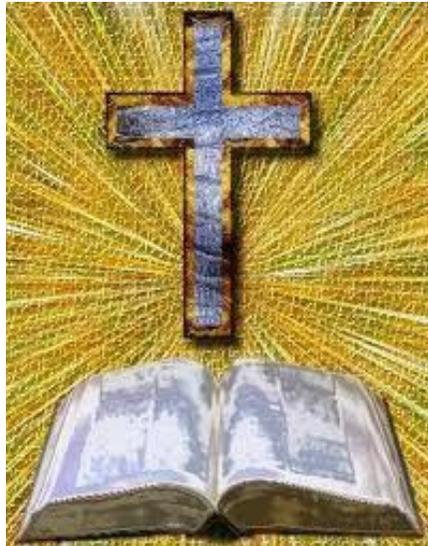


HOW THE HOLY SPIRIT
ENABLES YOU TO COME
TO CHRIST



By Paul Christensen

How The Holy Spirit Enables You to Come to Christ

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The Works of John Flavel (1628-1691), in six volumes (Banner of Truth Trust), is acknowledged as having a significant influence on the views expressed in this book.

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Foreword

By Rodney W Francis

I have known Paul Christensen for many years. We fellowshipped together in a small church in Palmerston North, New Zealand, when we were both very much younger Christians, and where we received our initial impartations of the ministry and power of the Holy Spirit. In recent years our paths have crossed again, and Paul has been involved with the Equipping Days we have been conducting in Auckland, New Zealand, through "The Gospel Faith Messenger" Ministry. In more recent times I have watched Paul develop in his writing ministry. He shares from his heart and carries a concern that Christians everywhere grasp a hold of the truths of the Scriptures. To do that we must be able to discern the voice of Jesus in whatever way He speaks to us ~ for in these last days of time God is speaking to us through His Son, Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-2). I commend this publication to you ~

Rodney W. Francis (Founder/Director: "The Gospel Faith Messenger" Ministry). Website: www.gospel.org.nz

Rodney is the Founder/Director of "The Gospel Faith Messenger" Ministry which ministers to thousands through literature, E-Mail and Internet Ministries (in over 100 nations), Bible Correspondence Courses, books, manuals, preaching/teaching, conducting Seminars, "Schools of The Holy Spirit," "International Training Schools" and the "Equipping of Timothy's." He has authored more than 34 books and carries a heart to see this generation of believers equipped with Holy Spirit Gifts and Leadership skills to do the job of fulfilling the purposes of God. He ministers out from Paraparaumu, New Zealand, carrying credentials both with "The GFM" Ministry, and "United Kingdom Elim (ECI)".

Part 1

The Work of The Holy Spirit Enabling People to Come to Christ

Introduction

You need a sound Scriptural account of how the Holy Spirit works in you to draw you to Christ, and enable you to live a life of holiness before God. Not every religion will lead you to salvation. There is only one God, the God of the Bible. All other gods are figments of the imagination. To understand how we are able to get ourselves into a right place with God, you need to closely look at how the Holy Spirit works in you to accomplish that. So you have to start at the beginning.

I will be directing my comments to you, as the reader, instead of to people in general, because you are the one reading this at the moment, and my desire is that you will hear the enlightening, life-giving voice of Christ through my words, without which, nothing will happen.

You are dead in trespasses and sins because of Adam's disobedience. If you have become a Christian believer, the "are" has become "were". You will see how this has happened as you continue reading. Adam's crime was more than just eating a piece of fruit from a forbidden tree. He wilfully disobeyed a direct command from God. He chose his own will over and above God's will. The temptation was that by eating the fruit, he and Eve would become their own gods, being able to discern between good and evil. Up to this point, all they had to do was to trust God or determine

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what was good or bad for them, and to walk in His will, believing His word. This is equivalent to faith, because that is all faith is – believing and accepting the Word of God, not because you are able to work it out for yourself to see whether it is true or not, but that you need to be willing to take it at face value because God said it, and He can be trusted to say what is true and correct.

The devil put the thought into Eve's mind: **"Has God said?"** Eve, influenced by the devil, started thinking with her natural reasoning, instead of maintaining a position of faith. The attractiveness of self-determination then occupied her mind and she decided to eat the fruit, and to give some to Adam. Adam could have maintained his position of faith and rejected what was happening with his wife, but he found himself in a situation where not only was he tempted to self-determination, but he had to make a decision between remaining faithful to God, or pleasing his wife. We do not know what pressure Eve put on Adam before he relented. To speculate would be to make assumptions where the Scripture is silent, but the fact remains that he did relent and joined her in eating the fruit.

So Adam's sin was more than just eating a piece of illicit fruit. He joined forces with the devil in his rebellion against God. He chose self-determination in following his own will instead of remaining in God's will for him. He ran away and hid from God when His presence came into the garden. He under-estimated the grace and the forgiveness of God in that if he had fallen on his knees before God and pleaded for forgiveness, things might have been quite different. But the Scripture does not show that Adam was inclined to that, or even if he was able to plead for grace and forgiveness if it were possible to be forgiven and cleansed on the spot.

What actually happened was that Adam lost his innocence and his sense of fellowship with God. Where before there was happiness and confidence in the presence of God, there is now fear and the instinct to run and hide from God. Also, when confronted by God, Adam blamed his wife instead of

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acknowledging and confessing his sin. Eve, in turn, blamed the serpent. The consequence of this was that Adam lost his communion with the divine nature, and this was replaced with a sinful nature, occurring in communion with the nature of the devil. So what happened to him was that the God-nature in him was replaced with the Satan-nature. This meant that all of his descendents, including you, would have that sinful nature passed on to them.

Also, as a result of losing the divine nature, his spirit died within him. His spirit was the part of him that allowed him to have communion with God, and to give him a basis for faith. Therefore, Adam, and all his descendents would have no internal appreciation of the presence of and communion with God, and would not be able to exercise the required faith that is necessary to be able to please God in any way.

Paul is telling the Ephesian Christians that the Holy Spirit has done a work in them to enable them to restore their faith and their communion with God. He says that Jesus Christ, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, has given life to their spirit, restoring to them what Adam lost through his rebellion.

So how has this happened? It could not happen spontaneously, nor could it happen through your self-efforts. The sinful nature is too strong and weakens the will so much that you cannot summon the resolve and the faith to turn from sin and embrace Christ. There has to be an outside influence that does something inside you to enable you to respond positively to the invitation to Salvation that God extends to every sinner. This outside influence is the work of the Holy Spirit, and there are two components to this.

The first influence is **external** and this is achieved through the preaching of the Gospel. This is the way that God has ordained for you to receive the invitation to Salvation. The Gospel is Christ-centred. Paul determined with the Corinthians that he was not going to know anything

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"except Christ and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). This is what Paul sees is the foundation of the Gospel. Paul also says that **"he is not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ because it is the power of God leading to salvation for everyone who believes in Christ"** (Romans 1:16). So, the Gospel of Christ conveys the voice of God in the person of the Holy Spirit that alerts you to the extent and misery of your sin, and its consequences in relation to your state before God.

This means that you have to be present where the Gospel is preached, and this involves being brought into where believers are gathered and where there is a preacher called of God with the evangelistic gifting to preach in such a way that the voice of God can speak clearly and freely through the preaching. The believers in a Christian fellowship need to make an effort to go out into the community and invite sinners to attend to the preaching of the Gospel. A fruitful church is one where sinners are brought into an environment where the Gospel is preached and they are given the opportunity to respond to the message and to embrace Christ as their Saviour and Lord.

The second influence is **internal**. This is the Father's drawing of you to Christ. What happens is that as the Gospel is preached, and the voice of Christ works through it, the underlying action is that there is an impulse that draws you to Christ like a steel pin to a magnet. You can resist; and in fact, the devil does all he can to hold you back or turn you aside from coming to Christ.

Saul tried to kick against the drawing power of the Spirit as he was persecuting the church, but when Christ appeared to him on the Damascus Road, He told Saul that it was pointless to resist the drawing power of God to Him. Saul surrendered immediately when he realised that he could no longer resist the call of God on his life. This could not happen under natural circumstances. This is a supernatural drawing applied to those whom God has elected to Salvation.

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Sinners who are not elected can sit under the Gospel but would be unresponsive to the message, because there is no supernatural voice of Christ speaking to their hearts; neither is there a drawing action of the Spirit in them towards Christ. This is one of the mysteries surrounding the plans and purposes of God – why some are elected and influenced by the Holy Spirit toward Christ in a supernatural way, and others are left to be unresponsive. This is where it is important for you to have an attitude of faith and trust in God, to acknowledge that He knows what He is doing, and that his decision to call some and bypass others is fully consistent with His justice. To question God in this is more consistent with Adam's departure from faith and trust, to natural reasoning and self-determination; something which grieves the Holy Spirit and puts a spanner into having free communion with God.

The work of the Spirit in the Gospel is to knit your soul together with Christ. It is similar to a marriage where a husband and wife become one flesh. Jesus Christ is the result of the Son of God being made one flesh with our human nature. It is a combining of God with man. The conversion of a sinner to Christ is the merging of two natures: the human and the divine. It is not that believers have the actual nature of God residing in them, because His essential nature must always stay within Him. It is more of a communion with His nature in the form of the indwelling Spirit.

There are two bands that knit you together with Christ: The first is *the Spirit on Christ's part*, and the second is *faith on our part*.

(1) **The Spirit that comes from Christ.** This is an essential part of the process because nothing can happen unless the Holy Spirit works in your heart. It is the Holy Spirit who gives the inspiration of the knowledge of what the Gospel stands for, and provides the direction in which you must go. He also strengthens your will to turn from sin

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(repent) and turn to Christ. He then gives the faith for you to become a believer.

(2) The other band is **inner faith to believe the Gospel** and to embrace Christ. This is given by the Spirit and is received by the seeker. You willingly receive what has been offered. We can say that the Spirit enlivens us and that Christ takes hold of us to bring us to repentance. Our response is to take hold of Christ by faith.

Colossians 1:27: ***"To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."***

Romans 8:10: ***"And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness."***

1 John 5:20: ***"And we know that the Son of God is come and has given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true; and we are in Him that is true, even in His son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life."***

2 Corinthians 5:17: ***"Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things have passed away; behold, all things are become new."***

When you consider the Scripture, ***"Christ in you, the hope of glory"*** (Colossians 1:27), you need to consider where Christ actually is in relation to you. 1 John 4:13 tells us that Christ is in you by His Spirit. The actual physical presence of Christ is at the right hand of the Father in heaven. But we can say that God is in us because the Holy Spirit is in us; and because the Holy Spirit represents Christ, we can say that Christ is in us by proxy through the indwelling of the Spirit. The Scripture also shows that you are in Christ by faith (John 1:12). This is why faith is so important to you. ***"Without faith it is impossible to please God"*** (Hebrews 11:6).

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Jesus is said to be within you through **habitation** (Romans 8:11). We can also say that you are in Christ by **implantation** (John 15: 1-8).

Christ is in you as the head is part of the body (Colossians 1:18): ***"And He is the head of the Body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence."*** Also as the root in the branches (John 15:5): ***"I am the vine, you are the branches. He that abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."***

You, if you are a believer in Christ, are as a member in the head (Ephesians 1:23): ***"And has put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church"***, or as branches in the root (John 15:1, 7): ***"I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman...If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you."***

Christ in the believer is life. (Colossians 3:4): ***"When Christ who is our life appears, then will you also appear with Him in glory."*** Through this life, the believer has communion and fellowship with Christ. (1 Corinthians 1:30): ***"But of Him you are in Christ Jesus who became for us wisdom from God – righteousness, sanctification and redemption."*** So, Christ in the believer results in sanctification; the believer in Christ results in justification.

Another way of expressing it is that you are apprehended by Jesus. (Philippians 3:12): ***"Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me."***

There are two important things that are noted:

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1. The **grace of God** is applied to our sinful nature.
2. The total **helplessness** of the natural person to save himself.

1. You has He quickened. The blood of Christ is the fountain of all merit. The Spirit of Christ is the fountain of all spiritual life. Until He quickens you, you can do nothing to lay hold of Christ by faith. (Ephesians 1:19): ***"And what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power."***

2. The natural person, before he is converted to Christ, is totally dead spiritually. The result is eventual condemnation, the withholding of spiritual life, and the person is still in their trespasses and sins.

Doctrine:

That those souls which have union with Christ are quickened with a supernatural principle of life by the Spirit of God in order to achieve it.

Without the breathing of the Holy Spirit of life into your soul, your union with Christ is impossible. (John 11:26): ***"And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"*** Life comes before faith. (Romans 8:1, 2): ***"There is therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death."***

There are five particulars that need consideration:

1. The characteristics of Spiritual life;
2. How it is wrought into the soul;
3. The design and purpose of God;
4. Wholly supernatural;
5. Must happen before we can close by faith with Christ.

1. The Characteristics of Spiritual Life

There is a wonderful change in you when the Spirit is breathed into you. A person may be physically alive, but **spiritually dead**. (Luke 15:24): ***"For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found..."*** (Colossians 2:13): ***"And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, has He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses."*** When the Spirit comes in, old things are passed away and all things become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17): ***"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."*** There is a continual infilling of the Spirit. (John 4:14): ***"But whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."*** Spiritual life is infused into the soul by the Spirit. (Ezekiel 36:25, 26): ***"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh."*** The two prophets in Revelation 11 were dead in the natural sense when they were killed by the beast, but they came alive when the Spirit entered into them (v11). Your understanding, will, thoughts, and affections are all renewed by it.

There are a number of characteristics of this new life:

a. **This life is divine**. (2 Peter 1:4): ***"Whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises; that by***

these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. This happens as the Spirit dwells in you according to 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17: ***"Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple you are."*** When a person is unsanctified, he is alienated from divine life. (Ephesians 4:18): ***"Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart."***

b. It is the **most excellent life** that you can live. People who live in sensual pleasures **are dead while they live** (1 Timothy 5:6). They have life in the physical sense, but they are dead in their spirit. They do not have eternal life. When a person is converted to Christ and they have eternal life, this enhances the life they are living in the world. They are more complete in themselves because what happens in their spirit flows into their emotional and physical being. Christian believers have much better emotional and physical health, normally, than ungodly people. We don't know what it is about having a living spirit inside us that gives a greater quality to our day-by-day lives, but we know the positive effects of it.

c. It is **a pleasant life**. Romans 8:6 tells us that to be "carnally" minded, that is, having a mind that is oriented to this world, is **death**, but to be spiritually minded, that is, to be waiting on the Lord for His will and being sensitive to the Holy Spirit, is **life and peace**. The will of God is found in the pages of Scripture and this is in complete harmony with the Holy Spirit. Proverbs 14:10 tells us that ***"The heart knows its own bitterness, but no one can share its joy."*** This shows us that in Scriptural language the "mind" and "heart" are the same thing. They describe an inward disposition to the ways of God and the ministry of the Holy Spirit to us. Because the disposition of one who is rejecting the Gospel is oriented to this present world, the future

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prospects of that person is death – not only the separation of body and soul, but of eternal death, which is complete separation from Christ and all His blessings for the rest of eternity. The sign of a person heading toward death is the root of bitterness in their heart. The joy that comes from believing and trusting in Christ is not transferable because every person must “do” his own believing. The experience of the prodigal son when he returned home is seen in Luke 15:24 where it says that ***“The father and son began to make merry.”***

d. It is a ***growing, increasing life***. There are a number of Scriptures that show this to encourage you that the Holy Spirit is continually working with you after conversion to ensure that you continue to grow in grace and in the knowledge of God. (John 4:14): ***“But whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”*** This is the picture, not of a tank of water that might be replenished when it rains, but a well with an artesian spring at the bottom of, supplying continuous fresh water. Walking and living in the Spirit will never go stale, because the life of Christ is always being infused into your spirit. It is a supply of grace that will never run out or go dry. (2 Corinthians 4:16): ***“For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.”***

You are made up of your physical being and your inward spiritual “man”. The person is who depending on his physical health or appearance as the foundation for life will end up being bitterly disappointed. The inner spiritual man is moving in a direction contrary to the physical man. As the physical man is aging and will ultimately perish, the inner man is growing stronger day by day. You don’t always see our progress from day to day, but when you look back over a year or two you see that you have grown more confident in prayer, effective in ministry, stronger in resisting temptation, more trusting in God’s Word, more

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concerned about the needs of his neighbour. Science tells us that every seven years every cell in the body is renewed, but the new cells do not have the same quality as the ones they replace, and so the body ages. But the inner spiritual man undergoes a perfect renewal because the well of water in him is pure and comes from the life of Christ, which is eternal. (2 Peter 3:18): ***"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever."*** This growth in grace does not cause you to remain passive in the things of God. There are things you need to do and to maintain.

The Scripture says that the just shall live by faith. This means that you exercise your faith every day, and this continues to enable the Holy Spirit to keep working in you. It is one of God's mysteries of how you give time and effort to maintain your life in God and at the same time He works in you to maintain the flow of "living water" through you. (1 Thessalonians 5:23): ***"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."*** The Scripture here shows who is responsible for maintaining your spiritual life. Sanctification is being set apart for God, giving up your will in favour of His will. You can go some way toward sanctification, but it will always be imperfect; but the final act of completing your sanctification is reserved for the Lord Himself. For the person who is clothed in the righteousness of Christ, God sees that person as wholly sanctified. There is nothing more perfect than the righteousness of Christ, and when you are clothed with it, you are totally sanctified, even when you don't see it in your normal, everyday life.

