them to persevere, and not to be moved by difficulties and opposition. You may often find few with you, and many against you. You may often hear hard things said of you. You may often be told that you go too far and that you are extreme. Heed it not. Turn a deaf ear to remarks of this kind. Press on. If there is anything in the world of which a man need not be ashamed, it is the service of Jesus Christ. Of sin, of worldliness, of levity, of trifling, of time wasting, of pleasure seeking, of bad temper, of pride; of making an idol of money, dress, dancing, hunting, shooting, card playing, novel reading, and the like—of all this a man may well be ashamed. Living after this fashion, he makes the angels sorrow and the devils rejoice.

But of living for his soul, caring for his soul, thinking of his soul, providing for his soul, making his soul's salvation the principal and chief thing in his daily life, of all this a man has no cause to be ashamed at all. Believer in Christ, remember this! Remember it in your Bible reading and your private praying. Remember it in your worship of God. In all these things never be ashamed of being wholehearted, real, thorough, and true! The years of our life are fast passing away. Who knows but this year may be the last in his life? Who can tell but that he may be called this very year to meet his God? As ever you would be found ready, be a real and true Christian. Do not be base metal!

## The Agonies of Hell

*Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.*

—MATTHEW 3:12

This text describes in words something that should make our ears tingle: Christ shall “burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire” (Matt. 3:12). When the Lord Jesus Christ comes to purge His threshing floor, He shall punish all who are not His disciples with a fearful punishment. All who are found impenitent and unbelieving, all who have held the truth in unrighteousness, all who have clung to sin, stuck to the world, and set their affection on things below, all who are without Christ. All such shall come to an awful end! Christ shall “burn up the chaff”!

Their punishment shall be most severe. There is no pain like that of burning. Put your finger in the candle flame for a moment, if you doubt this, and try. Fire is the most destructive and devouring of all elements. Look into the mouth of a blast furnace and think what it would be to be there. Fire is of all elements most opposed to life. Creatures can live in air, and earth, and water, but nothing can live in fire! Yet fire is the portion to which the Christ-less and unbelieving will come. Christ will “burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire”! Their punishment shall be eternal. Millions of ages shall pass away and the fire into which the chaff is cast shall still burn on. That fire shall never burn low and become dim. The fuel of that fire shall never waste away and be consumed. It is “unquenchable fire.” Oh, reader, these are sad and painful things to speak of! I have no pleasure in dwelling on them!

## Hope in the Gospel

*And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

—1 CORINTHIANS 6:11

There is hope in the gospel for any man as long as he lives. There is infinite willingness in Christ to pardon sin. There is infinite power in the Holy Spirit to change hearts. There are many diseases of the body which are incurable. The cleverest doctors cannot heal them. But thank God, there are no incurable diseases of the soul! All manner and quantity of sins can be washed away by Christ! The hardest and most wicked of hearts can be changed.

Reader, I say again, while there is life, there is hope. The oldest, the vilest, the worst of sinners may be saved. Only let him come to Christ, confess his sin, and cry to Him for pardon, only let him cast his soul on Christ, and he shall be cured. The Holy Spirit shall be sent down on his heart according to Christ's promise, and he shall be changed by His almighty power into a new creature.

I never despair of anyone becoming a decided Christian, whatever he may have been in days gone by. I know how great the change is from death to life. I know the mountains of division which seem to stand between some men and heaven. I know the hardness, the prejudices, the desperate sinfulness of the natural heart. But I remember that God the Father made the glorious world out of nothing. I remember that the voice of the Lord Jesus could reach Lazarus when four days dead and recall him even from the grave. I remember the amazing victories the Spirit of God has won in every nation under heaven. I remember all this and feel that I never need despair!

## Jesus Is Coming Again!

*He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen.  
Even so, come, Lord Jesus.*

—REVELATION 22:20

What will you see when that great event takes place? You will see the eternal Son of God return in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. He will come to raise the dead saints and to change the living ones, to punish the wicked and to reward the godly, to summon everyone before His bar, and to give to everyone according to His works. He will come to bind Satan and deprive him of his usurped dominion, to deliver the earth from the curse, and to purify it as the eternal dwelling place of a holy nation; to cast out sin, and all its accursed consequences—disease, death, sorrow, wars, poverty, injustice, and oppression. You see the world defiled now by the presence of evil. You will see it at length restored to its former state, and the days of paradise before the fall brought back again.

What will you get by looking forward to Jesus coming again? You will get that which is the best remedy against disquiet and depression, hope shed abroad in your heart about things to come. When the minds of others are cast down with perplexity, you will feel able to lift up your head and rejoice; when all around seems dark and gloomy, you will see light, and be able to wait patiently for better days. Few things are so remarkable in the present time as the universal anxiety and suspense about the future. On all sides, and among all classes, you hear of lack of confidence and gloomy forebodings of coming evil. Church and state alike seem shaken to their foundations; no one seems to know what to expect next. On one thing alone men seem agreed: they look forward with more fear than hope to the future. In a day like this there is no comfort like that of looking forward to Christ coming again. The Christian who reads his Bible and believes what it contains can behold the shaking of all things round him unmoved!

