

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### REAL CONVERSION

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist"

- II Timothy 4:3-5

Chapter Two of this book began with a quotation from Asahel Nettleton, the American evangelist who opposed Finney's decisionist techniques. This statement could almost be seen as a prophecy concerning the evil effects of decisionism:

These evils are destined to be propagated from generation to generation, waxing worse and worse.

- Asahel Nettleton,

1854 edition of *The Life and Labours of Asahel Nettleton*

Here are the main points we have covered so far in this book:

1. Our culture is unravelling, with no end in sight.
2. Decisionism has failed to cure the problem.
3. Stronger preaching against sin is needed.
4. Careful counselling by the pastor should be done in a quiet place. There should usually be more than one such counselling session, perhaps many in certain cases, but at least a few in all cases.

Imagine yourself going to a doctor's office with a bleeding sore on your face. In the office are a number of people with crutches, some in wheelchairs, others wheezing, barely able to breathe. You are all waiting to see the doctor. After a few minutes, a nurse runs in and gives everyone in the room a red pill. Then she smiles brightly and says, "You're all cured! Go home!"

"But, but," you protest, "we have different symptoms."

"Oh, that's all right," the nurse answers, "One prescription fits everyone."

"But I wanted to see the doctor," you protest.

"Oh, he never sees anyone who is sick," she answers. "He delegates that to me."

As she turns to go, she says, "Come back when you're well. The doctor will be glad to see you then."

Sadly, many churches handle lost inquirers about like that. *If medical doctors treated patients in their offices like many pastors treat inquirers in their churches, they would constantly be faced with malpractice suits.*

Rev. F. L. Chapell warned that our churches would fill up with lost people unless pastors made sure they are converted:

The dark days that preceded the Great Awakening will come again unless somebody stands firmly and clearly and decidedly by the doctrine of a converted church-membership.<sup>1</sup>

The tragic situation in our churches today could easily be reversed by following Spurgeon's advice to preachers:

If you wish to see results from your sermons you must be accessible to inquirers...you should appoint frequent and regular seasons for seeing all who are seeking after Christ, and you should cordially invite such to come and speak with you.<sup>2</sup>

Spurgeon's advice echos that given by Richard Baxter in the seventeenth century:

The work of conversion is the first and great thing we must drive at; after this we must labour with all our might... We must be ready to give advice to inquirers, who come to us. A minister is not to be merely a public preacher, but to be known as a counsellor for their souls, as the physician is for their bodies... To this end it is very necessary that you be well acquainted with practical cases, and especially that you be acquainted with the nature of saving grace, and be able to assist them in trying

their state, and in resolving the main question that concerns their everlasting life or death. One word of reasonable, prudent advice, given by a minister to persons in necessity, may be of more help than many sermons.<sup>3</sup>

These two men from the past strongly urge us to love the lost enough to spend time with them and help them.

### **Evangelistic Preaching**

The kind of counselling we are suggesting will be of little help unless it comes after evangelistic preaching. By this we mean preaching which does two things:

1. Exposes sin by the Law, showing the sinner that he is lost and helpless (Galatians 3:24) by appealing to his conscience.
2. Extolls the virtues of the gospel: i.e. the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (I Corinthians 15:1-4) as the only remedy for sin.

There is a great need for preaching on the evilness of sin today. As Dr. J. Gresham Machen so aptly put it, "Without the consciousness of sin, the whole of the gospel will seem to be an idle tale."<sup>4</sup> There is a great need for preaching on the wrath of God as well.

By this, we do not mean verse-by-verse teaching, or preaching *about* certain doctrines (which depersonalizes them - always a trap). We are talking about preaching to the people in front of you on their sin, on Hell, on the wrath of God.

Duncan Campbell saw the need for preaching on sin and judgment back in the 1940's and 1950's:

Duncan Campbell was often criticized for declaring the wrath of God night after night, but he saw this only as a backcloth to the gospel.<sup>5</sup> Campbell's method was to preach on sin, condemnation and hell during the services.<sup>6</sup>

It should be remembered that the last great regional revival in the Western world occurred under Duncan Campbell's preaching.<sup>7</sup> Oh, for God to send such preachers again, at this hour!