Paul also knows whose power keeps us persevering until the Second Coming of Christ. He prays for the Thessalonians that God will continue to work in them. Pastors should pray for their congregations for the same end. The true mark of a Christian pastor is that he will give himself to prayer for his congregation. Every Sunday he exhorts the congregation to be encouraged in the Lord and to maintain their walk

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with the Lord. When he is finished preaching, he gets alone with the Lord and pleads with Him that He will do the work to achieve the aims he exhorted in his congregation. So the pastor pleads with God and persuades people. This is the sign of a church that is growing spiritually. It makes the difference between empty sermonizing and Holy Spirit preaching. (1 Corinthians 13: 9, 10): **"For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."** This shows you that what you have at present is not complete. You know it is not complete, because you are always conscious of your need, and this motivates you to pray and pour your heart out to God that He will make up for your faults and shortcomings. But when you are united with Christ, you will be changed in an instant and you will be completed in your sanctification and your perfection in Christ. Your sinful physical body will fall away and be no more, and you will receive a new body that will be sin-free and perfect. (Galatians 5:17): **"For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that you cannot do the things that you would."** This is showing the conflict and the spiritual battle that you have to fight right throughout your lives until you are united with the Lord.

This is where you need the armour of God, and to make sure that you are clothed with that armour every day so that you will be able to stand in the strength of Christ and to be able to do His will. But as hard as you strive to do God's will, there will be always hindrances and a sense of opposition that you have to contend with. There are things you want to do, but when you try to do them, you find that you cannot do them to the perfection that you desire. (Proverbs 4:18): **"But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day."** But there is an encouragement in the midst of your battles. As you put your faith in Jesus Christ as your sufficiency, you find that the Holy Spirit shines on the path that you are to take through the snares and

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minefields, and as long as you stay on the path which is shown by the will of God, you will be safe. The will of God is inseparately bound up in Christ, and as you walk in the light as He is in the light, you have fellowship with Christ, and our pathway gets clearer and clearer until you are overtaken with the glory of God when you find yourself face to face with Christ. So, your spiritual life, as you walk in the Spirit, is not static. It is always growing and developing. Your experience in Christ is not a repeat of the same year as is the experience of many people, but each new year is an improvement on the one before. You start as a babe in Christ, feeding on milk, and continue through the Christian life until you get to a place of maturity when you are feeding on good solid spiritual food, and you are able to feed others. When Jesus told Peter to "**feed My sheep,**" He was looking forward to the day when Peter would arrive at the place of maturity when He would have the strength and solid foundation to be able to do just that.

e. It is an ***everlasting life***. This is another characteristic of the life that comes from Christ through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not some passive entity that lies dormant in us; but He is an active, life-giving Person who builds us up, encourages, exhorts, comforts, strengthens, and guides us through our spiritual lives. It is the Holy Spirit who conveys the words of eternal life from Jesus to our hearts, and then opens our hearts to receive it. (1 John 5:11): "**And this is the record, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.**" The eternal life that you receive is linked to Jesus Christ. You need to hold fast to Jesus by faith if you are to receive the eternal life that God has given us.

God has given the invitation to all men and women to receive eternal life through the Gospel, but not all receive it because they are not prepared to give themselves up to Jesus. It is not receiving eternal life that is the problem, everyone desires it; but when they are presented with the personal cost of receiving it, they baulk, because it means giving up all they are and have, and putting their whole

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allegiance and faith in Jesus. Jesus told the rich young ruler to sell all that he had and then to come and follow Him. The rich young ruler went sadly away because the cost to him was too great. But there are many who do respond to the call of Jesus to follow Him, and they follow Him willingly. These are the ones who receive eternal life, and as they persevere to the end, they step out of their sinful physical bodies into the reality of the life promised to them. (1 John 3:9): ***"Whosoever is born of God does not commit sin; for his seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."***

A person who is converted to Christ is born of God. The Holy Spirit does a supernatural work in him to regenerate his spirit which comes to life. The result is that the person becomes aware of the reality of God and now has the faith to come to Christ. The reality of God cannot be gained through the natural mind. It must come through a resurrection of the spirit inside the person. Contact with God is spirit to Spirit. It is actually the entry of the Holy Spirit into the man's spirit that resurrects it. The Holy Spirit is a life-giving Spirit, so where He is, there is life.

The experience of the person is that one minute God is just a character on a page of Scripture, and then the next minute, He is alive and speaking to the person. This is a life-changing event. It is quite different for unregenerate people, even when they adopt a religious lifestyle and show a philosophy that is very similar to real Christian faith. (Hebrews 6:4-6): ***"For it is impossible for those that were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance..."*** This shows that there are some who were enlightened to understand the Gospel and have gone some way to live a Christian life, but have not persevered and have fallen back into the world. ***"Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world"*** (2 Timothy 4:10). These people were filled

with the Holy Spirit and fed on the Word of God, but for some reason, they deserted Christ and turned their backs on Him. The well of living water in them dries up and the daily renewal does not happen. The chilling thing about this is that they may never get another chance to repent.

2. How the life of the Spirit is wrought in the soul

a. It is mysterious. ***"The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit"*** (John 3:8). The Holy Spirit cannot be perceived by the natural mind. He operates in that realm that is beyond our five senses. Our natural bodies and minds have been designed to live and to deal with the environment that God has created for us. Anything outside of the confines of the created universe is beyond the scope of our natural minds to grasp. This is why the things of God are **spiritually discerned**. How do you spiritually discern the things of God? You do it by **faith**. Faith is simply believing what the Bible literally says about God without trying to enquire into areas which are not clearly revealed in the Scriptures. Trying to work out the mysteries of God will get us tied-up in knots and will end up with being tangled in confusion and unbelief because of a lack of contentment to just believe what the Bible says. Therefore the things of the Spirit are not mysterious to the eye of faith. Once a person "gets the message" about faith, then he receives ***"a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God"*** (Ephesians 1:17). God will reveal His secrets to those who are prepared to happily accept the literal words of the Bible by faith.

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b. The life of the Spirit in a person comes through the greatness of the power of God.

¹⁹ "And what the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of His might

²⁰ which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and made Him to sit at His right hand in the heavenly places,

²¹ far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

²² and He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church,

²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all" (Ephesians 1: 19-23).

Conversion to Christ is not a light thing. It is not just a matter of walking to the front of a church and signing a "decision" card. That action may be a very small part of a long process of intervention by God to bring the person to an understanding of his sin, and then to give him the will to choose Christ rather than continue in his sin. The plan of salvation for every individual started in eternity before the foundation of the world, and you can track it through the Old Testament, the Incarnation and Ministry of Jesus, His Crucifixion and Resurrection. You then receive the revelation that the Spirit has given Paul the apostle in order to help us understand what the plan of salvation is all about.

Therefore, conversion to Christ involves the mighty power of God, and nothing less was and is sufficient to accomplish it. Some think that it is just a matter of making a personal choice to abandon the sinful life and to embrace Christ.¹

¹ This is a controversial point in theology. Charles Finney, the famous American revivalist of the 19th Century took the position of instantaneous conversion the moment a person made a decision for Christ. Because the Holy Spirit unmistakably supported his ministry with one awakening after another among unconverted sinners, we

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But it is by faith that you discover that the ability to make that choice is because of God's mighty power that has worked in the heavenlies to defeat the powers of darkness, for Christ to emerge victorious over them, and for Him to go and present His own blood before the Father as the final sacrifice for our sin. The ability for any person to exercise faith in Jesus Christ is given by the Spirit which works in them to make their spirit come to life, because it is only an enlivened spirit that can open the mind to perceive the Gospel and exercise the will to receive Christ.

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

c. When the Holy Spirit comes to enliven the spirit of a person, He is infused into all the natural faculties of the soul. ***"And the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"*** (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Once the person has been converted to Christ, the Holy Spirit continues the work to develop sanctification, enabling the person to live the life of holiness in order to bring glory to Christ before the world. The Scripture says that the work is being done in the person's spirit, soul and body, so that all three are developed in harmony to prepare the person for glory when Jesus comes again and you all stand before Him. As long as the work is going on in the person, that person is preserved by the power of God from falling away, because when God has started a work in the believer, He will follow it through to completion.

These are the ways in which the Spirit works in believers. He gives light to the mind ***"And this is life eternal, that***

cannot ignore that personal choice to accept Christ has to be a significant component in conversion. There are ongoing debates between Calvinists (only God can convert), and Arminians (it is up to personal choice), but there is Scriptural support for both, so we must conclude that both are correct, and how they are combined is one of those mysteries that we might have to accept.

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they should know You the only true God, and Him whom You did send, even Jesus Christ" (John 17:3). Because you cannot know God from your natural mind or through your senses, the Holy Spirit reveals Him through the Scriptures and gives you a sense of His presence with you. In a sense you know Him, even though you have never seen Him in the flesh. It is the Holy Spirit within you who gives you a spiritual knowledge of Him, and the effects of this is that you feel that you know Him better than you know your best friend.

The Holy Spirit also enables you to be obedient to the will of God: ***"according to the fore-knowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied"*** (1 Peter 1:2). It is part of the over-all plan of God, formulated before the foundation of the world, that not only are you drawn to Christ through the work of the Spirit, but you are enabled to live in obedience to God's will through the sanctifying work of the Spirit. Without this underlying work of the Spirit that happens mostly without you being conscious of it, you would very quickly fall back into your sinful life. Before we are converted to Christ, our attitudes and intentions were worldly and sinful, and we lived for ourselves.

After conversion, as the Holy Spirit works within you, you develop a heavenly attitude and temper in your emotions and attitudes. ***"If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth"*** (Colossians 3:1, 2). God will not give you a set of instructions like this unless He gives the ability to carry them out. He knows that ***"the flesh is weak"*** (Matthew 26:41), and is unable to maintain the holy life by itself; therefore the Holy Spirit does the work in you, and you maintain that work through your faith and obedience to God's will as He reveals it to you through His Word. So, there is quite a difference between a person who has been

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truly converted to Christ, and a hypocrite who may have all the appearance of being a Christian believer. A truly converted person's spiritual life runs into all parts of his soul, making his obedience to holiness comprehensive in every area of his life. There are no neglected corners. If Jesus is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all.

But in the hypocrite, his obedience is partial, and particular in certain areas, but not in others. Look at the Scripture which describes the hypocrites that find themselves before the judgment throne of God as described by Jesus: **"Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by Your name, and by Your name cast out demons, and by Your name do many mighty works?"** (Matthew 7:22). Notice that these hypocrites are describing the works they did in the sight of others. They do not say anything about their heart attitudes. The truly converted person would know that anything done which is displayed before others is relatively insignificant and are works that are done after they are justified through their genuine faith in Jesus Christ. The truly converted person will humble himself before the throne of God and say, "I owe everything to what Jesus did for me on the Cross of Calvary, and everything I have done merely makes me an unprofitable servant." The hypocrite still has his heart in the world as described by Jesus: **"This people honour Me with their lips; But their heart is far from Me"** (Matthew 15:8). Jesus is quoting from Isaiah, who extends what he is saying to include the reasons why their hearts are far from God: **"And the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near unto Me, and with their mouth and with their lips to honour Me, but have removed their heart far from Me, and their fear of Me is a commandment of men which has been taught them"** (Isaiah 29:13).

So, you can see by this that the hypocrite observes religious principles and puts on the appearance of being a Christian believer through what is coming out of their mouths; but they are not speaking from their hearts. They are repeating "parrot fashion" what others have instructed them to say.

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They attend church, listen to the preaching, go to Bible Studies, pray prayers, obey their mentors, etc; in other words, they do all the religious activities that all Christian believers do, but the difference is that their inner hearts are unchanged. They are doing all these things as a duty, and if they had their own choice, they would not come near a church, but rather do the sinful things their heart is craving. This means that they would have hidden sins that they often resort to because they still enjoy them, and they keep them carefully hidden from others, especially those who fellowship with them in church. The sad thing is that many of these become church leaders, influencing others, and you have seen some of the scandals involving one or two television evangelists that have hit the news in the last couple of years.

d. The infusion of the Holy Spirit in a person at conversion is instantaneous.² ***"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"*** (2 Corinthians 4:6). There comes a time in the plan of God for that person, to hear the preaching of the Gospel with the voice of Christ speaking through it to the heart of the person. The light of the knowledge of God shines into the heart of the person and reveals the extent of his sinfulness, causing him to call out to God for mercy. Then the person is drawn to Jesus Christ and is given the faith to receive Him as Saviour.

This event can take quite a long time to incubate. The person can be under the conviction of sin for quite a long time (which has been slowly growing in intensity) and the Holy Spirit has been working on him. As the conviction of sin increases, the pride of the person goes down and the person experiences humiliation in the presence of our holy

² This is different from the "the baptism in the Holy Spirit" where the converted believer is endowed with power to preach the Gospel and to witness for Christ, backed up with supernatural power to show that Jesus is really alive and that the Gospel is the absolute truth.

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God. Then the Holy Spirit continues to work, bringing a sense of purpose to seek Him, and a growing resolution to get right with God, whatever that takes. While this is happening, the person could be going to church and listening to the preaching of the Word for quite a long while. There are two things in Scripture which give indications of what God is doing in the heart of the seeker in order to bring them to full conversion to Christ.

"To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

The Holy Spirit starts to enlighten the person that God not only exists, but He is the living God to whom we must all answer. Also, that there is only one way to get into a right place with Him. This is to move towards Christ, who is his only hope of experiencing the glory of God without the conviction of his sinfulness overcoming him completely. To be exposed to the glory of God, his sinfulness needs to be covered, and only the righteousness of Christ can do it.

"Jesus answered and said to him, Verily, verily, I say to you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

This can only come to a person through revelation from God Himself. The realisation of this cannot come through natural human reasoning. It has to come through the work of the Holy Spirit in a person. This is the only way a person can know that he needs to be born again, to become a whole new creature in Christ, to be accepted of God and to share His glory in heaven.

But even this knowledge is not enough to save him. (The demons in hell know all this and yet they are totally reprobate without any hope of salvation.) He needs the faith that only the Holy Spirit can give, in order to come to Christ and receive Him as Saviour. When it is God's time

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to convert him to Christ, the Holy Spirit enters the person and completes the work of faith.³ Then the person receives the will to accept Christ as Saviour, receives a new heart, and is instantly changed into that new creature in Christ. As soon as that change happens, he is clothed in the righteousness of Christ, the Bible becomes a new book to him, fellowship with other Christians becomes a pleasure, and he is on the road to sanctification as the Holy Spirit continues His work in his heart.

3. The Design and Purpose of God

Although it has been in the design and purpose of God to bring the person to Christ, once the work of conversion is done, there is a special harmony between the person and God's purpose for his life. He is no longer resisting the work of the Spirit, but is working in absolute harmony with the will of God. He receives a new appreciation of the purpose of God in his life – something which he has never known before. He also starts to recognise a new voice in his heart which, as he grows in grace and in the knowledge of God, he recognises as the voice of Jesus as He speaks to him through the Holy Spirit within him.

³ This is when the seeker is able to accept the invitation when the preacher gives the opportunity for those who wish to accept Christ to respond by walking forward in an altar call, or to stay behind in a special meeting of “anxious” seekers.

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There are two ways to live in harmony with the designs and purposes of God:

A. Glorify God in a life of obedience;

So the first thing is to be obedient as you live in this world. ***"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them"*** (Ephesians 2:10). The Lord has given us all the resources and tools for us to live a life glorifying to God. He does not stand idly by and leave us to our own devices. He continues to work in and through us, and things are made a lot easier when you freely obey His promptings and leadings.

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments, and do them" (Ezekiel 36:26, 27).

So there are two things which the Lord does in us to enable us to live a life of obedience to Christ. Firstly, **He gives us a new heart**. This is part of regeneration where at the same time our spirit is made alive to God. Then **He fills us with the Holy Spirit** to live within us to prompt and to guide us in His ways. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit came upon believers, but after the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit comes to permanently live within the believers in Christ. Along with the Holy Spirit, there is a whole portfolio of abilities and tools to enable us to live that life of obedience to His will, and to have the power and ability to share the Gospel with others.

i. This obedience is sincere and is a true obedience as it flows from a principle of grace. A truly obedient believer is totally aware of the grace of God which makes it possible to be a believer in Christ and to have the will and perseverance to live a life that glorifies God.

ii. The hypocrite is moved by outward things. He forms his opinions and attitudes on influences that come from things outside of himself. Some of these things are: applause from others, where he needs to know that he is approved of those either in authority over him or his peers; worldly and fleshly interests such as the desire to have a significant position in business, society, or the church; force of education, where he is educated along a certain line of theology which he is convinced of as the right way to approach God, but without spending time with the Lord in His Word and waiting on the Spirit to show him the right way. He is usually hard and fast in his views and is basically unteachable. He usually has an attitude that he is "right" and others are wrong, or that his spirituality is superior to others (pride).

iii. Forced obedience is no obedience at all, as in the example set out in Psalm 78:34-37: ***"When He slew them, then they sought Him, and they returned and inquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter Him with their mouth, and they lied to Him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with Him, neither were they steadfast in His covenant."***

The three key words contained in hypocritical obedience are: **flattery**, which involves lip service and repeating of liturgies while the heart is far from God; and God views this as **lying**, because what is coming out of their mouths is not consistent with what they really believe in their hearts; and **unreliability** in their promises in that they will make treaties and agreements which are intended to appease God, but which they do not intend to follow.

What God is looking for is sincere obedience from the heart. God will reward willing obedience: ***"If I do this thing willingly, I have a reward"*** (1 Corinthians 9:17). Therefore willingness from the heart has moral virtue with

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God. Often, in spite of our spirit being willing, our flesh is weak and we sometimes don't feel willing to do the will of God, but, as a wise pastor once said, **"I am willing to be made willing by the Holy Spirit."** This acknowledges our weakness in this area, but brings the matter before the Lord and subjects himself to the inner work of the Holy Spirit to work willingness in the inner man.