## Calvary

*And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha.*

—JOHN 19:17

You probably know that Calvary was a place close to Jerusalem, where the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was crucified. We know nothing else about Calvary besides this. I am afraid that much ignorance prevails among people on the subject of Jesus Christ's sufferings. I suspect that many see no peculiar glory and beauty in the history of the crucifixion. On the contrary, they think it painful, humbling, and degrading. They do not see much profit in the story of Christ's death and sufferings. They rather turn from it as an unpleasant thing.

People seem to forget that all Christ's sufferings at Calvary were necessary for man's salvation. He had to bear our sins, if ever they were to be borne at all: with His stripes alone could we be healed. This was the one payment of our debts that God would accept; this was the great sacrifice on which our eternal life depended. If Christ had not gone to the cross and suffered in our stead, the just for the unjust, there would not have been a spark of hope for us. There would have been a mighty gulf between ourselves and God that no man ever could have passed. The cross was necessary, in order that there might be an atonement for sin.

People seem to me to forget that all Christ's sufferings at Calvary were foreordained. They did not come on Him by chance or accident: they were all planned, counseled, and determined from all eternity. The cross was foreseen in all the provisions of the everlasting Trinity for the salvation of sinners. Not one throb of pain did Jesus feel, not one precious drop of blood did Jesus shed, that had not been appointed long ago. Infinite wisdom planned that redemption should be by the cross; infinite wisdom brought Jesus to the cross in due time. He was crucified by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.



## Cold Time for Believers

*The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.*

—ROMANS 13:12

It is a cold time for believers. They meet with much to chill and dampen their zeal and little to cheer and warm their hearts. They have to put up with many crosses and disappointments. They see iniquity abounding, and their own love is apt to become cold. And why? It is night! It is a lonely time for believers. They find little company on the way that leads to heaven. Here and there they fall in with one who loves the Lord Jesus and lives by faith. A few of God's children may be found in one town, and a few in another. But on the whole, the children of the world seem like the Syrian army, which filled the country and the children of God are like a few scattered sheep in a wilderness! And why? It is night.

It is a dangerous time to believers. They often stumble and scarcely discern their path. They often stand in doubt and know not which way to turn. They sometimes are unable to see their tokens and lose sight of their landmarks. At best they travel on in continual fear of enemies. And why? It is night. Reader, I ask you to ponder these things. If time present be night, you will not wonder if we ministers warn Christians to watch and pray. You will count it no strange thing if we tell you to live like soldiers in an enemy's country, and to be always on your guard. Reader, sit down and ask yourself whether you find this world in which you live to be night or day. Is the present time one of conflict, or a time of ease? Do you feel that your best things are here in this life, or that your best things are yet to come? I offer these questions to you as a test of your spiritual state. I place them before you as a gauge and measure of your soul's condition. I tell you plainly, if you never found this world a wilderness and place of darkness, it is a bad sign of your state in the sight of God!

## Privileges of Knowing Christ

*And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

—ROMANS 8:17

Nothing can be conceived more glorious than the prospects of the sons of God. The words of Scripture at the head of this paper contain a rich mine of good and comfortable things. “And if children,” says Paul, “then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (Rom. 8:17). True Christians then are “heirs.” Something is prepared for them all which is yet to be revealed. They are “heirs of God.” To be heirs of the rich on earth is something. How much more then is it to be son and heir of the King of Kings! They are “joint-heirs with Christ.” They shall share in His majesty and take part of His glory. They shall be glorified together with Him. And this, we must remember, is for all the children. Abraham took care to provide for all his children, and God takes care to provide for His. None of them are disinherited. None will be cast out. None will be cut off. Each shall stand in his lot and have a portion in the day when the Lord brings many sons to glory.

Who can tell the full nature of the inheritance of the saints in light? Who can describe the glory which is yet to be revealed and given to the children of God? Words fail us. Language falls short. Mind cannot conceive fully, and tongue cannot express perfectly, the things which are comprised in the glory yet to come upon the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty! Oh, it is indeed a true saying of the apostle John: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2)!

## Christ in the Sick Room

*The LORD will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.*

—PSALM 41:3

I do say that sickness ought to do us good. And I do say that God sends it in order to do us good. Affliction is a friendly letter from heaven. It is a knock at the door of conscience. It is the voice of the Savior knocking at the heart's door. Happy is he who opens the letter and reads it, who hears the knock and opens the door, who welcomes Christ to the sick room.