### **Focus on These Great Baptist and Protestant Themes**

Evangelistic preaching, to be effective, *must focus on these great Baptist and Protestant themes:*

- The *self-examination of the heart*,  
(Have you preached to the people in your church on the need to examine themselves to see whether they are in the faith? II Corinthians 13:5).
- The *depravity of man*,  
(Have you preached to the people in your church on their depravity lately? Ephesians 2:1, 2, 5).
- The *atonement of Jesus*,  
(Have you preached to the people in your church on the atonement of Jesus for their sins lately? Romans 5:6-9; I Corinthians 15:3).
- The *Last Judgment*,  
(Have you preached to the people in your church on what will happen to them at the Last Judgment lately? Revelation 20:11-15).
- The *unpardonable sin*,  
(Have you preached to the people in your church on the unpardonable sin lately? Matthew 12:31-32).
- The *reprobation of sinners*,  
(Have you preached to the people in your church on the reprobation of sinners lately? Romans 1:24-28).
- The *fire of Hell*,  
(Have you told the unconverted people in your church that they are going to burn forever in Hell lately? Matthew 5:46; Luke 16:19-31).
- The *Ten Commandments*,  
(Have you preached to the people in your church on the fact that they have broken the Ten Commandments lately? Exodus 20:3-17; I John 3:4).
- The *Blood of Jesus*,  
(Have you preached to the people in your church on the Blood of Jesus lately? Strangely, some Bible preachers are suddenly unsure of the Blood in our day. There will be no revival without great Blood

sermons. If there is no Blood in Heaven, then you will never get in there! Hebrews 9:7; 10:19).

- The ***Resurrection of Jesus***,  
(Have you preached to the people in your church on the physical resurrection of Jesus lately, or do you reserve this subject for Easter only? Remember, "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain (empty); ye are yet in your sins" (I Corinthians 15:17). Remember also that "we shall be saved by his life" (Romans 5:10). Sermons on this subject are especially important in a day of charismatism and new-age mysticism.).
- The ***absolute necessity of regeneration***  
(Have you preached to the people in your church on their need of regeneration recently? John 3:3, 7; Titus 3:5).

These great themes should constantly appear as the subjects of evangelistic sermons, if we wish to see conversions, and if we truly desire revival.

Asahel Nettleton pointed out that these doctrines were preached by the Apostles and that:

With these, idol temples were demolished - sinners pricked in their hearts, and brought to bow submissively to the Saviour's feet.

These are the doctrines which were preached in the time of the glorious reformation from papacy, throughout the whole Protestant world. These were the weapons used by Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, Cranmer, and Knox. They went forth with the sword of the Spirit pressing the consciences of men...

These too are the doctrines which have been preached in the late revivals, in New England. Doctrines which have awakened the enmity of thousands, and have shown sinners their opposition to God. Doctrines which many have opposed with all their hearts, in which contest thousands have been convicted and slain. These are the weapons which have been wielded by the hand of the divine Spirit and have been mighty through God to the

pulling down of strong holds. These are the doctrines which thousands have embraced, by their own confession, at the very time when they submitted to God...<sup>8</sup>

Oh, for God to send Spirit-anointed preachers to take up these grand old themes of our Baptist and Protestant forebears, and proclaim them up and down the land without fear of the lost evangelicals seated in the pews in front of them!

The kind of counselling which follows will do little good unless it is preceded by hard, sin-condemning, conscience-probing, Christ-exalting evangelistic preaching.

Dr. John R. Rice\* said:

In the very nature of the case, people do not repent of their sins until they are conscious and convicted of their sins. Jesus said, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Until a man knows he is sick, he does not feel the need of a physician. A preacher friend said, "You have to get people lost before you can get them saved."

Why would a sinner want Christ if he were not conscious of his sin, did not feel the need of a Saviour?<sup>9</sup>

#### **Sin Confronted in the Pastor's Study**

When the sermon is over, lost people are invited to my office. They sit there quietly reading the following material. They read this before Dr. Cagan or I see them. The following pages are a reproduction of what we give to the people when they come to my office after the sermon:

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\*We agree with Dr. Rice on the subject of preaching against sin. We disagree with him on the subject of Charles G. Finney's decisionist techniques and on some related issues. But many of Dr. Rice's sermons are evangelistic classics, such as "The Unpardonable Sin," "All Satan's Apples Have Worms," "Neglect, the Shortest Way to Hell," "Missing God's Last Train for Heaven," "God's Slaughter Crew," "The Scarlet Sin," "Religious But Lost," and many others. Preachers should obtain and read these powerful, conscience-probing sermons. It would do many churches good if pastors preached these sermons by Dr. Rice to their people. I myself have done just that on several occasions, always giving full credit to Rice before preaching.