God counts heartfelt, willing obedience as holiness: **"but He who has called you is holy, so be holy in all areas of your life"** (1 Peter 1:15). God's standard is holiness, which is the highest standard of behaviour and conduct. Of course, you are never going to reach the standard of perfection that is expected, while you are still in your sinful body, and you must always realise that if it were not for your faith in Christ, you would be continually condemned for your shortcomings. But the grace of God, through your faith in Christ, enables you not to have your sins imputed to you even though you still regularly stumble and fall on your journey toward holiness. But our faith in Christ, expressed in willing obedience to God's will, enables God to view us as totally holy people, clothed in the righteousness of Christ.⁴

iv. The Holy Spirit prepares and qualifies the soul for the enjoyment of Himself in heaven. This is why He works in the person, causing them to become born again and new creatures in Christ. **"Jesus answered [Nicodemus], and said to him, Verily, verily, I say to you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"** (John 3:3). The sinful, natural man cannot enter into the Kingdom of God because it is not a suitable environment for him. It would be a misery to him because there would be no opportunity to express his sinful nature there, seeing that in heaven everything revolves around absolute holiness and devotion to Christ. The natural man is resistant and

⁴ Some groups believe in "entire sanctification" where a person can come to the point where he or she can declare themselves sinless through faith. Our position is that the Scripture more strongly supports progressive sanctification and that full sanctification occurs when the Church is glorified at the Second Coming of Christ.

rebellious toward Christ and so to put him in an environment where Jesus Christ is Lord would be a constant irritation and frustration to him. People who have not been made alive in their spirit would find serving God a drudgery and a burden. Here is God speaking: **"Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred Me"** (Zechariah 11:8). Heaven would be no heaven for a dead soul. Therefore, a person must be regenerated, recreated, and receive a new heart in order to be a fully happy and functioning person in the Kingdom of God.

4. The life-giving work of the Holy Spirit is wholly supernatural.

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said to you, you must be born again. The wind blows where it wants, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:6-8).

The Holy Spirit does not perform any act concerning our salvation naturally. **"For who makes you to differ from another? And what have you that you did not receive? Now if you did receive it why do you glory, as if you have not received it?"** (1 Corinthians 4:7). We did not construct our own salvation; it was the Holy Spirit who did the supernatural work in us to enable us to receive the Gospel. The faith to receive Christ did not arise out of our natural will or ability. It was received from the Holy Spirit.

"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit;

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for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Because you are connected to the vine, Jesus Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit in you, receive spiritual life in order to bear fruit for Christ. Nothing can be done in and through you without Christ, and He gives you the enabling through the Holy Spirit working in you.

"Oh generation of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12:34). Jesus is here describing the state of those who are not converted to Christ. In order to speak and do good things in the sight of God, a person has to have a new heart with the law of Christ written on it. This can only be accomplished by the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit.

"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God" (2 Corinthians 3:5). Even your thoughts, to be accepted of God, need to be energised by the Holy Spirit. Without the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in you, you are not sufficient in yourself to do anything. You are totally helpless, unable to think, speak, or do anything that is acceptable to God.

There are definite reasons why you are totally impotent to do anything toward your salvation. The first reason is that your natural mind is completely at odds with God, and it cannot change itself without the intervention of the Holy Spirit. ***"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be"*** (Romans 8:7).

The second reason is that you are alienated from God, making Him our enemy and not our friend. ***"And, you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now has He reconciled"*** (Colossians 1:21). It is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit that reconciles us to God by opening our darkened minds to the reality of our sin and impending condemnation,

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and then the good news of the Gospel, giving us the will to choose Christ and the faith to come to Him and own Him as Saviour and Lord.

Something produced naturally can be dissolved naturally. **"That which is born of flesh is flesh"** (John 3:6). Therefore, as soon as you were born in the natural, it is inevitable that you are going to grow old and eventually die. But the principle of spiritual life is that it is not subject to dissolution. **"But whosoever drinks of the water that I [Jesus] shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life"** (John 4:14). **"Whosoever is born of God does not commit sin; for His seed remains in him and he cannot sin, because he is born of God"** (1 John 3:9).

What has caused the natural man to grow old and die is the sin which entered into his being when Adam rebelled against God. His sin entered his genes which were passed on to every succeeding generation, so that every person born of man is subject to aging and decay. But the person born of God has a new life in his being. This is spiritual life, and although his natural body grows old and dies, the spiritual life is in his soul and spirit which goes immediately into the presence of Christ when it separates from the natural body at death.

The supernatural work of the Holy Spirit brings life to our dead spirit. Therefore this is a resurrection within us, the most important resurrection, because it is a resurrection of our spirit which makes us alive to God. **"Wherefore He says, Awake you who sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light"** (Ephesians 5:14). So the first thing that happens is that you are made alive in your spirit, and then the light of Christ comes to you in the form of the good news of the Gospel. **"And that you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness"** (Ephesians 4:14). Then, as you take hold of Christ in faith as the result of hearing and

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understanding the Gospel, you are actually being recreated. This shows that the regeneration process is not completely passive on your part. The Holy Spirit works in you to bring light to your heart and spirit, and you respond by exercising faith in Christ; in this way it is like shedding our old filthy garments and putting on the new man like a brand new suit of clothes.

If spiritual life could be produced by natural means, then the people with the best natures would be the soonest to be made alive by it. But it does not work that way. Look at the example of the rich young ruler (Mark 10: 17-21). How many churches that you know of would welcome a man like that into membership and even make him a deacon. I am sure that he would make very generous contributions to the finances of the church, and would have enhanced the reputation of that church in the community by having such an illustrious person in their midst. But Jesus was not looking at the man's natural qualities or possessions, but at his heart. He could see that where his heart was, there was his treasure, and He shone His light onto the very area that needed to be rectified if the young man was to become a genuine disciple. The invitation was given to him, but he refused it. So the young man had many natural qualities, but he ended up graceless because he still retained his covetous heart. He could not give up his reputation or his riches to embrace Christ. By contrast, you see the woman in Luke 7:37-50. Here was a woman who was a sinner, who gave away to Jesus probably her most prized and expensive possession in the expression of her love for Jesus. She went away accepted and justified by the Lord. She was sinful, and yet sanctified.

5. Must Happen Before We Can Close By Faith With Christ

There are two prerequisites to receiving the life of the Spirit:

a, Renounce all other hopes and dependencies. ***"For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God"*** (Romans 10:3). This shows that you cannot depend on your own righteousness. Trying to establish your own righteousness by keeping the Mosaic or moral law in order to win approval from God is really a lost cause. God will not accept anything that contributes toward your own righteousness. ***"All our righteousness is as filthy rags"*** (Isaiah 64:6). ***"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death"*** (Romans 8:2). Until you are set free by a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, you are subject to the law of sin and death. You are trapped in it. There is no escape: ***"How can we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?"*** (Hebrews 2:3). There is only one way of escape from the bind you find ourselves in, and that is by way of Christ. He is the one to set us free, and He has sent the Holy Spirit to do it.

b. You need to open your heart fully to Jesus Christ. ***"Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me"*** (Revelation 3:20). The sound of Jesus knocking on your heart's door and His voice asking you to open the door is conveyed to you by the Holy Spirit speaking the message to your heart. So, the first move is from the Holy Spirit

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coming and speaking to your heart. You then respond by moving towards Jesus. Failing to respond will cost that person spiritual life: **"And you will not come to Me, that you might have life"** (John 5:40).

Question: If you cannot believe until there is a quickening of the Spirit, and you cannot be justified until you believe, won't a person perish if death comes before the work is complete?

Answer: If God begins a work in a person, He will finish it without leaving the soul in danger. **"Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ"** (Philippians 1:6). God is in complete control of life events. He will not allow a person that He is working on to go out into eternity before the work He has started in that person is complete.

APPLICATION

1. Unregenerate people are no better than dead people. They are "dead people walking." They have the appearance of life, but their lives are limited to the affairs of this world, which is temporary and will end at the Lord's command. **"You has He made alive who were dead in trespasses and sins"** (Ephesians 2:1).

- a. The natural person is limited to his senses and cannot see beyond the physical to the spiritual. **"They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave. Therefore they say to God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of Your ways. Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? And what profit should we have, if we pray to Him? Lo, their good is not in their hand: the counsel of the wicked is far from me"**

(Job 21:12-16). This is what a New Testament apostle says about the natural person: **"You have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; you have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter"** (James 5:5).

- b. The apostle Paul knew that the natural wisdom of men was not enough to bring a person into the kingdom of God. **"But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness to him: neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned"** (1 Corinthians 2:14). Paul is showing his awareness of what Jesus previous said about unconverted people: **"No man can come to Me, except it were given to him of My Father"** (John 6:65).

2. The Holy Spirit gives much encouragement to ministers and parents to wait in hope of final success through the preaching the Gospel, even when it looks like there is little hope that the ones being ministered would be converted. **"The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, and caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. And He said to me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, You know"** (Ezekiel 37: 1-3). This prophecy is there to show that God is the God of the impossible, and He is quite capable to cause a valley of dry bones, caused by some ancient battle, to come alive and transform into a great army. In the same way, the Holy Spirit is very capable of taking a dead and dry sinner, filling him full of life, and making him a powerful soldier of the Lord.

3. The converted Christian carries much honour by virtue of his new birth. **"I write to you, fathers because you have known Him that is from the beginning. I write to you**

young men, because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, because you have known the Father" (1 John 1:13). This is an acknowledgment from the Holy Spirit (through the words of the Apostle John) that He acknowledges the positive response to come to Christ. Conversion to Christ is not an insignificant event for God. The Scripture says that there is joy in heaven when a sinner repents and comes to Christ (Luke 15:7).

3. The condition of the unregenerate world is totally deplorable. It is as Jesus describes the scribes and Pharisees: **"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness"** (Matthew 23:27). The world that you see around us looks beautiful and attractive, but when you dig below the surface, you see in the behaviour of natural people the sin and corruption that lies there.
 - a. There is no beauty in the dead. It doesn't matter how attractive and good-looking a person is while he is alive, because when he is dead and is a lifeless corpse, the quickest thing you want to do is to have the funeral and have him buried or cremated, because having a dead body around is not something you want.
 - b. The dead have no pleasure or delight. **"For to be carnally minded is death...because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God"** (Romans 8:6-8). While a person is still alive they can derive much pleasure from their wealth, wisdom, assets, lands, and honours, but it all stops when that person dies. **"They that trust in their wealth, and boast**

themselves in the multitude of their riches...Their inward thought [is, that] their houses [shall continue] for ever, [and] their dwelling places to all generations; they call [their] lands after their own names. Nevertheless man [being] in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts [that] perish. This their way [is] their folly...Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them...and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling” (Psalm 49:6-14, KJV).

- c. The dead must be buried. **“Then Abraham rose from beside his dead wife and spoke to the Hittites. He said, “I am a foreigner and stranger among you. Sell me some property for a burial site here so I can bury my dead”** (Genesis 23:3, 4). Abraham loved Sarah and was devoted to her while she was alive, but as soon as she died, he needed to have her buried and he negotiated with the local Hittites to buy a burial plot for her. She was no use to him dead, and if he tried to keep her, all he would end up with is a rotting smelly corpse.

5. All men should be very concerned to examine their condition with respect to spiritual life and death. (Romans 8:12): **“Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it.”** Unregenerate sinners will not acknowledge that they have such an obligation, and this is because they have no understanding of the spiritual world. So, in order to come to a realization that he really does need more than this natural understanding has to offer him, he must consider the following criteria:

6. Spiritual sense is evidence of spiritual life. **“But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil”**

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(Hebrews 5:14). Unregenerate sinners cannot distinguish good from evil, although they are able to make some limited distinctions between standards of natural morality. It is only when the Holy Spirit does a supernatural work in the soul to give him an understanding of what is good or evil in a spiritual sense. Once he realises that, and makes a comparison between God's spiritual standard of what is good, and his own state, then he will see how sinful he is and the condemnation that awaits him if he continues in the same direction as before. This realisation comes by revelation, and is the first step towards spiritual life. (Romans 7:24): ***"Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?"***

- a. Spiritual hunger and thirst is also evidence of spiritual life. ***"Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation"*** (1 Peter 2:2).
- b. If there are spiritual conflicts with sin then that is evidence of spiritual life. ***"For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please"*** (Galatians 5:17).

Objection: "I have a very dead heart toward spiritual things."

Answer: The very sense of spiritual deadness is a sign of spiritual life. There is a great difference between spiritual deadness and spiritual death.

Objection: "Some signs of spiritual life are clear to me, but I cannot relate to others."

Answer: Although a child can breathe, even if it cannot do a lot of other things, it shows that it is alive.

How Do You Actually And Effectively Apply Christ To Your Own Soul?

"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12).

As soon as the soul is made alive by the Spirit of God, the immediate response is the active reception of Christ in the way of believing.

1. You have the power to become children of God.

2. ***"As many as received Him..."*** In considering this segment of the key Scripture we must consider the following: ***"a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all"*** (Colossians 3:11). The Gospel is now available to all, and not limited to one racial or ethnic group. ***"For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH"*** (Romans 1:17, emphasis mine). Those who receive Christ must receive Him by faith, which is believing the literal

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promises of God over and above what the senses tell them. **"As the Scripture says, Anyone who trusts in Him will never be put to shame. For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on Him, for, Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved"** (Romans 10:11-13). This is a repeat of the first reference, to reinforce that God's invitation to come to Christ is open to all who will believe the good news.

3. Receiving Christ is equivalent to believing on His Name. His Name is Himself, and Himself is His Name. To be linked to the Name of Jesus, there must be devotion to the Jesus of the Name.

Doctrine:

That the receiving of the Lord Jesus Christ is that saving and vital act of faith that gives the soul right both to His Person and benefits.

We cannot act spiritually until we begin to live spiritual. There are different ways of stating it: "Jesus said to them, ***"I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst"***" (John 6:35). Spiritual life is here expressed as receiving the bread of life and the living water; the result is that you will never sense spiritual malnourishment if you have received Jesus. ***"Hear the word of the LORD, You rulers of Sodom; Give ear to the instruction of our God, You people of Gomorrah"*** (Isaiah 1:10). When you see descriptions like this in the Old Testament, ie: "rulers of Sodom", etc., you interpret these as speaking of unregenerate sinners. The New Testament view of this is an instruction for sinners to hear the Word of the Lord speaking through the Gospel and to do more than just hear it, but, as other translations put it, to listen to the Word. In New Testament language, listening to the Word of the Lord for sinners means to believe the Gospel and receive Christ.

The Nature of Receiving Christ Explained

A. No person can receive Christ in the darkness of natural ignorance. ***"For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day"*** (John 6:40). This shows that seeing leads to believing. ***"It is written in the prophets, 'AND THEY SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT OF GOD.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me"*** (John 6:45, emphasis mine). The knowledge of the Father leads to receiving Christ.

B. A mental assent of the understanding of the truths of Christ revealed in the Gospel: His person, nature, offices, incarnation, death, resurrection, is not in itself saving faith, yet it is the foundation. There are three degrees of assent: conjecture – weak; opinion – moderate; belief – strong.

This is brought four ways:

1. Intelligence of sense
2. Clearness of self-evident principles
3. Discourse and notional deduction
4. Infallible testimony

"If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for the testimony of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son" (1 John 5:9).

"He who has received His testimony has set his seal to this, that God is true" (John 3:33).

C. Our hearty agreement. **"This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone"** (1 Peter 2:7, emphasis mine).

D. It can find nothing in Christ that is distasteful. **"His mouth is full of sweetness. And he is wholly desirable. This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem"** (Song of Solomon 5:16).

E. Christ lacks nothing that is necessary or desirable. **"And being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform"** (Romans 4:21).

F. Receiving Christ consists in the consent and choice of the will. **"Your people will volunteer freely in the day of Your power; In holy array, from the womb of the dawn, Your youth are to You as the dew"** (Psalm 110:3). There are problems when sinners resist the call of the Gospel. This is why Jesus said that many are called but few are chosen. **"And you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life"** (John 5:40). The will consents through the mighty power of God. **"And what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might"** (Ephesians 1:19). This is what it takes to turn a sinner's will around from resisting the message to accepting it with all his heart.

G. Christ is received under the terms of the Gospel. There is no other way that Christ is received. **"So it makes no difference whether I preach or they preach, for we all**

preach the same message you have already believed" (1 Corinthians 15:11). There is only one message, and that is the good news that Jesus died on the cross to take the guilt and punishment of our sins from us, and the only way that can happen is that the sinner receives Jesus as Saviour and Lord. There are many who believe and teach that religion can be gained by observing some sort of moral principles, and believing in a Jesus who was not born of a virgin, did no miracles, and did not rise from the dead. This may be religion, but it is not Bible Christianity.

H. The Gospel offers Christ sincerely. ***"But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith"*** (1 Timothy 1:5). ***"That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us"*** (Hebrews 6:18).

I. The Gospel offers Christ entirely and without division. ***They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household"*** (Acts 16:31). This was in response to the question by the Philippian jailer, ***"What must I do to be saved?"*** This shows us that all those who believe on Christ and no true seeker will miss out.

J. The Gospel offers Christ exclusively as the only Saviour. ***"These leaders were very disturbed that Peter and John were teaching the people that through Jesus there is a resurrection of the dead"*** (Acts 4:2). The Jewish religious leaders believed that being a Jew and observing the Mosaic Law was the only way to approach God. Then the Apostles came and were preaching that Christ had risen from the dead and there was no salvation outside of Him. In effect, the Apostles were teaching that observing the Mosaic Law was not the way to approach God any more, and this was one of the significant factors behind their persecution of Christians at that time. ***"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ"*** (1 Corinthians 3:11). ***"I will go in the***

strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of Your righteousness, even of Yours only" (Psalm 71:16). ***"And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith"*** (Philippians 3:9).