Come now and let me show you a few of the lessons which He by sickness would teach us:

1. Sickness is meant to make us think, to remind us that we have a soul as well as a body, an immortal soul, a soul that will live forever in happiness or in misery, and that if this soul is not saved, we had better never have been born.
2. Sickness is meant to teach us that there is a world beyond the grave and that the world we now live in is only a training place for another dwelling where there will be no decay, no sorrow, no tears, no misery, and no sin.
3. Sickness is meant to send us to our Bibles, that blessed book, which in the days of health is too often left on the shelf and is never opened from January to December. But sickness often brings it down from the shelf and throws new light on its pages.
4. Sickness is meant to draw us to Christ. Naturally we do not see the full value of the blessed Savior. We secretly imagine that our prayers, good deeds, and sacrament receiving will save our souls. But when flesh begins to fail, then the absolute necessity of a Redeemer, a Mediator, and an Advocate with the Father stands out before men's eyes like fire, and makes them understand those words, "Simply to Your cross I cling!" as they never did before. Sickness has done this for many—they have found Christ in the sick room!

## Signs of Conversion

*Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.*

—MATTHEW 3:8

Do you think that you are converted? Then give all diligence to make your calling and conversion sure. Leave nothing uncertain that concerns your immortal soul. Labor to have the witness of the Spirit with your spirit, that you are a child of God. Assurance is to be had in this world, and assurance is worth seeking. It is good to have hope; it is far better to feel sure.

Do you think that you are converted? Then do not expect impossibilities in this world.

Do not suppose the day will ever come when you will find no weak point in your heart, no wanderings in private prayer, no distraction in Bible reading, no cold desires in the public worship of God, no flesh to mortify, no devil to tempt, no worldly snares to make you fall. Expect nothing of the kind. Conversion is not perfection! Conversion is not heaven! The old man within you is yet alive, the world around you is yet full of danger; the devil is not dead. Remember at your best, that a converted sinner is still a poor weak sinner, needing Christ every day. Remember this, and you will not be disappointed.

Do you think you are converted? Then show the value you place on conversion by your diligence in trying to do good to others. Do you really believe it is a dreadful thing to be an unconverted man? Do you really think that conversion is an unspeakable blessing? Then prove it, prove it, prove it, by constant zealous efforts to promote the conversion of others. Look around the neighborhood in which you live, have compassion on the multitudes who are yet unconverted. Be not content with getting them to come to your church or chapel; aim at nothing less than their entire conversion to God. Speak to them, read to them, pray for them, stir up others to help them. But never, never, if you are a converted man, never be content to go to heaven alone!

## The Visible Church Is a Mixed Body

*Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.*

—MATTHEW 13:30

First of all, the visible church of Christ will always be a mixed body until Christ comes again. I there see wise and foolish virgins mingled together in one company, virgins with oil, and virgins with no oil, all side by side. And I see this state of things going on until the very moment the Bridegroom appears. I see all this, and I cannot avoid the conclusion that the visible church will always be a mixed body until Jesus comes again. Its members will never be all unbelievers, Christ will always have His witnesses. Its members will never be all believers, there will always be a vast proportion of formality, unbelief, hypocrisy, and false profession. I frankly say that I can find no standing ground for the common opinion that the visible church will gradually advance to a state of perfection, that it will become better and better, holier and holier, up to the very end and that little by little the whole body shall become full of light.

I fully admit that the gospel appears sometimes to make rapid progress in some countries; but that it ever does more than call out an elect people, I utterly deny. It never did more in the days of the apostles. Out of all the cities that Paul visited there is not the slightest proof that in any one city the whole population became believers. It never has done more in any country, from the time of the apostle down to the present day. There never yet was a parish or congregation in any part of the world, however favored in the ministry it enjoyed, in which all the people were converted. At all events, I never read or heard of it and my belief is the thing never has been, and never will. I believe that now is the time of election, not of universal conversion. Now is the time for the gathering out of Christ's little flock. The time of general obedience is yet to come.

## Christ Is the One

*For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.*

—2 CORINTHIANS 8:9

He is one who is most loving. He loved us so that He left heaven for our sakes and laid aside for a season the glory that He had with the Father. He loved us so that He was born of a woman for our sakes and lived thirty-three years in this sinful world. He loved us so that He undertook to pay our mighty debt to God and died upon the cross to make atonement for our sins. When such a One as this speaks, He deserves a hearing. When He promises a thing, you need not be afraid to trust Him.

He is one who knows the heart of man most thoroughly. He took on Him a body like our own, and was made like man in all things, sin only excepted. He knows by experience what man has to go through. He has tasted poverty and weariness and hunger and thirst and pain and temptation. He is acquainted with all our condition upon earth. He “himself hath suffered being tempted” (Heb. 2:18). When such a one as this makes an offer, He makes it with perfect wisdom. He knows exactly what you and I need and never breaks His word. He always fulfills His promises. He never fails to do what He undertakes. He never disappoints the soul that trusts Him. Mighty as He is, there is one thing which He cannot do, it is impossible for Him to lie (Heb. 6:18). When one like this makes a promise, you need not doubt that He will stand to it. You may depend with confidence on His word.