K. Christ is offered freely. ***"Jesus answered and said to her, if you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give me to drink; you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water"*** (John 4:10). ***"Ho, every one that thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money; come and buy and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price"*** (Isaiah 55:1). ***"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come, And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is thirsty say, Come. And whoever will, let him take the water of life freely"*** (Revelation 22:17). ***"But to him that works not, but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness"*** (Romans 4:5).

L. Christ is orderly in His offering. First His person and then his privileges. ***"He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"*** (Romans 8:32). You can look for salvation as an objective. ***"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins; return to Me, for I have redeemed you"*** (Isaiah 44:22). Christ is totally desirable. ***"Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You"*** (Psalm 73:25).

M. Christ is offered advisedly as part of God's counsel, plans and purposes. ***"Even He shall build the temple of the Lord; and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both"*** (Zechariah 6:13). ***"And I will betroth you unto Me for ever; yes, I will betroth you to Me in***

righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth you to Me in faithfulness; and you shall know the Lord" (Hosea 2:19, 20). We need to count the cost in being converted to Christ and living a life of holiness. ***"For which of you, intending to build a tower, sits not down first, and counts the cost, whether he has sufficient to finish it?"*** (Luke 14:28). And living a life of holiness involves taking up the cross. ***"Then Jesus said to His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take his cross, and follow Me"*** (Matthew 16:24).

Where to Now?

If you are not a Christian believer you need to start seeking God and asking Him to give you the revelation of who Jesus Christ is, and your state before God. The fact that you have exercised enough interest to read this book means that the Holy Spirit is drawing your heart to Christ. The next part will show you how the voice of Christ speaks through the Gospel, and how it is important for you to respond to it in obedience.

Part 2

THE VOICE OF CHRIST IN THE GOSPEL

Introduction

What follows is a concept that is familiar to many committed Christians, but it is expressed in a fresh way and clearly identifies the specific voice of Christ, distinguished from the other voices that come to us. Because Jesus Christ is a real Person who communicates to you through the Holy Spirit, His voice is distinctive and can be recognized.

These are not my original thoughts. The ideas in the text are adapted from a set of sermons by John Flavel (1628-1691).⁵ When I read this particular sermon, I was so struck

5 *The sermon was published in his Works, in six volumes, published by Banner of Truth Trust, 1968, 1982, vol 4, pp 169, 193. I have not copied the sermons word for word in modern English, but have instead taken*

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by the relevance to contemporary Christian experience and fellowship with Christ that I felt the need to restate his points in a way that would be appreciated by committed Christians of this generation. This shows that although the principles were taught by Mr Flavel 320 years ago, it is so obvious that they are very relevant today, and that the Holy Spirit has not changed His tune in what He is teaching the church from that day until this.

I am involved in a non-denominational ministry concentrating on the prophetic. The ministry concentrates on the voice of God through the ministry of the Holy Spirit being an essential component of the teaching and practice offered to Christians at the Prophetic Schools, Equipping Stations and Prophetic Days, where believers are encouraged to learn to be sensitive to the voice of God and to make themselves available to move in the prophetic. I believe that this is vitally important for a deeper understanding on how to put ourselves in a position where we can hear and recognize the voice of Christ when we share the Gospel with others.

The text quoted above emphasizes the point that the voice of Christ is a significant component in the preaching of the Gospel. **In fact, conversion cannot take place without you being able to hear the voice of Christ speaking to your heart.** This shows that you do not come to Christ through your own will, nor by the effectiveness of Gospel preaching alone; but by the voice of Jesus Christ which opens your heart, the will, and makes the preaching of the Gospel persuasive to the point where you are convinced of the truth and accepts Christ as Saviour: **"if any person hears My voice"**.

Hearing is either **external or internal**. The soul has "ears" as well as the body. **"He who is able to hear, let him listen to and heed what the Spirit says to the assemblies (the churches)"** (Revelation 2:17). It is the

his main points and expressed them as they spoke to me.

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person who has a **spiritual ear** to recognize and be able to confidently discern that it is actually the voice of the Spirit.

It is a serious judgment from God when God denies the ability of a person to hear the voice of the Spirit: **"And He said, Go, tell this people, Hear and hear continually, but understand not; and see and see continually, but do not apprehend with your mind"** (Isaiah 7:9). Spiritual hearing is the faculty of the inner man. There are plenty of people who hear sermons and sit under religious teaching, hearing with their physical ears. But hearing the voice of Christ involves not only hearing the Gospel with the physical ears, but there needs to be **a work of understanding**: **"Is it not the task of the ear to discriminate between [wise and unwise] words, just as the mouth distinguishes [between desirable and undesirable] food? "** (Job 12:11). It also involves the emotions: **"And by unlimited seduction to evil and with all wicked deception for those who are (going to perdition,) perishing because they did not welcome the Truth but refused to love it that they might be saved"** (II Thessalonians 2:10). It also involves **obedience** to what we hear.

Your mind might be stimulated with the pleasant themes and "music" of the Gospel but it would be as if you never heard it at all if obedience doesn't follow the hearing of it: **"Lo, you are to them as a very lovely [love] song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument, for they hear your words, but do not do them"** (Ezekiel 33:32). When you apply this to your own situation, You are considering the **vital sound of Christ's effective internal voice**, which brings spiritual life to dead sinners: **"Believe Me when I assure you, most solemnly I tell you, the time is coming and is here now when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear it shall live"** (John 5:25).

Doctrine:

No person will be able to exercise the will to effectively receive Christ until the spiritual, life-giving voice of Christ is first heard by the inner man.

In order to fully understand the working of the voice of Christ to open the hearts of sinners, six things need to be explained:

1. There are different kinds of Christ's voices.
2. The general nature of the voice.
3. The special properties of the voice.
4. To whom it is directed.
5. What motivates Christ to speak to one person and leave another person out.
6. The special effects in each person who receives the voice of Christ.

The Different Kinds of Christ's Voices

There are only two types of voice that comes from Christ: the **external** and the **internal** voice.

The External Voice:

We identify the external voice of Christ as the written Scriptures, and the voice of the ministers of Christ as they preach the Gospel: ***"Therefore thus says the Lord [to Jeremiah]...you shall be My minister; and if you separate the precious from the vile...you shall be as My mouthpiece"*** (Jeremiah 15:19). When you read or

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hear the Scriptures, and the preaching of the Gospel, you are hearing the voice of Christ.

The Internal Voice:

The internal voice of Christ does not consist in sound, but in power, and here are some remarkable differences between the two voices:

(1) The external voice is the instrument of conveying His internal voice to the soul. When the external voice speaks to the ear, the internal voice speaks to **the heart**.

(2) The external voice has no effect unless it is accompanied by the internal spiritual voice. It was a dramatic sight to see the walls of Jericho falling to the ground at the sounds of the rams horns. But there was more power present to bring the walls down than just the sound of the horns.

It is more of a marvellous sight to see people visibly affected in their hearts through the sound of the preaching of the Gospel, and to see hearts completely changed in front of our eyes. Here it is **a voice within a voice**. Some of us have also seen hearts broken and lives changed in meetings where there has been no preaching at all. Here, the internal spiritual voice of Christ has come directly to people, bypassing the external voice of the preacher. This shows that even though people are sitting under the best of ministry from the greatest men of God, **there is no effect on their hearts without the internal spiritual voice of Christ is speaking as well**.

The General Nature of the Voice of Christ

Firstly, the voice of Christ has the power to enliven and open the heart with just one word. Look at how Jesus used the power of His words when He raised Lazarus in John 11:43: ***"When He had said this, He shouted with a loud voice, Lazarus, come out! And out walked the man who had been dead."*** It has been said that if Jesus had not have mentioned Lazarus's name, all the dead people in the tombs around about would have walked out, such is the power of the words of Jesus!

He also used the power of His words to heal the deaf man in Mark 7:34: ***"And looking up to heaven, He sighed as He said, Ephphatha, which means, Be opened. And his ears were opened..."***

So, when the Gospel is being preached, there is a mighty power that flows from Christ, through the Holy Spirit, to enliven a person who is spiritually dead and to open the heart that was previously cold, hard and locked up through ignorance and unbelief. This is further shown through the example in Ezekiel 37:9 and 10: ***"Then said He to me, Prophesy to the breath and spirit, son of man, and say to the breath and spirit, thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath and spirit, and breathe***

upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath and spirit came into [the bones], and they lived and stood up upon their feet, an exceedingly great host."

As the breath came from the four winds of heaven and animated the dry bones and gave life to them, so the mighty power of Christ comes along with the voice of the preacher, and the heart opens and the will bows to the will of God. When the powerful spiritual voice of Christ is heard, there is no resisting it. It is a beam of light coming directly from the Holy Spirit into the heart and mind of the sinner, clearly showing the danger of a sinful life and the need to receive Christ as Saviour – as if a voice directly from heaven was declaring and making the truth plain to the person's heart.

"The Lord spoke thus to me with His strong hand upon me..." (Isaiah 8:11). Here, the Lord made such an impression on the spirit of Isaiah that it seemed that He had taken hold of him with a strong hand. This indicates that not only does the Lord speak to a sinner's heart, but He speaks in such a strong way that there is absolutely no doubt that it was the Lord Himself who is doing the talking.

This is Christ's way of speaking by His Spirit to the inner ear of the sinner's and believer's spirit. There are some who maintain that He speaks through audible speech, but this can be in the realm of fancy, because the voice is a **spiritual** voice that speaks to the heart. Perhaps, the inner voice has had so powerful an impression on the heart that it has seemed like an audible voice.

A faithful man of God had the experience of hearing a voice come to him while he was praying, saying "I am come in person to visit you for you are worthy." The good man suspected that this was a delusion of Satan and he shut his eyes saying, "I will not see Christ here, it shall suffice me to see him in glory." The voice of Christ that comes through

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the Word of God is much more reliable than a voice from heaven.

Secondly, **the voice of Christ is able to facilitate what is impossible for people to achieve by themselves.**

This means that He is able to effect a sinner's conversion with a word from His mouth. Charles Finney, the famous American 19th Century revivalist, had the experience of seeing this happen after a time of prayer in the woods when he was immersed in the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He came down out of the woods, encountered an unconverted man whom he knew, spoke to him about his soul, and the fellow was converted on the spot. This is what happens when the voice of Christ speaks directly to a person's heart in support of the sharing of the Gospel by faithful and prayerful believers.

When Jesus healed people during His earthly ministry, He did it easily and immediately. The centurion saw this and was able to confidently say, "**Speak the word only, and my servant will be healed**" (Luke 7:7). Therefore, all the Holy Spirit has to do to make the most dead sinner alive is to merely say the word and it happens.

All Elijah did was to throw his mantle over Elisha, and the latter had no hesitation in being willing to give up all to follow him. Similarly, all it needs is for a beam of light from the Spirit to shine into a sinner's heart, and immediately there is total willingness to leave all, give up the selfish life with its most meaningful desires and interests to follow Jesus, even when the cost is the greatest, and the terms are the most severe. Conversion is too difficult for angels or humans to do of and by themselves, but Christ can do it by just saying one word.

The Special Properties of the Voice of Christ

Thirdly, we need to know more of the spiritual voice of Christ and the special properties of it. This voice must be heard by every seeker planning to come to Christ, because the door of the heart cannot be opened without hearing it.

A. It is a **secret** and **still** voice that seems to be whispered into the ear of the spirit, directly applying what is spoken to the external ear, much like what Nathan said to David: **"You are the man."** This still small voice reverberates right through the soul, and yet, no other person but the individual receiving can hear it. **"Now, a day before Saul came, the Lord had revealed to Samuel in his ear"** (I Samuel 9:15), that He whispered the secret into the prophet's mind. This is what happens when a sinner hears Christ whisper in his ear and makes his heart to tremble with godly fear, saying, **"This is your very state and condition; this is your sin, which is now exposed by the Gospel in your ears."** This is the voice that comes without any sound that can be heard by no one else, but is very real and intelligible to the heart to whom it is spoken.

In I Kings 19:11, 12, when Elijah stood on the mount before the Lord, there came **"a great and strong wind"** (which)

rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake, and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire [a sound of gentle stillness and] a still, small voice. When Elijah heard the voice, he wrapped his face in his mantle", etc.

It is the same with the preaching of the Gospel. The terrors of the Lord can be made known by the preaching of the Law of God; hell and damnation can be held up before the condemned sinner, but until the still small voice of Christ through the Holy Spirit comes and applies these things to the conscience, the sinner will never cover his or her face with shame and confusion, nor will he or she go and mourn for the misery that awaits the unconverted sinner.

The voice of God goes right to the centre of the soul of the person. The outward preaching of the Gospel will have no significance to the person until the voice of God accompanies it. ***"In hearing, men hear not"*** (Matthew 13:13). They hear the voice of man, but not the voice of God. They hear the sound, but do not feel the power of the word. What is spoken externally dies in the ear and is not retained by the memory. Most people who attend church meetings have forgotten the content of the sermon by the time they finish their cup of tea after the service and head for the door to go home. But the still, small voice of Christ makes its way through secret passages right to the heart, and no one else knows what God speaks to the heart but the person to whom He speaks, and it is not forgotten.

B. The internal spiritual voice of Christ is **a personal and specific voice**. It speaks directly and distinctly to the state of the soul as it were the only soul that God was ever speaking to. Preachers speak in general terms, and they draw the bow of the Gospel at random, as it were, not knowing where God will direct the arrow; but the Holy Spirit guides it to the target. A person can be sitting in a

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congregation of 400 people and it can seem as if the preacher is speaking directly to him on a personal level. The preacher may not know him on a personal level, but the Holy Spirit takes the words of the preacher and applies it directly and personally to the congregation member's heart. The person receiving the voice of the Spirit then senses that God is singling him out in particular, and that the Lord means what He is saying, especially if the voice is convicting him of his sin, need for righteousness, and impending judgment to come.

John 10:5 tells us that Christ **"calls His sheep by name"**. How does He do that? By speaking specifically to them, describing their particular situation as if He called them by their given names. He does not use an audible voice, as He did by **"Samuel, Samuel"**, or, **"Saul, Saul"**, but He sends a beam of convincing light into the conscience, revealing the specific sin, danger, or obligation expected of the person. This happens as if God is actually naming him. Until this comes, no sharing of the Gospel, even by the best of preachers or faithful Christian workers can have any saving operation on the soul.

A person can sit through hundreds of sermons, hearing truth after truth, and agreeing with them all in his mind, and they will do him no good. David, after his adultery with Bathsheba and his murder of Uriah the Hittite, had a peaceful conscience, until Nathan arrived and the Holy Spirit accompanied his word and spoke right into his soul concerning his sin. God can come into a congregation, single out a person, speak with His voice to the heart, rip up the peaceful conscience and cause the person to cry out, "What can I do to be saved?"

"...there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were closed up for three years and six months, so that there came a great famine over all the land; and yet Elijah was not sent to a single one of them, but only to Zarephath in the

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country of Sidon to a woman who was a widow"
(Luke 4:25, 26).

So, you can be sitting in a meeting with hundreds of people, listening to the same sermon and prayers, and yet God can come to no one else but you, and convict you in a particular way to direct you more perfectly in His will. In this, the Lord shows His unique goodness and causes a very positive response in your heart to Him.

Two very good examples of what we have been talking about are:

1. During a testimony given by the founder of the Gospel Faith Messenger Ministry, Rodney Francis recounted his experience as a teenager being in a meeting when an old man of God was preaching the Gospel. When the preacher spoke about sin, righteousness and judgment to come, Rodney was scared out of his wits. What caused that? It was the voice of Christ, through the Holy Spirit, speaking to his heart. Quite possibly, most of the others in that meeting were not affected in the same way. They may have enjoyed the sermon as most of us would when Gospel meetings are lit up and lively. But Rodney did not enjoy the experience. This is because the Holy Spirit bypassed everyone else and singled him out to be spoken to directly about his sinful life and his neglect of Christ.⁶

2. The famous Irish evangelist, Willie Mullan gave a testimony about when he was an unsaved youth delinquent attending a Gospel meeting conducted by an old evangelist who was about to retire. This was a three-week mission, and no one got saved, which was a great disappointment to the evangelist. After that mission, he retired, discouraged. Willie attended the last meeting, in which the evangelist

⁶ *Recounted with kind permission from Rodney Francis, Founder and Director, GFM Ministries.*

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asked the congregation what they would do on that day when Jesus Christ comes again. Willie was not affected and maintained his careless attitude throughout the time of the meeting, but as he walked home through a moor on the edge of town, the voice of God came to his heart, saying, **"What will YOU do when I come again?"** This had such an effect on him, that he got converted right away and after that received a call from God to preach the Gospel. After having preached the Gospel and seen thousands converted to Christ, he went and visited that old evangelist and shared his testimony with him, which was a great encouragement to the old man.

C. The internal, spiritual voice of Christ **is distinguishable by the person who hears it.** **"The sheep know His voice"** (John 10:4). There is majesty, a divine authority that comes with the inner voice of Christ that makes it quite different from all the other voices that one might hear. It was said of Christ, **"No man spoke like this man"** (John 7:46). You can say the same of the spiritual voice. You have never heard a voice like this before. It seals the truth upon the heart so firmly that there can be no objection to it. You can debate with the voice of man, but there is no debate at all when you hear the voice of Christ in our heart.

There are two things that come with the voice of Christ which makes it entirely different from all other human voices:

1. A marvellous light comes with it that lights up all the parts of the heart and exposes its secrets. **"For God, Who said, Let light shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts so as [to beam forth] the Light for the illumination of the knowledge of the majesty and glory of God [as it is manifest in the Person and is revealed] in the face of Jesus Christ, the Messiah"** (II Corinthians 4:6). **"The secrets of his heart are laid bare; and so, falling on [his] face, he will worship**

God, declaring that God is among you in very truth” (I Corinthians 14:25).

2. A marvellous power accompanies His voice to make a deep and firm impression of what is spoken to the heart. **“For our [preaching of the] glad tidings (the Gospel) came to you not only in word, but also in (its own inherent) power and in the Holy Spirit, and with great conviction and absolute certainty (on our part)”** (I Thessalonians 1:5). The Apostles were absolutely certain that the word they preached came directly from the Holy Spirit. Sometimes when the word of God comes to a person, he can be at a loss, as Peter when he was released from prison, but when he recovers his senses he can say, **“Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent His angel.”**

It is the same with a believer when he first hears the voice of God and takes a little time to get over the amazement and initial doubts about what power this is that is affecting his heart, because he has never heard such a voice like this before. But when things settle down and the believer reflects on it, the assurance comes that this is indeed the voice of God that is coming to him.

D. The spiritual, internal voice of Christ is **a surprising voice**. It comes unexpected by the person who hears it. **“I am found of them who sought Me not”** (Isaiah 65:1).

Before you came to Christ, someone can invite you to a Gospel meeting and you think that you are going to hear three hymns and a sermon and that's about it. Little do you realize that as you are sitting under the preaching that the voice of Christ comes to you and forcefully reveals to you what a vile sinner you are and that you could slide down into hell at any moment because you have no Saviour to keep you out of it. It is something that you have not foreseen.

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Little did Matthew realize when he was sitting collecting taxes, that Jesus would come along and call him to be a disciple. Saul had no idea that on his way to Damascus, a great light would shine out of heaven and the voice of Christ would speak to him in the way that it did. Some have come to Gospel meetings to scoff and ridicule, and others to satisfy their curiosity. But God's thoughts were not theirs.

The time for mercy has now come, and the Holy Spirit speaks to the person's heart, blowing their peaceful conscience to pieces and causing them to tremble with fear at the revealing of what their future is to be outside of Christ.

What follows are the possible thoughts of a person who has come to a Gospel meeting with light-hearted motives, but has been arrested by the Spirit of God and is receiving more than he bargained for:

"I went to that meeting for company because I had nothing to do that evening. I sat there with a careless heart while the songs and hymns were sung. I thought. 'so what?' when testimonies of God's mercy and grace were given. I sat through most of the sermon, which I did not understand, and then suddenly an arrow was suddenly shot into my conscience which startled and frightened me to death. It is now beyond any other power but that of Christ to settle and satisfy my wounded and unsettled conscience."

E. This spiritual, internal voice of Christ **is full of energy; great and mighty in power to pierce the heart.** Hebrews 4:12 tells us: **"For the Word that God speaks is alive and full of power - making it active, operative, energizing and effective; it is sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating to the dividing line of the breath of life (soul) and [the immortal] spirit, and of joints and marrow [that is, of the deepest parts of our nature] exposing and sifting and analyzing and judging the very thoughts and purposes of the heart."**

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The power that is spoken of is not in the written word itself, and does not work as a natural agent; otherwise everyone who has Scripture quoted to them would feel this power. No, the power comes from the Spirit of Christ speaking to the sinner's conscience.

"For the weapons of our warfare are not physical (weapons of flesh and blood), but they are mighty before God for the overthrow and destruction of strongholds, [inasmuch as we] refute arguments and theories and reasonings and every proud and lofty thing that sets itself up against the (true) knowledge of God; and we lead every thought and purpose away captive into the obedience of Christ the Messiah, the Anointed One" (II Corinthians 10: 4, 5). These are the effects of the voice of Christ when it comes through the Holy Spirit.

We can look further at the power of the voice of God when we consider the new creation compared to the original creation: **"For God who said, Let light shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts so as [to beam forth] the Light for the illumination of the knowledge of the majesty and glory of God..."** (II Corinthians 4:6). God can have a dead, darkened sinner before Him, and then command the light of the Spirit to shine in that person's heart, and at a word from Christ, that dead sinner, like Lazarus from the tomb, can rise up and come forth with spiritual life. **"...the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear it shall live"** (John 5:25).

F. The spiritual voice of Christ **brings deep conviction to the conscience**. It ends arguments, debates and evasions. When it was merely the voice of man, anyone could dispute and deflect the force of what was spoken. But when the Spirit comes, **"He shall convince the world of sin"** (John 16:8). The convincing is done by demonstration, to show the impossibility of some of the ideas that we have about

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sin. Before the voice of Christ is heard, when presented with the terrors of the wrath of God toward sinners, the evasive heart could say, *"This concerns me no more than anyone else. If it goes badly for me, it will also go badly for thousands of others as well. It is true that I do have this evil in me, but I also have some good in me."*

But as soon as the voice of Christ speaks conviction to the conscience, these arguments die away very quickly. He was doubtful about his sin before, but now he is certain: *"I see that I am a sinner. I have avoided receiving Christ. If I continue in my unsaved state, hell awaits me when I die, and that could happen at any time."* His vain hopes give up the ghost and his sin and guilt stare right in the face of his conscience.

G. The voice of Christ that we are presently speaking about **generally comes through the preaching of the Word of God**. Because there are always exceptions to the rule, it can come through other means, but this is quite rare. ***"For our [preaching of the]...Gospel came to you not only in word, but also in...power and in the Holy Spirit"*** (1 Thessalonians 1:5). This shows that it is not just the natural preaching of the Word of God; otherwise all the thousands of church goers who sit under good evangelical sermons will experience the power of God in their hearts each time. The reality is that most hear the sermons without any sense of the power of God in them. But to the Thessalonians, says Paul, the Word of God has come in the power of the Holy Spirit, and it is the operation of that power that has had the dynamic and life-giving spiritual effects on them. The words that were preached were the **vehicle** that carried the power of the Spirit to their hearts.

Sometimes the voice of Christ has been heard through providence, but this is rare. It is usually through the preaching of the Gospel. This is why Paul calls the Gospel ***"the power of God to salvation"*** (Romans 1:16). The modern preaching of the Gospel uses all sorts of "gimmicks"

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and technological aids, but the voice of Christ is still heard through the actual preaching of the Word. Modern thinking often sees straight pulpit preaching of the Gospel as "outdated", "of another time", "foolish and ineffective", but the Holy Spirit has not altered His way of bringing the voice of Christ to the heart of sinners and believers. **"For the story and message of the cross is sheer absurdity and folly to those who are perishing and on their way to perdition, but to us who are being saved it is the [manifestation of] the power of God"** (I Corinthians 1:18).

Although God is quite capable of conveying His voice through providential events, He rarely does so if the Word is available to be preached. But if the Word is devalued and despised, He will use providence to speak to the hearts of sinners. But suppose God did decide to use another medium to convey his voice to the hearts of believers and sinners? A person can become full of doubts and question the validity of the voice. He could say, *"I need to know for sure that what is coming to me is really the voice of God, because my soul depends on it. What if it is a counterfeit of Satan?"*

In a case like this, it would be very hard to provide adequate proof that what is being conveyed is the genuine voice of God. But when God uses the Word as His instrument to convey His voice, it yields much more satisfaction to the doubting soul. **"We have a more sure word of prophecy"** (II Peter 1:19).

Although Paul was converted with a voice from heaven, God sent Ananias to preach the Gospel to him (Acts 9:17). The Lord will honour His Word. Providence may prepare the way, but the Word is God's regular instrument to convey His power to bring salvation to sinners.

H. The voice of Christ **leaves abiding effects and lasting impressions on the heart.** The words of men are

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scattered to the wind and easily forgotten, but the effects of Christ's words are durable and lasting. **"I will never forget Your precepts; [how can I?] for it is by them You have quickened me – granted me life"** (Psalm 119:93). How many hundreds of excellent sermons have you heard and forgotten over the years? But when the voice of Christ comes to you through the Word, you have a lifetime memory of it. You can recall it as if it were yesterday. His words are sealed on your heart for ever (Jeremiah 31:33). Job knew about the sealing of the word on his heart: **"He seals their instructions"** (Job 32:16).

To Whom The Voice Of Christ Is Directed

To whom is the voice of Christ directed?

It is quite true that the Holy Spirit is a free agent and can direct Himself anywhere He wishes: **"The wind blows where it will"** (John 3:18). Also, the Lord has made all sorts of people hear His voice, high or low in rank, rich or poor. Yet, if we take notice of what He usually does, we

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find that there are not many mighty, influential, wealthy or wise people chosen to hear and respond to His voice: **"for [simply] consider your own call, brethren; not many [of you were considered to be] wise, according to human estimates and standards; not many influential and powerful; not many of high and noble birth"** (I Corinthians 1:26). He didn't say **not any**, but **not many**. He does call some to stop the world thinking that Christians are being deceived through their simplicity. There was one Joseph of Arimathea; one honourable Nicodemus, but not many.

In actual fact, men of the greatest fame and position have been the greatest enemies of the Gospel. Two things make a person great in the world: (1) the increase of wealth, and (2) internal gifts of the mind giving the ability of sharp reason and wit. When these two combine in a person, it makes it virtually impossible for them to stoop in humility to the simplicity of the Gospel. The Lord passes these ones by and directs His voice to the poor. **"God has chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom"** (James 2:5). Jesus confirms this in Matthew 11:25, 26: **"At that time Jesus began to say, I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth and acknowledge openly and joyfully to Your honour that you have hidden these things from the wise and clever and learned, and revealed them to babies – to the childish, untaught and unskilled. Yes, Father, [I praise You that] such was Your gracious will and good pleasure."**

Why The Voice and Call of Christ is Directed to One Person and Not to Another

It is not because Jesus sees one person better than another as far as their status, dignity, or position in the world may be. Everyone is bound by the common sin and misery brought about by the Fall. This was behind the comment of Paul in Ephesians 2:3, that **"they were by nature the children of wrath even as others."** If it was not this way, then you would have something to glory about before God. But Jesus goes about things according to the pleasure of the divine will. It was said of the Ephesians that they **"were afar off"** (Ephesians 2:13), yet they heard the voice of Christ. The discrete scribe (Mark 12:34), who was **"not far from the kingdom of God"**, and Agrippa (Acts 26:28) who was almost persuaded to be a Christian, never heard it.

"I tell you, many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons and heirs of the kingdom will be driven out into the darkness outside, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth" (Matthew 8:11, 12).

There are many poor souls under the greatest disadvantages, a poor worker with little time and heavy workload, yet such a person is often called by the voice of Christ; when those who enjoy an abundance of opportunities and have plenty of leisure time that they don't know what to do with, who have the best books available to them, and yet feel nothing to any purpose. All this is resolved into the good pleasure of the will of God.

The Effects Of The Voice Of Christ Upon People

Let us view the effects of the voice of Christ upon people, and we will find some remarkable effects wrought upon the heart by it.

(1) The first effect of the voice of Christ on a sinner is **to convict the conscience of the person's sin and misery**. There may have been a general conviction of sin beforehand, that everyone was a sinner to some degree or another, but when the voice of Christ speaks directly to the individual, the conviction becomes direct and personal. It is a voice of terror, because it informs the sinner that the whole judgment and wrath of God is directed against the person, and in their present state, there is only one future: damnation and hell.

"Once I was alive but quite apart from and unconscious of the Law. But when the commandment came, sin lived again, and I died – was sentenced by the Law to death" (Romans 7:9).

Paul testifies that he once was living in false hope based on his comprehensive knowledge and belief that his religious belief had him in good standing with God. He was living according to his natural intellectual knowledge of the things of God, and his position as a child of Abraham. But when the commandment came to him through the voice of Christ, the conviction of his personal sin and separation from God came alive in him and then he knew that he was under the sentence of eternal death in hell.

"Then He shows to them [the true character of] their deeds and their transgressions, that they have acted arrogantly [with presumption and self-sufficiency]. He also opens their ear to instruction and discipline, and commands that they return from iniquity" (Job 36:9, 10).

A general conviction of sin has no more effect than viewing a painted lion on a billboard, but when the Holy Spirit shows a person the true character of their sinfulness and makes it intensely personal, then the person knows for sure that God knows him by name and considers him His personal enemy. Sin inside the person then becomes like a living lion seeking to devour him and roaring dreadfully at him.

(2) The second effect is that the sinner **is humbled and made contrite for his sin**. This is what happened to the crowd of Jews on the Day of Pentecost when Peter preached to them. They were pricked in their hearts.

The pain they felt because of their sin was worse than a stab wound with a knife, or a bullet wound. ***"...And they shall look [earnestly] upon Me Whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him as one who is in bitterness for his first-born"*** (Zechariah 12:10). Only Jesus can reach right into a person's heart and cause the person to mourn for his sin. The word of man cannot do it. The spirit of the person lies naked before Christ whose word will wound and heal it. When the voice of Christ speaks to him of his sin, he goes away sick at heart. It penetrates deeper into some hearts more than others, depending on how long the sinner has been in bondage to his sin.

(3) The voice of Christ **rouses the sleepy and sluggish mind to think deeply about ways to get deliverance from the danger the person now faces**. He realizes that

he is being prevented from falling down into hell by a slender thread, and the God who is maintaining that thread and keeping it from breaking at any time is a God who is his enemy.

"Then [the jailer] called for lights and rushed in, and trembling and terrified he fell down before Paul and Silas. And he brought them out [of the dungeon] and said, Men, what is it necessary for me to do that I may be saved?" (Acts 16:29, 30). This man was a tough Roman jailer; this level of terror and conviction would not have happened to him under natural circumstances. He would have heard Paul and Silas praying and singing hymns before the earthquake, but when the earthquake happened, the voice of Christ spoke to his heart, and now he is before Paul and Silas begging them for the way to salvation. The signs that the person is a convicted and humbled man/person? are as follows:

- i. There is a strong intention of their minds and thoughts concerning the danger they are in.
- ii. They have a searching inquisitiveness about the way of escape. They want to know what course to take. Is there any hope for me? How am I able to get out of this?
- iii. They take no notice of their present troubles and problems. The conviction of sin is so heavy on them they ignore everything else.

(4) The fourth effect of the voice of Christ is **encouragement and hope, showing the person the means by which they can receive salvation in Christ.** It is an inviting voice as well as a convicting one. This is the difference between the voice of Christ and the voice of Satan. Satan will show you the terrors of sin and judgment, but will tell you that you might as well give up because there is no hope for you. But however deep the conviction and terror that the voice of Christ puts upon you, there is always something left for you to base your hope on! Notice

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that Paul did not leave the jailer to “swing in the wind” in his fear and terror: **“And they answered, Believe in and on the Lord Jesus Christ, that is, give yourself up to Him, take yourself out of your own keeping and entrust yourself into His keeping, and you will be saved; [and this applies both to] you and all who were in his house”** (Acts 16:31).

Jesus Himself holds out a strong hope to a convicted sinner who flees to Him for salvation: **“All whom My Father has given (entrusted) to Me will come to Me; and him who comes to Me I will most certainly not cast out – I will never, no never reject one of them who comes to Me. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will and purpose; but to do the will and purpose of Him Who sent Me”** (John 6:37, 38). This shows clearly that there is an open welcome from Jesus for all who will come to Him for salvation. He also is quite clear that because He has not come to do His own will, but that of His Father. The will of the Father is also committed to saving sinners. Although the devil would work as hard as he can to make the sin and the consciousness of it so bad as to try and make the sinner believe that he is beyond mercy, Jesus counters it by making it quite clear that mercy is freely available to every sinner, no matter how bad. **“Therefore He is able also to save to the uttermost – completely, perfectly, finally and for all time and eternity – those who come to God through Him, since He is always living to make petition to God and intercede with Him and intervene for them”** (Hebrews 7:25).

(5) The fifth effect of the powerful voice of Christ is **the strong attractiveness that draws the person to Christ. “No one is able to come to Me unless the Father Who sent Me attracts and draws him and gives him the desire to come to Me; and [then] I will raise him [from the dead] at the last day. It is written in the book of the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God – have Him in person for their teacher.**

Everyone, who has listened and learned from the Father, comes to Me" (John 6: 44, 45). Once the voice of Christ comes to you, things are put in motion to draw you to Christ.

Coming to Christ follows hearing from Him. The bonds and ties to the world are broken and left behind, and the chains of sin break and give way. There is nothing that can hold you back from coming to Christ. There is a strange restlessness in the spirit of a man, and nothing but Christ can satisfy it.

(6) The last effect of Christ's voice is **the sweet and satisfying rest and consolation that comes to the inner man**. When you obey the call of Christ and come to Him and is converted, then there is the overall sense of complete peace. ***"For we who have believed – who have adhered to and trusted and relied on God – do enter into that rest"*** (Hebrews 4:3). As the first effect of the voice of Christ is terror and unsettledness, the last effect is rest and peace. When we look at Romans 8:30, we read: ***"And those whom He thus foreordained He also called; and those whom He called He also justified...and those whom He justified He also glorified – raising them to a heavenly dignity and condition [state of being]."*** So, you can look backward and forward from eternity to eternity, and see that in the beginning you were chosen of God to be given the invitation to come to Christ, and see that in the future you are going to joyfully share the rest of eternity in wonderful glory and fellowship with Christ.

Further Thoughts About The Voice of Christ

One thing you have to note is that the voice of Christ is not heard at all times. There are specific times when the Lord chooses to speak to you. **"The time is coming...when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God"** (John 5:25), and, **"In the time of favour...I have listened to and heeded your call, and I have helped you on the day of deliverance – the day of salvation"** (II Corinthians 6:2).

The voice of Christ comes through the combination of the Word preached, spiritual observances such as communion, and God's providences, but especially the Word being preached makes the specific time and environment when Christ decides to speak to hearts through the Holy Spirit. The preaching of the Word alone, even though it is preached by the best of preachers with the most excellent of sermons, has no more effect on the consciences of sinners than when the angel came down and disturbed the waters of the pool of Bethesda (John 5:4). But when the Lord pours out His Spirit with the Word according to the promise in Proverbs 1:23: **"I will pour out My Spirit upon you, I will make My words known to you."** It is then Christ will speak to your heart and salvation will come to when you take heed to it.

In the early days of the Christian Church, there was a general outpouring of the Spirit, when three thousand people were spoken to by the spiritual voice of Christ at once from one sermon. These days possibly three thousand sermons have been preached over a period of time with not one person saved! It seems that there is a restraint of the Spirit in our country, making it a land of spiritual drought, and it is likely to remain so **"until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is valued as a forest"** (Isaiah 32:15). As you pray and seek the Lord, you need to have an expectation that this will happen, so that the waters of our Christian Churches **"may be healed and made fresh, and everything shall live wherever the**

river goes. The fisherman shall stand on [the banks of the Dead sea]; from Engedi even to Eneglaim shall be a place to spread nets; their fish shall be of very many kinds, as the fish of the Great or Mediterranean Sea" (Ezekiel 47:9, 10). The ministers of these churches will no longer try and catch "fish" with "fishing rods", but will spread their nets and catch whole shoals of converts at a time. While you know that there are seasons and times when the Lord will do this, you cannot predict exactly when it will happen; but you are to wait expectantly for it as the man did at the pool of Bethesda.

Ministers must preach in hope, faithfully giving the people God's word, if at any time the Holy Spirit will fall on the people and bring souls to Christ (II Timothy 2:25). We are sometimes wrong in our expectations, when we have prepared ourselves fully and find a new freedom in our spirit, and we are led to conclude that this must be the time when the Holy Spirit will come into the meeting and speak to hearts. But we find ourselves often mistaken and disappointed when, in spite of our earnest prayer and hard work, the Spirit does not make the appearance that we would want. In spite of that we must continue to work in hope that the day will come when it will happen. But when it does happen, it is a day to remember. Some of us have had the experience of being in meetings where the Holy Spirit has brought the voice of Christ to the gathering and wonderful things have happened as the Holy Spirit has sovereignly moved through the congregation, softening hardened hearts and bringing people to Christ. Even though we have forgotten the scores of meetings we have attended and sat through Sunday after Sunday, we remember the times when the Holy Spirit has been present in power as if they were yesterday.

Having the Holy Spirit bring the voice of Christ to sinners and believers in a meeting is vitally important, because it can make the difference between an eternity in fellowship with Christ or an eternity in hell for so many people. You must not be content with the natural preaching of men only.

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You need to hear the voice of Christ speaking to you of the purposes of God for you. **"[O] brethren beloved by God, we recognize and know that He has selected (chosen) you; for our [preaching of the] glad tidings (the Gospel) came to you not only in word, but also in power and the Holy Spirit, and with great conviction and absolute certainty"** (I Thessalonians 1:4, 5).

It is the voice of Christ coming in power and in the Holy Spirit that brings spiritual resurrection to spiritually dead sinners. This is a greater resurrection than that of your bodies on the last day because you have been made alive in your spirit, which was previously dead. It is this resurrection to spiritual life that makes the difference between being included in the kingdom of God, or being shut out of it. The voice of Christ on the last day will be dreadful to you if you have not had the spiritual resurrection beforehand. Once you have been made spiritually alive in Christ, the blessing of God comes to you: **"From this day I will bless you"** (Haggai 2:19).

When you have heard and obeyed the voice of Christ, the Lord says to you, "I will bless you forever with all spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Him."

Application

Now that you have carefully considered the general principles connected with the spiritual voice of Christ, you will now move into what you should do to practically apply yourself to promote environments where the Lord would want to come and speak to your heart.

The first main point is that **we should mourn and pray earnestly for those who sit under the ministry of the Word Sunday after Sunday and yet are not affected in their hearts by what they hear.** The Lord recognized this in the Jews: ***"And the Father who sent Me has Himself testified concerning Me. Not one of you has ever given ears to His voice, or seen His form (His face, what He is like). - You have always been deaf to His voice and blind to the vision of Him"*** (John 5:38).

There are many churches of all denominations in our country filled with people who call themselves Christian, and yet if someone spoke to them about hearing the voice of Christ, they would not understand what you mean by it. This is because although they have been faithful and loyal church-goers for years and have sat under regular ministry and preaching of the Gospel, it is an empty sound to them. They may have a mental assent to it, but it does not reach their hearts. They are content with a one-hour formal service on Sunday, but afterward leave and live like anyone in the world for the rest of the week.

There are people who call themselves Christian, but they do not believe in the central truths of the Bible, such as the virgin birth, miracles of Christ, His resurrection, or the infilling of the Holy Spirit. It seems that the Gospel is hidden to them: ***"But even if our Gospel...also be hid – obscured and covered up with a veil [that hinders the knowledge of God] – it is hid [only] to those who are perishing, and obscured [only] to those who are***

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spiritually dying, and veiled [only] to those who are lost. For the god of this world has blinded the unbelievers' minds (that they should not discern the truth), preventing them from seeing the illuminating light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, the Messiah, Who is the image and likeness of God" (II Corinthians 4:3, 4).

The Gospel is not hidden from them in the sense that they do not understand with their minds that Jesus came and died on the Cross, etc., but their level of understanding does not go any deeper than their natural intellect. They are limited to knowing **about** Christ. They are generally satisfied with hearing a sermon if they understand some of it, but there is not one truth that God has been able to drive home to their hearts. ***"And He said, go, and tell this people, Hear and hear continually, but understand not; and see and see continually, but do not apprehend with your mind"*** (Isaiah 6:9). So, in hearing the mere voice of man without feeling the power of God would be just the same as if we never heard at all.

Consider, if you are a church-goer, and have been for many years sitting under the ministry of minister after minister without the words having any real impression on your heart; and seeing that the same preaching has been having a dynamic effect on others around you; why that is so. ***"For John came to you walking in the way of an upright man in right standing with God, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the harlots did believe him; and you, even when you saw that, did not afterward change your minds and believe Him"*** (Matthew 21:32).

It seems strange that you are sitting there and seeing others being deeply moved by the preaching of the word and receiving salvation, healing, deliverance, encouragement, filling of the Spirit, the ability to exercise spiritual gifts, and your conscience is not moved at all about your state and condition. We, as believers who have heard

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the voice of Christ in our souls and have obeyed it, should mourn before God for the multitudes of people who are sitting in churches having a false hope of heaven, when they have never heard the voice of Christ calling them away from their formal, nominal 'churchianity' to a living faith in Christ. They should be crying to the Lord in the language of Song of Solomon 8:13: **"O you who dwell in the gardens, your companions have been listening to your voice; now cause me to hear it."** *"Lord, don't let me sit under the preaching of the word any longer without hearing Your voice. Open the ears of my soul so that I can hear Your voice and feel Your power, otherwise the preaching will be ineffective to my salvation. It will be a bit of a rattle to my conscience for a while, but in the long run will only make my misery a lot worse".* We who have heard and obeyed the spiritual voice of Christ should use the same wording to pray that Christ will speak to their hearts with His spiritual voice when we tell them about what Christ has done for us and can do for them.

The second application presents us five other truths that will help us provide an environment for people to hear the voice of Christ.

A. The actual experience of different people in meetings fully supports the truth of Scripture. We see the Scripture being fulfilled every day as we observe the different responses to the preaching of the Gospel. ***"For we are the sweet fragrance of Christ [which exhales] unto God, [discernible alike] among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the latter it is an aroma [wafted] from death to death – a fatal odour, the smell of doom; to the former it is an aroma from life to life – a vital fragrance, living and fresh"*** (II Corinthians 2:15, 16). And again, when Paul, in his hired house at Rome, testified the kingdom of God to the people and persuaded them from morning to evening, it says that **some believed the things that were spoken, and some believed not.** This is the Scripture

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account of the different responses to the Gospel; it makes some come alive, and becomes spiritual death to others. Some come to faith, others are left in unbelief.

B. God has great respect for the instruments that are used to bring the Gospel to the hearers. Although God can speak directly to sinners and believers without preachers and church meetings, He chooses to use the components of the visible church to convey the voice of Christ to those who have ears to hear it. ***"He who hears and heeds you [disciples] hears and heeds Me; and he who slights and rejects you, slights and rejects Me; and he who slights and rejects Me, slights and rejects Him who sent Me"*** (Luke 10:16).

Christ has ordained preachers, ministers, and ordinary disciples to spread the Gospel. There is a high level of contempt in our society for those who spread the Gospel. Many faithful Christian workers are ridiculed or ignored in their efforts to get the Gospel to lost sinners. When people do that, they are flying right in the face and authority of Jesus Himself, and in turn, showing contempt to God who sent Jesus to the Jews, the Holy Spirit to us, and us to our present community. As we have already seen in Jeremiah 15:19, Christian workers who preach the Gospel are **God's very mouthpiece**. The word preached is God's instrument for conveying spiritual life to our souls. It is best to honour it, and bring our friends and relations to sit under the ministry, because we don't know when the Holy Spirit might bring the voice of Christ to those people and they are saved as a result.

C. There is a fearful judgment in removing the Gospel from a nation, seeing that it is the very means by which God will bring spiritual life to people. The Spirit of God and the Word of God usually come and go together. When they are gone, no more conversions to Christ are possible. ***"Where there is no vision, the people perish"*** (Proverbs

29:18), ***Bind up the Law, seal up the testimony among My disciples***" (Isaiah 8:16), and Revelation 2:5: ***"I will remove your candlestick out of its place."***

When we view the sites where the Ephesian, Corinthian, and Philippian churches were, all we see are ruins. There is no sign that those churches ever existed. At one stage, even though in Paul's time they were Spirit-filled, vibrant churches winning souls for Christ, at some stage they stopped listening to and obeying the voice of Christ, and He took their candlestick out of its place.

We have seen a big decline in general Christian faith in our country (even over the last 40 years). Christianity is attacked in the movie and television media, inducing people to believe that there is no God, and that the Bible is made up of myths and fables. Even large areas of the nominal Christian Church have turned to liberal modernism where the central truths of the Gospel are treated as myths!

We need to take Luke 13:8 and Matthew 3:13 seriously: ***"The axe is laid at the root of the tree."*** This is a picture of a carpenter who throws down the saw and the axe at the root of the tree he intends to cut down. If the tree dies, it will certainly be cut down; but if buds start to appear to show that the tree is still alive and may continue to bear fruit, the carpenter might not cut it down after all.

D. Those who have heard Christ's voice and call in the Gospel, have no reason to be discouraged from going to Christ in the way of faith. There is a difference between faith and presumption. Presumption is taking action when there is no warrant in Scripture to do it. Saul acted presumptuously when he got impatient and offered the sacrifices contrary to Samuel's instructions before Samuel returned to offer them himself (I Samuel 13:9). But if the voice of Christ has spoken to you, there is no fear of presumption in obeying it, because this is the best warrant for boldly approaching the throne of grace to

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receive Christ as Saviour. **"[Urged on] by faith Abraham when he was called, obeyed and went forth to a place which he was destined to received as an inheritance; and he went, although he did not know or trouble his mind about where he was to go"** (Hebrews 11:8).

When you receive the call of Christ, you don't have to worry about the issues you have about your condition. Your believing is your act of obedience to the voice of Christ that calls you. Satan will try and discourage you by saying to you that you are so sinful, wretched and vile, that you are not qualified to go to Christ. But you can answer him by telling him that you know that you are a vile, wretched sinner, but it is Christ who has personally called you with His voice and that you are bound to obey Him. Your obedience to His voice has given you the warrant to freely and boldly approach Him for mercy and grace. If Jesus had no intention of giving you mercy and forgiveness, He would not have called you by name with His voice.

E. If no soul can open to Christ until it hears His powerful, spiritual voice, then the change made upon people by conversion is wholly supernatural. Conversion to Christ is through the power of God and not through the nature of man. Man is totally helpless in sin until the voice of Christ comes to him. People in their natural state can do some things that approach some aspect of Christian life and faith that have a remote tendency to conversion and spiritual life, yet it can never bring a person to a saved state in Christ without the application of a power outside of himself. **"The natural man cannot (of himself) know the things that are of God"** (I Corinthians 2:14). He cannot believe: **"For faith is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God"** (John 6:44). He cannot obey:

"The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither can be" (Romans 8:7). The unbeliever cannot speak a good word (Matthew 12:34), or think a good

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thought (II Corinthians 3:5). So, the natural man is totally impotent to be able to make any approach to God.

But although man has lost his ability to obey, **God has not lost His power to command.** Though man has insufficient power, yet he has intolerable pride in him which puffs him up to think that he has what he has not, and can do what he cannot do. The main thrust of the voice of Christ in the Gospel is to convince man of his helplessness. Also, every person can do more than what he or she is currently doing towards becoming converted to Christ; therefore it is good to urge them to come under the preaching of the Gospel so they can be in a position where Christ can speak to them if and when He chooses.

The third application is that when people hear the loud call of the voice of Christ in their hearts, **they should diligently hearken to it and take steps to obey its instructions.** *"He who has an ear to hear, let him hear"* (Revelation 2:7).

It is a very dangerous thing to turn away the ear from Him who speaks from heaven. ***"So see to it that you do not reject Him or refuse to listen to and heed Him Who is speaking [to you now]. For if they [the Israelites] did not escape when they refused to listen and heed Him Who warned and divinely instructed them [here] on earth...how much less shall we escape if we reject and turn our backs on Him Who cautions and admonishes [us] from heaven?"*** (Hebrews 12:25). When Christ decides to speak to you directly with His voice, it is vital that you do not turn away from Him in the slightest way, because this is the most important event, not only in this life, but in all eternity for you.

Satan will do all he can to turn you away from believing and obeying the Gospel from the first time Christ gives us the first call and at every subsequent stage of your Christian walk. He will throw all the discouragements he can at you.

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He will tell you that you are too young, and that it is too soon for you to commit yourself to Christ. But if you are old enough to be condemned to hell, then you are old enough to receive Christ. There are graves of all sizes, even your size. Then he may tell you that the Christian life is full of sufferings, reproaches, and persecutions, to discourage you from listening to the voice of Christ. But what are the sufferings for Christ here in this life compared to the sufferings without Christ in eternity? God promises strength, comfort and success to go along with Christ's command to believe. So there is no real reason for you to refuse His voice.

The fourth application is about **how we feel about ourselves and whether we are hearing the voice of Christ or not.**

You might say: "*That John 5:25 says that all who hear the voice of Christ will live, but I am much in the dark about whether the voice of Christ has actually sounded in my soul, and I feel little of any spiritual life in me. So my question is: 'By what signs does the life of Christ reveal itself in the souls of men?'*"

The answer is that there are diversities of the signs of spiritual life, and the person who finds them is blessed.

1. There is a spiritual sense and feeling flowing from and accompanying the spiritual life. This is not only the sense of comfort, but there is certainly the sense of the burdensomeness of sin (Romans 7:24). It is good that we can feel that, because many in the world are past feeling it (Isaiah 6:9, 10). It is a sign that Christ has spoken to your heart if sorrows for sin begin to load it.
2. Spiritual motions towards Christ are a sign of spiritual life. God is at work about that life-giving work of faith in your soul: **"Every man who has**

heard and learned of the Father comes to Me"

(John 6:45). The voice of Christ turns the person around and sets him in motion toward Christ. If you have that restlessness in you that you feel the cry of "*Draw me, I will run after You,*" then you have a comfortable sign that Christ has spoken to your heart.

3. A spirit of prayer is an evidence of spiritual life as the effect of Christ's voice to your soul. As soon as Christ spoke to Paul's heart, the first effect was that he started praying: "***Behold, he prays***" (Acts 9:11). If you have a spirit of restlessness in you that makes you desire to have communion with God in prayer, then you can know that Christ has definitely spoken to your heart.
4. There is a pleasure and a delight in spiritual things. "***My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness,***" etc. (Psalm 48:5). Your thoughts now feed with pleasure on spiritual things, whereas before you didn't want to think about them.
5. There is developing in you an aversion to anything that would be dangerous to your spiritual life. You are starting to see that the most poisonous thing to your soul is sin. "***Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins***" (Psalm 19:13). This pictures a person on the edge of a cliff and is in danger of falling off. He cries to be held back from falling, and so we cry to God to keep us back from falling back into sin.

The last point is that if you sense that you are on your way to heaven and you are seeking after God by praying and studying His Word to keep on the road to sanctification, then that is a very good sign that the voice of Christ has spoken to you and is continuing to speak life to your spirit and soul. Sanctification is a well of water springing up into

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eternal life (John 4:14). If you have seen the beauty, felt the power, and heard the voice of Christ, your soul will be gravitating and inclining toward Christ. ***"Come Lord Jesus, the Spirit and the bride say come, and let him that hears say come"*** (Revelation 22:17).

The sweetest sign of your hearing of Christ's voice in your soul is a restless longing to be with Christ in the state of perfect freedom from sin, and in perfect, face-to-face fellowship with Jesus in glory.

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Part 3

ALLOW THE FATHER TO DRAW YOU TO CHRIST

"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent me draws him: and I will raise him up at the last day"
(John 6:44)

INTRODUCTION

This is written for anyone who needs the message of the Gospel of Christ. The "you" in the text includes people who have never been converted to Christ, as well as those who were once converted, but have "fallen off the rails" and no longer walking with Him. It also includes those who are converted, are living the best they can for Him, and who are passionate about leading people to Christ and seeing them converted.

The first thing that you need to think about is that all the preaching in the world cannot bring you to Christ by itself. If you are a Christian, think about all the times that you were spoken to about your need for Christ, either from a friend or a sermon at church, and you walked away unconvinced. You may have been born to church-going parents and gone through the Sunday School, hearing all

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the Bible stories and been taught the principles of the Gospel, and then went on to be a regular church member, sitting under sermon after sermon, yet your heart was not touched. You may have been someone who was directly opposed to Christianity and ridiculed it and Christian believers every chance you got. Then something happened over and above the encouraging and preaching you heard. The day it happened was no different to any other day, and the sermon was no different to any other sermon, yet something like a beam of light entered your heart and you knew beyond all shadow of doubt that you were a condemned sinner heading on the road to hell.

That time may still be in the future for you. As you are reading this, you are saying to yourself, "So what? What am I to be saved from?" As you keep reading, maybe that beam of light might enter your heart and your blind eyes may be opened to the real meaning of life, and your true state before God.

Every effort to bring you to Christ is in vain until the almighty power of the Holy Spirit applies itself to your heart. This is not to say that Christians are wasting their time speaking to you about your need for Christ; nor are preachers and ministers preaching in vain every Sunday. They are preaching in hope – that the day will come when the Holy Spirit will speak to your heart and make you fully aware of where you stand with God.

Let's unpack the Scripture text:

No one: It is not in the power of any person, no matter how important or influential they are. The church and the preacher can be the best in the world and it would not make any difference to where you are before God right now.

Can: You are powerless to have any kind of genuine faith without the work of the Holy Spirit. There are some churches that believe that you do have the power to make a

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decision for Christ, but it is only "getting religion" which comes far short of saving faith and merely gives seekers false hope.

Come to Me: Jesus is the only Person you can come to in order to be saved from a future in hell, and to receive eternal life. This is what Jesus says: **"I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst"** (John 6:35). We are not talking about natural hunger or thirst here, but that sense down deep in your heart that life is not all that it is "cracked up to be", and that there must be something more than "this". It is a hunger and thirst for spiritual life which is deep in the hearts of unconverted people, but most don't recognize it as such. Jesus Christ is the only Person who can satisfy that deep, gnawing hunger and thirst.

Except My Father: The Father is the initiator of the work of salvation. It all started with Him in His plan for salvation formed before the foundation of the world. It was His idea that mankind should be saved from sin before anyone ever knew what sin was.

Who has sent Me: Jesus did not come on His own volition. He was sent by the Father. This is in keeping with the truth that the salvation of mankind was the Father's plan from the start. He has entered into an agreement, or covenant with Jesus and have agreed that Jesus will come to earth and be the Sacrifice for mankind's sin.

Draw him: What we mean by "drawing" is that the Father powerfully and effectively inclines the will to come to Christ. There is no coercion or moral persuasion, otherwise the power of choice is compromised.

The Doctrine:

It is utterly impossible for anyone to come to Jesus Christ for salvation unless he be drawn to Him by the special and mighty power of God.

You are not compelled to come to Christ against your will. ***"For it is God who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure"*** (Philippians 2:13). He is the one who enlightens your mind, warns of the dangers of remaining in sin, and provides the way of escape through Christ. He does this through the agency of the Holy Spirit whom He has sent to do His will on earth.

Faith is a voluntary act. No-one can force faith on to you. It is a decision that you make as the Holy Spirit enables you to do so. ***"For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God"*** (Ephesians 2:8). As the Holy Spirit works in you to reveal your sinfulness and the hopelessness of ever being reconciled to God by your own efforts, and as you start calling on Him for mercy, He offers you His grace as His gift to you, and leaves you to choose to accept it. He shows you that His gift is His Son, Jesus Christ, who died on the cross to take the guilt of your sin upon Himself. As you move towards Christ, the Holy Spirit enables you to have the faith to believe the Gospel and willingly join yourself with Christ, receiving Him as Saviour and Lord.

SPECIFICS ABOUT THE DRAWING OF THE SOUL TO CHRIST

In order for you to recognize when the Father is drawing you to Christ, we need to examine what it is and how it works. We want to follow the correct impulses and be drawn into the truth rather than into error. There are three main points that we need to consider:

1. What the drawing of God is.
2. The manner in which God draws us to Christ.
3. How it is that none can come except they are drawn of God.

1. What the drawing of God is:

There are two ways in which people are drawn to some set of ideals or organization in the world: physical – involving force and compulsion, for example, communism; or moral – using the world's view of morality or ethics to coerce the person to agree, or throw in his lot with the group ideals, party, organization, etc, for example, giving to a particular charity through persuasive television advertising.

The tragedy is that some church organizations use the above strategies to increase and hold their membership. The Reverend Moon used persuasive methods to attract members to his religious organization but used force to keep them there. Many other churches use “Christian” morality as a lever to get and hold their members. The key in these strategies is that you will have your power of choice taken away from you, and this is never God's way.

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God's way of drawing is gentle and maintains your freedom to make the choices you want to make: **"Your people shall be volunteers in the day of Your power" (Psalm 110:4). "I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love, and I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck. I stooped and fed them" (Hosea 11:4).** Everything that God does for us is to do with freedom and not bondage. Once He stirs the conscience, He then opens the door and shows us the way of escape.

There is an operation of the Holy Spirit on the heart and the will.

"And what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 1:19, 20). This shows that when God starts to draw you to Christ, it is according to His mighty power. No other power is strong enough to pull you out of the kingdom of darkness and your bondage to sin. This is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead, because it takes that much power to convert you to Christ. When you come to Christ, you are receiving spiritual life from God. This is your resurrection from the dead. **"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1).**

The apostle Paul recognized this when he wrote to the Thessalonians in chapter 1 verse 11: **"Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power."** This shows that when you come to Jesus in faith, it is because of the work of God's power in you to enable you to do it.

So His drawing does not involve coercive force, but an enabling power to take the way of escape from the condemnation of your sins. He always allows you to make the choice, not because you are able to follow through with

your choice with your natural ability, but your choice will involve a change of heart. Once God sees your change of heart, also wrought in you by the Holy Spirit, He then draws you to be able to receive Christ as Saviour; and in doing so, you start to experience the "good pleasure of His goodness".

2. The manner in which God draws sinners to Christ:

There are five ways in which the Father draws sinners to Christ:

- I. Step by step
- II. Agreeable and appropriate
- III. Is very powerful
- IV. Is very effective
- V. Is final and for ever.

I. Step by step: The Father does not lay the whole burden of being converted to Christ in one big step. This would be too much for most sinners and they would be frightened off. The Father leads sinners to Christ one step at a time. **Before Jesus appeared, John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way for Him: "For John came to you in the way of righteousness..."** (Matthew 21:32a). John's message was one of repentance. His preaching brought conviction of sin to his listeners. This is right in line with the way the Holy Spirit works with you. Before anything else can happen, you need to be made aware of your sinful state before God. Being unrighteous means to be unacceptable to God.

In your sinful state, you are in rebellion against God and His standards of righteousness; therefore you are condemned and can only expect the justice of God and can only look forward to eternal misery in hell. So, in preparation for the

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ministry of Jesus, part of John's role was to bring about in Israel a collective conviction of sin. John's purpose was to shake people out of their complacency and self-righteousness and make them feel unsettled and distressed about their sin. There were some who responded, and others who remained in their self-righteous state: ***"and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him: and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him"*** (Matthew 21:32b). Even when those Jews who thought they were the elite, when they saw the lower "caste" people being convicted of their sin and willingly embracing repentance, they still chose to stay within their settled assurance of their religious position. John was breaking up the fallow ground in preparation for the ministry of Jesus.

When Jesus came, His message was quite different: ***"Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls"*** (Matthew 11:28, 29). The ministry of Jesus was not forceful. It was a gentle invitation for those who were labouring under the burden of a heavy conviction of sin to come to Him, and the outcome of that choice was that they would find peace in their conscience.

So this is what good Gospel preaching will do. It will lay a foundation of what God's standards are and how we all have fallen short of it. This is designed to show and persuade the listeners that they are condemned sinners who will experience the wrath and fierce anger of God if they come up in front of Him at the Judgment in their sinful state. If you have any thoughts of coming to Jesus and being a Christian, you will have to go through this stage. You cannot avoid it. It is part of the narrow gate that all who are to be converted to Christ needs to pass through. Some will experience a deeper conviction of sin than others. It depends how long you have lived your life in rebellion against, or indifference to God how intense the conviction

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will be. But you will not be able to come to Jesus without going through this stage, and all you will get is "religion" but you will still be in your sins and condemned to hell.

One of the effects of true conviction of sin is that you will start to earnestly seek a way of escape from the condemnation of it. No longer will you say "What does Jesus save us from?" You will know very clearly once the Holy Spirit has revealed it to you. This is what happened to the crowd on the Day of Pentecost when Peter preached to them: **"Now when they had heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'"** (Acts 2:37). They came under intense conviction of sin and were desperate for a way of escape. They saw that Peter and the Apostles could show them.

So, the salvation of the three thousand on the Day of Pentecost came in stages. Their curiosity was aroused by the powerful work that the Holy Spirit was doing in the believers in the upper room. They then listened to the preaching of the Gospel by Peter. Then they came under conviction of sin – they knew they were condemned sinners. Only the Holy Spirit could have done this; they heard His voice speaking to their hearts. Then they pleaded for a way of escape. Peter then pointed them to Jesus as the only way to escape condemnation for their sin. They responded and received Christ as Saviour and Lord.

This is the pathway and the narrow gate that you must go through as well if you want to become a Christian. If you are reading this, then the Holy Spirit has started the work in you by arousing your curiosity to find out what this book is all about. If you start to become unsettled and distressed by the thought that you are a sinner, separated by God, and condemned to hell, then you are being drawn by the Father into the next step of becoming a genuine Christian believer. You now have the choice of going on to find the way of escape, or to turn away and carry on with your life until the conviction goes away. God will not force you, but He will

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gently draw you on to Christ. But if you refuse Him, there is no other way of escape, and all you can look forward to is an eternity of misery and regret.

II. Agreeable and appropriate to the nature of man:

Mankind was created to have fellowship with God. Anything that will restore that fellowship is agreeable to the basic nature of people. It is God who designed and created your basic nature, but it has been altered from its pristine state by sin. This is why there is a deep desire for more than the vanities of this life, even though the thought of having Jesus as Lord is repugnant to the unconverted sinner. This causes a continual conflict in the soul of the sinner, even though he may not be conscious of it.

"But even if our Gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded who do not believe lest the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them" (II Corinthians 4:3, 4).

This shows that if you have never accepted Jesus Christ as Saviour, your mind is blinded by ignorance of what the Gospel is all about. What this means is that you are limited by a natural knowledge of the general events of the life and ministry of Jesus, and artist's impressions of what He might have looked like while He was on earth. But the real meaning of the Gospel, and what effects it has on those who believe in Christ, is lost to you. You are held prisoner by the principles and attitudes of this world: ***"Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of this world"*** (Galatians 4:3).

But there is a goodness in Jesus Christ that is discovered only by those who believe in Him and accept Him as Saviour and Lord.

1. The goodness of Jesus outbids all temporal good.

This means that although there are many good things in this life that can make life very meaningful and enjoyable to

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us, they are limited, and can disappear with the changes of society and environment. Today, you might have a loving family, a regular, well-paid job, and a secure and comfortable home. Tomorrow, you might become redundant, or disease may hit your family, leaving you alone and penniless. The world can offer you no guarantees. But the goodness of Jesus is not dependent on these things, nor is it dependent on the law of cause and effect. Depending on what the world can offer can leave you utterly forsaken if you lose the material blessings you are depending on for a good life. When you depend on the goodness of Jesus, you still have a strong foundation when your material blessings disappear out from beneath you.

2. In the same way, **the goodness of Jesus recompenses all temporal evils.** We are all prone to sickness and disease, reverses of fortune, loss of friendships, family members turning against us; and in some countries at present, loss of possessions and even life through war and crime. All these are evils and afflictions that we cannot escape. Even when you become a Christian, you will not escape these things unless in God's special will that He puts a hedge of protection around you. But there are many of God's choicest children that are not afforded protection, and they go through times of extreme suffering. If you are depending on this world alone, there is no reparation for your loss. But in Christ, there is full reparation when God's time comes to recompense you for everything you have lost.

Jesus shows us how valuable His kingdom is: "***Again the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it***" (Matthew 13:46). Having Jesus as Saviour and experiencing His goodness is worth more than all the material blessings that this world could ever offer. You could lose your job, home and family, and yet be richer than you could ever imagine because you have Christ in your life.

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Jesus tried to tell the rich young ruler that. (Matthew 19:16-23). The rich young man did not realize that what Jesus had to offer him was immeasurably more valuable than all the riches that he had, but the young man was blind to it; all he saw was his material wealth, and he could not let it go. **"Do not over work to be rich; because of your own understanding, cease! Will you set your eyes on that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven"** (Proverbs 23: 4, 5). In comparison to the goodness that is in Jesus, material riches are like vain shadows when compared to the value that Jesus brings into our lives when we allow Him to come and take control of our lives.

Jesus gives us a wonderful promise: **"I love those who love Me, and those who diligently seek Me will find Me. Riches and honour are with Me, enduring riches and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, yes, than fine gold, and My revenue than fine silver. I traverse the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of justice, that I may cause those who love Me to inherit wealth that I may fill their treasuries"** (Proverbs 8:17-21).

This also lines up with Ephesians 1:3: **"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ"**. If you have Jesus controlling your life, then you have everything, even though you might not have much in the way of material possessions in this world.

But there is a cost. It would be advisable to take note of the instruction that Jesus gave the rich young ruler: **"Sell all you have, come and follow Me"**. There is nothing wrong in being rich, but if you are trusting in your riches above everything else, then Jesus would instruct you to change your heart attitude toward them. Jesus knew the heart of the young man. He knew that he put a great store in his wealth and social position. Jesus wanted a change of

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heart in him, and bringing him to the place where he would be prepared to sell all his possession, and as a consequence lose his social position, He would lead him to discover what real wealth means.

"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife, and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26, 27). This seems to be a hard saying, but the principle behind it is that we should trust Jesus more than anything else. The word "hate" does not necessarily mean "dislike", but in this context it means "to love less than", meaning that we are to love Jesus more than anything else that may have value for us. For many people there would not be a requirement to leave home and family behind them and go to the wilds of Africa to preach the Gospel, but for others, Jesus may require them to follow Him in ways that are opposed by parents, wives, children, brothers and sisters. This is where the Christian needs to make a choice. What is more important? Doing the will of God in following Christ, or leaving Christ behind to maintain goodwill and close relationship with family?

When a person is crucified, he is nailed to a cross. He is limited in his movements, and there is suffering involved. He is no longer free to make his own choices, and is at the mercy of those who have put him there. Although accepting Jesus as Saviour makes you free, it is not always the freedom you think it is. It is a freedom of conscience where you are no longer weighed down by a burden of sin. But some of the freedoms of life where you were able to choose your own destiny before are now taken away from you. You are bound to follow Christ, even if that means rejection, suffering and even death.

Although there are afflictions and suffering in the Christian life, these are temporary, and do not result in long-term damage to your soul. ***"For I consider that the sufferings***

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of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18). But the benefits of following Christ are eternal. Your life will seem to be over in a shorter time than you think. You will wonder where the years went. But in Christ, when you enter into eternity, you will discover the glorious benefits of Christ, and they will be everlasting. Then you will fully understand the meaning of the true riches that are in Christ.

III. The drawing of the father is very powerful. "For the love of Christ compels us..." (I Corinthians 5:14). Once you have heard the voice of Christ in your heart, there is a strong drawing action that comes from the Father through the Holy Spirit which draws you to Christ. There is a deep dissatisfaction and yearning for Christ that is impossible to resist. This is the evidence that you are being drawn by the Father. But He does not force you to receive Christ; He draws you by His love as He reveals it to your heart. ***"Your people shall be volunteers in the day of Your power"*** (Psalm 110:3). You are not conscripted into God's army. You are willing volunteers because Christ has spoken His love into your heart and your strong desire is to follow Him wherever He goes.

The work of Christian conversion has three distinct components:

1. Resurrection: Romans 6:4, 5: ***"Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection"***.

2. Creation: Ephesians 2:10: ***"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for***

good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them”.

3. Victory or conquest: II Corinthians 10:4, 5: "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ”.

If you are outside of Christ, although you have physical life, your spirit is dead. Because the spirit is the most important part of you - because it is the component that has communication with God - it is as you are a dead person walking. Your perception of the meaning of life is severely limited to the material things of this world. Your view of death is that it brings to an end everything you know and value in the world. All you can see is oblivion at the end of it. This is because that part of you that could perceive God and eternal life is dead within you. It needs to be brought back to life in order for you to fully understand and appreciate the kingdom of God and what it contains for you. Only Christian conversion will do this for you.

Also, something new is created within you. You become a new species of person. Before conversion to Christ happened, there were only natural human beings, separated from God and condemned to eternity without Him and all the lovely things that come with Him. But conversion to Christ involves the creation of a new person whose spirit is alive to God, and who now has the sense of the reality of God. In the same way that God created the universe out of nothing at His verbal command, He has created a new person inside of you that knows and understands Him and is willing to walk in obedience to Him.

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With this new creation, there is victory and conquest. At present, outside of Christ, you are pushed around by circumstance and the law of cause and effect. You are enslaved to the attitudes and the fortunes of this present life. Even if you experience some success in your social position, career, wealth and material possessions, you know deep down that these things are only temporary. A change in fortune could see you lose everything, and there is always the deep abiding fear of that. Also, there is the fear of death because you know that death means the end of relationships, possessions, and even life itself. This brings an abiding fear of the future. You are a prisoner of all these things. It is as if you are on a roller coaster and cannot get off. Some people are unable to cope with these pressures and try to escape by suicide, but to their horror they find that they have not escaped, because they find themselves waiting for the Judgment, knowing that they have made a tragic error in shortening their own lives. Conversion to Christ sets you free from the fear of the past, present and future, because it puts within you a new knowledge of the grace of God, the victory that is in Christ, and a confident hope that no matter what happens in the future, Christ will be with you and will see you through to total victory. Even death itself will be a blessed release from the limitations of this life and this world, and will bring you into the absolute freedom of what God has prepared for you in heaven.

IV. The drawing of God is very effective. When God draws you to Christ, your conversion is absolutely genuine. There is no doubt that you are getting the real thing. But not every person who professes Christianity is genuine. There is an ineffective work among hypocrites. A hypocrite is someone who pretends he is something when he is not. ***"For your faithfulness is like a morning cloud, like the early dew it goes away"*** (Hosea 6:4). A hypocrite can make a good showing of religion, but tires of it after a while and returns back to what he was before. The voice of Christ has not spoken to his heart and there is no real work of conversion in his soul. He cannot keep up the pretense.

"But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in times of temptation fall away" (Luke 8:13). These are the people who hear the preaching of the Gospel and receive it as a mental assent without making sure that the voice of Christ has really spoken to their hearts. The voice of Christ is what gives them the root that will keep them held fast in the faith. Because they do not have this root, as soon as the storms of life come, they stop believing and revert to their life back in the world.

Agrippa, when confronted with the Gospel through Paul's testimony said, **"You almost persuade me to become a Christian"** (Acts 26:28). There is no doubt that he was convinced in his mind that the Christian faith was genuine as a result of hearing what Paul had to say, but the voice of Christ had not spoken to his heart, and therefore he was unable to make the crucial step of putting his life into the hands of Christ. There are a lot of people who go to Gospel meetings and who are affected by the preaching. They "almost" come to Christ, but they end up walking out the door unconverted.

When God draws true believers to Him, there is not only "almost", but they are "altogether" converted: **"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out"** (John 6:37). This does not mean that they come to Christ immediately or willingly in the first instance. There can be many pauses, holding back, stands, but ultimately there is victory over the restraints of the world, the natural mind, and the devil, and the person moves into full, genuine conversion to Christ.

V. It is final and forever. Once you have come to Christ and been converted, God will never cancel it. **"For the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable"** (Romans 11:29). People can walk away from Christ, but He will never desert them. He will even pursue them by His Spirit,

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reminding them in their consciences about His love for them and the grace of God extended to them in order to draw them back to Himself; but He will never give them up. Some believers have backslidden for twenty years, and finally have come back to Christ and carried on as if they had never gone away from Him. Such is the power of His grace and His forgiveness. But as long as we keep our trust in Him, no matter what we experience on the way, even to the point of losing our lives, He will stay with us until we meet with Him in eternity, and eternity is forever. Also, true believers will never be kidnapped by the devil and returned to his kingdom of darkness: ***"My Father who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of my Father's hand"*** (John 10:29). The devil will try every bluff and strategy he can to get you back into the world, but as long as you determine to remain with Christ, there is nothing he can do to take you away from Him. But you can make a decision to walk away from Christ: ***"From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more"*** (John 6:68). If that happens and you find yourself in front of the Judgment seat of Christ on the last day, you should not be surprised if there is no more grace or mercy extended to you. But as long as you determine to keep yourself under the grace and mercy of Christ and seek to walk in His ways, nothing will be able to separate you from Him.

3. It is impossible for you to come to Christ unless the Father draws you to Him.

You can walk up to the front of a church and sign a decision card (and most people think that conversion has taken place when that occurs). You and they are wrong. What you have done (when you walked up to the front) was that you made your first response to the Gospel message. You are still a "seeker". You have not been

converted yet. Even when you pray the "sinner's prayer" you are not converted yet. All you have accomplished up until now is that you have heard the Gospel message, believed it in your mind, understood that you are a sinner and needing Christ, and have now made your first approach to Him. Many seekers can do that without the voice of Christ ever speaking in their hearts; and this is why so many fall away. They think that they have been converted and then become disillusioned because they are still confused and in the dark about what their new faith really means. All you have done is to see the gate where you must enter into the kingdom of God and have put your hand on the latch. You still have to open the gate and walk through it. But further progress is not possible to go any further until the Holy Spirit does His work in you.

A. The difficulty of the work of conversion is too difficult for you in your natural ability and strength to do by yourself. Conversion is a resurrection of your spirit from the dead, and a new creation within you. Only Jesus can raise the dead and create something new. He has to do with work within you.

B. The little power and ability that you have in your natural state cannot be employed until the drawing power of God is on your will. Your will, in its natural state is still dominated by sin. It does not have the strength to change direction and leave sin behind. It needs to be activated by the power of God.

C. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). To think about Christ and believe that He existed and had a ministry is quite easy; but to come to Him is naturally impossible. Faith can only be activated by the Word of God: **"Faith comes by hearing the Word of God"** (Romans 10:17). This is not just natural preaching of Bible stories and homilies;

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this is the voice of Christ bringing His Word to your heart. If He has not spoken, you have **presumption** instead of faith. Presumption is sin brought about by unbelief, it taking an action which is not supported by a definite word from God in the mistaken belief that God is leading you to do it. Conversion is an act of God's mighty power (Ephesians 1:19), and comes with God's express permission (Philippians 1:29).

I. The Subject of Faith: Consider the **subject** of the work of faith. Here you have a spirit-dead sinner who needs a spiritual resurrection. A dead person cannot make himself alive. He needs someone outside of himself, with the necessary power to raise him, as Jesus did for Lazarus (John 11:43).

If you are still an unconverted sinner, your heart is dark, blind and ignorant of what the kingdom of God stands for. ***"For an empty headed man will be wise when a wild donkey's colt is born a man"*** (Job 11:12). What needs to happen is for Jesus to shine into your heart: ***"For it is God who commands the light to shine out of darkness who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"*** (II Corinthians 4:6). So, it is God who commands the light to shine, as He did right at the beginning of creation (Genesis 1:3).

But natural knowledge is not that light: ***"For since in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe"*** (I Corinthians 1:21), ***and, "For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called"*** (verse 26). Natural learning and ability may enhance a mind-based assent that the principles that Jesus taught were good and wise, but

this is not the light that God causes to shine into the hearts of sinners, causing them to come to Christ and be saved.

The natural human heart, even with all the knowledge there is to know about the Bible, and the ministry of Jesus, is self-seeking and is not inclined to yield itself to the Lordship of Christ. ***"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God"*** (Romans 10:3). These are hearts that are full of pride, thinking that through their natural knowledge and ability, they can make themselves righteous before God; but God will not acknowledge them.

II. The Act of faith: Consider the act of faith. Who has the ability to impart faith so a person can come to Christ and be made alive in his spirit? Who has the ability to create a new person with a heart to follow Christ willingly? God is the only Person who has that ability. Conversion to Christ is an act of faith. It is not something that you can do with your natural ability or in your natural strength.

a. It is against the stream of the corrupt nature to come to Christ. The wicked person has to forsake the lifestyle of sin: ***"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord"*** (Isaiah 55:7). The natural person is locked into trying to improve self in order to be acceptable. This is the tenor of all religious thought that does not have Jesus Christ as Lord. ***"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God"*** (Romans 10:3). Any religious denomination or group that holds to

humanism⁷ is not in submission to the righteousness of God, and therefore is not acceptable to Him. Members of those churches or organizations are not converted and are still in their sins, and can only expect to be condemned at the Judgment Seat of Christ. If you are to be genuinely converted to Christ you must forsake your righteous self and place the judgment of your acceptability to God in the hands of Christ. ***"But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord"*** (I Corinthians 4:3, 4). You do not obtain righteousness by working and obeying⁸, but believing and coming to Christ, and this is against the grain of nature. ***"Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ"*** (Philippians 3:8).

b. Conversion causes the soul to move against the trend of what it would naturally desire and do, therefore it takes a power beyond yourself to accomplish it. ***"And what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places"*** (Ephesians 1:19, 20). The act of faith is enabled by God's mighty power, the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. This is the amount of power that is needed to convert you to Christ. It is impossible to change your heart by your own choice or ability. It is totally corrupted. What is needed is a new heart, and

7 This is defined as the importance of the human above all in terms of importance, dignity, capability and rationality.

8 Working and obeying is part of Sanctification after you are converted to Christ.

God creates this in you by His mighty creative power and then you are able to exercise faith. True evangelical faith can only be exercised from a newly created heart. Only then can the direction of your will can be changed to be able to come to Jesus and to follow Him thereafter.

III. The enemies of faith: Consider the **enemies** arrayed against any person who seeks to come to Christ. Satan is too subtle and crafty for you (as a natural person) to get the better of. He will take hold of you and do all he can to prevent you from breaking free of him in order to come to Christ. **God is the only One who has the power to break Satan's hold over you.** In short, these are the strongholds mentioned in II Corinthians 10:4: ***"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds"*** (II Corinthians 10:4). Sin in an unbeliever's heart is a mighty stronghold that is the greatest hindrance to faith. In your unconverted state, you love your sinful ways more than you love God. You have greater regard for keeping hold of your desires and habits than any regard that you might have for Christ, even though you may know in your mind that Jesus died for you on the Cross. You may even be aware that unless you give up your sinful ways you will be condemned at the Judgment, but the firm hold of sin that it has on your heart will not be released in spite of all your desire to reform yourself. Another stronghold is the deception that Satan has over your mind. He has blinded your mind to the gloriousness of the Gospel, and is convincing you that the Christian life will imprison you in a strict life that has no fulfilment or joy in it. Satan's lies to your heart and mind are almost impenetrable strongholds. This is why the Gospel is so powerful when accompanied by the voice of Christ. The weapons contained in the Gospel have the mighty power to break down the walls of any stronghold, and to make the heart bare for the reception of the voice of Christ

speaking to it. ***"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes"*** (Romans 1:16).

THINGS WE MUST CONSIDER

1. You must consider seriously how deeply and thoroughly is the nature of man corrupted and what an enemy is every man to his own happiness, that he must be drawn by the power of God to Christ. Jesus knew this when He made the following statement: ***"But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life"*** (John 5:40). It is not that you don't know that you need to change your life in order to get to heaven. The world is full of religions where multitudes are doing all sorts of things to get themselves into a better spiritual and physical statement from where they are. It is not enough that you know in your mind that you are a sinner, and it is also not enough that you are trying to overcome it. All these efforts have no moral value to God, because the one thing that all these people are **not** doing is coming to Christ so that they can have true eternal life through Him.

2. What enemies are they to God, and the souls of people that they do all they can to discourage and hinder the conversion of these people to Christ? God draws the soul forward, and these do all they can to pull backward, like an unwilling donkey pulls backward when its master tries to pull it forward. When others prejudice and discourage seekers from coming to Jesus Christ in the way of faith, this is in direct opposition to God, and a partnership with the devil. The Holy Spirit showed His displeasure to one such person in the Acts account: ***"But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood***

them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, 'O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time.' And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand" (Acts 13:8-11).

3. Observe carefully and learn the true reasons why when you see out-and-out sinners take hold of Christ and start to walk in his ways, leaving behind them the pleasurable, profitable corruptions in order to be godly people in Christ, seeking to put their sins to death as they grow in grace. Use the same enthusiasm for this as you do when you see something happening in the world around you that mystifies and amazes you. One of the causes of persecution from non-Christians is that they don't understand why someone of their own number suddenly changes their direction and no longer does the things that they are used to doing. ***"In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you"*** (1 Peter 4:4).

4. Is this the first time your heart has been deeply affected by the preaching of the Gospel? Learn then from this event, how it comes about that you have previously sat under very persuasive and powerful sermons and yet have not been drawn in the way that you are now. This shows that even the best sermon is unable to affect one soul for Christ unless the Spirit of God draws him/her. This shows the absolute ineffectiveness of ministers or preachers who try to draw souls to Christ by using their own natural abilities and their own efforts alone. The special drawing power of God does not always accompany their efforts every time. Consider these Scriptures:

"So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase" (I Corinthians 3:7). This shows that the preacher is a seed-sower, and preaches in hope that God will draw sinners by His power. **"For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building"** (I Corinthians 3:9). If ministers, elders and Christian workers want to see the church of Christ built up, they need to realize that they need to work as partners with God. They need to know His will, and allow the Holy Spirit to work with them. And you have already seen that when you work in partnership with God, you have access to His weapons contained in the Gospel to pull down the strongholds that stand in the way of souls coming to Christ and being converted (II Corinthians 10:4).

5. If all success depends on the Father drawing sinners to Christ, then you must not despair of your unsaved friends and family members, over whom you mourn, because of their obstinate attitude that stops them coming to Christ. God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). It is a miracle of His grace that out of all your family members, you were the one picked out and drawn to Christ, without you first looking for Him. God can just as easily draw others out, and as you keep praying for their souls, God will not forget your prayers and will act accordingly, even if it may not be within your lifetime.

6. As the Father drew you to Christ when you could not have come to Christ yourself, then you can be sure that no one can draw you away from Christ except if God leaves you. He has already said that He would not leave you nor forsake you: **"The LORD our God be with us, as he was with our fathers: let him not leave us, nor forsake us"** (1 Kings 8:57); **"Hide not Thy face far from me; put not Thy servant away in anger: Thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation"** (Psalm 27:9, KJV); **"Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed"** (II Corinthians 4:9). The next Scripture is a specific promise that comes from Jesus Himself: **"I will not**

leave you comfortless: I will come to you" (John 14:18).

The power that at first drew sinners to Christ can secure and establish them in Christ to the end. ***"My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of My Father's hand"*** (John 10:29); ***"Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you'"*** (Hebrews 13:5).

7. You need to be in constant attendance upon the components of the Gospel (and the practices of the church connected with it) in which the drawing power of God works to influence the hearts of men and women. ***"I was sought by those who did not ask for Me; I was found by those who did not seek Me. I said, 'Here I am, here I am,' to a nation that was not called by My name"*** (Isaiah 65:1). You would be surprised at how many souls are saved who listened to a Gospel sermon without intending to do anything about what it was requiring of the person. Suddenly the voice of God speaks to the heart and God draws that sinner right into close proximity to the throne of grace. The Scripture refers to Gentile nations being reached with the Gospel. They were not looking for it, but many souls were saved when the Gospel came to them. This is why you always have to be aware of the people who could be listening in the background when you are sharing the Gospel message, either by preaching or one-to-one sharing. Often a person standing nearby can be spoken to by the Holy Spirit and end up coming to Christ, when the person you were speaking to had no response to the message.

8. Because you know that no person can come to Christ without the drawing power of God, nevertheless you do not remain passive. God has

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ordained that sinners will come to Christ through the preaching of the Gospel. You need to use all the power and ability that you have available to us to preach the Gospel whenever and wherever the Holy Spirit gives us the opportunity. You do not let an opportunity go by because you do not know when God may decide to speak to the heart of the person you are sharing the Gospel with. Often it is the person you would least expect to respond to the message whose heart is suddenly opened before you and starts to ask searching questions about how to be saved.

CONCLUSION

What we have read about here is just one aspect of how the grace of God works through the sharing of the Gospel. In the previous part, we read that no soul can respond to the Gospel unless the voice of Christ speaks to the heart. This voice is not an audible voice that we can hear with our ears, but is a spiritual voice that speaks to the heart. Once a sinner hears that voice, there is no going back because the conscience is activated and inflamed with the deep conviction of sin. But this is not enough. There needs to be a further work of God in the sinner's heart. Leaving the sinner thrashing around in "the mud of sin conviction" without assistance is not in God's nature. Along with the consciousness and conviction of sin, the way of escape is indicated. This way of escape is through Christ.

But the sinner cannot approach Christ by himself. He needs targeted assistance. This is what this booklet is all about. As the person cries out, "*What shall I do to be saved?*" the grace of God does a further work in drawing the person to

Christ. If you have recognized the drawing of God to Christ as you have read this book, then go with it, even if it seems strange to you. This may be your only opportunity to come to Christ. God may not give you another chance.

How do you respond to the drawing of God to Christ?

If you look at the Apostle Paul's (formerly called Saul) response in Acts 9:11: "**Behold, he prays.**" This is the first act of a person under conviction of sin that shows that he is responding positively toward the drawing power of God. He is making his first approach to Christ **by praying**.

The next response is to **search the Scriptures** for guidance about how to come to Christ. This can be done with the assistance and guidance of an experienced Christian who can guide you through the appropriate Scriptures that show you the correct pathway to a firm, settled faith in Christ.

The first experience of the drawing power of God is not the last. You will find that at every stage of your spiritual life you will be drawn back to Christ as you have need for further knowledge of His will. He has given you the Holy Spirit to be your Comforter and Guide, and as you continue to pray and consult the Scriptures, go to church, fellowship with other Christians, sit under the ministry of the preacher, and take part in other activities that will enhance and strengthen your faith, you will be able to recognize the drawing of the Spirit to Christ more readily, and you will find great joy and satisfaction in responding.

Read also:

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PERSONAL TESTIMONY

How The Holy Spirit Enables You to Come to Christ



I have been involved in a number of church situations since accepting Jesus Christ as my Saviour in 1966, after attending a Pentecostal church service for the first time in my life. I had never experienced Christianity like that before, and I knew that it was the life for me

Two years later, I had the experience of knowing the Lord in a deeper, more personal way in the middle of a golf course near my parents' home when I went before Him and introduced myself. I told Him that I had been introduced to church, the Bible, prayer, and Christian fellowship, but no-one could introduce me to Him, so I was there to introduce myself. I said, "*You are God and I am Paul, and I am very glad to meet You.*" At that moment, I felt all lit up inside, and I heard the voice of the Lord in my heart for the first time. He said, "*We have been waiting for you to do this for a long time.*" This was the start of a wonderful relationship that has been a key part of my Christian life ever since.

In recent years I have been involved in Anglican and Baptist church communities for a number of years. I am now serving as an elder at St Aidan's Presbyterian Church in Conifer Grove, Auckland, New Zealand.

I am a strong supporter of The Gospel Faith Messenger Ministry and its vision, and I trust that this booklet contributes to a much better understanding of how the voice of Christ is involved in the sharing of the Gospel.