(The following three pages are a reproduction of the sheet we give to those who come to the pastor's office after each sermon for counselling on conversion)

## **YOUR BIGGEST PROBLEM - SIN**

Dear Friend:

I am glad you came here today. I hope you came because you are thinking about your *sins*. Your *sins* are many and they are terrible in God's sight.

(1) Your *sins* have separated you from God:

"Your iniquities (sins) have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you"  
(Isaiah 59:2).

(2) Your *sins* are all known by God:

"The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil" (Proverbs 15:3a).

God knows every *sin* you have ever committed.

(3) Your *sins* are recorded in God's books in Heaven:

"The dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works"  
(Revelation 20:12b).

Every *sin* you have ever committed was seen by God and has been written down in these books in Heaven. You are in trouble!

(4) At the Last Judgment, you will stand before God, and He will read your *sins* out of His books. Your *sins* will condemn you:

"Be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23b).

(5) Even your *sins* which you kept secret will be read from the books by God at the Last Judgment:

"For God shall bring every work into judgment,  
with every secret thing" (Ecclesiastes 12:14).

- (6) Sinful *words* which you have said will be read out of the books  
by God, and your *sinful* words will condemn you:

"For by thy words...thou shalt be condemned"  
(Matthew 12:37).

- (7) Your *sinful* thoughts will be read out of God's books. *Sins* you  
have thought about will condemn you.

"And God saw...that every imagination of the  
thoughts of his heart was only evil" (Genesis 6:5).

- (8) You have *sinned* by missing church. This shows you have  
broken the first commandment given by Jesus in Matthew  
22:37-38. This is a terrible *sin*:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,  
and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the  
first and great commandment" (Matthew 22:37-38).

Each time you miss church, this *sin* of not loving God as you should is  
recorded in God's books. You are in trouble because of your *sins*. This *sin*  
alone is enough to condemn you.

- (9) You have committed at least one of the following *sins*:

- PRIDE
- CURSING
- GREED
- REJECTING JESUS
- FALSE RELIGION
- HATRED AND ANGER
- SELFISHNESS
- TALKING BACK TO PARENTS
- LYING
- SEX SIN
- PORNOGRAPHY
- STEALING

- DRUGS OR ALCOHOL
- NOT LOVING GOD AS MUCH AS YOU SHOULD
- MISSING CHURCH

"Sin is the transgression (or breaking) of the law"  
(I John 3:4).

- (10) You have committed at least one of these horrible *sins*.  
Your *sins* are written down in God's books in Heaven.

Even if you could stop *sinning* now, it would *not* help you. If you never again committed even one *sin*, it is *too late* for you. The *sins* you have already done are written in God's books. These *sins* of yours are enough already to condemn you. ***IT IS TOO LATE FOR YOU TO BE GOOD.***

Even if you are sorry for your *sins* it will not help you. Your sorrow will not remove your *sins* from God's books. ***IT IS TOO LATE FOR YOU TO BE SORRY FOR YOUR SINS.***

NOTHING YOU CAN DO CAN GET RID OF YOUR ***SINS!*** NO ONE BUT ***JESUS*** CAN TAKE YOUR ***SINS*** OUT OF GOD'S BOOKS.

NO ONE CAN REMOVE YOUR ***SINS*** BUT ***JESUS*** - BY HIS BLOOD. HE WAS CRUCIFIED TO PAY THE PENALTY FOR YOUR SINS.

NO ONE BUT JESUS HAS "POWER ON EARTH TO FORGIVE ***SINS***"  
(Matthew 9:6).

DO YOU WANT ***JESUS*** TO FORGIVE YOUR ***SINS*** AND REMOVE THEM FROM GOD'S BOOKS?

WILL YOU COME TO ***JESUS*** SO HE CAN WASH YOUR ***SINS*** AWAY WITH HIS BLOOD?

JESUS IS ***NOT*** ANGRY WITH YOU. HE LOVES YOU.

JESUS IS ALIVE. HE IS SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD IN HEAVEN.

(The sheet we give out to inquirers ends here)

## **An Outline on Counselling**

C. H. Spurgeon strongly urged every Baptist preacher to have a quiet room where he could talk at length with the lost. He told the students at his Pastor's College:

It is shocking to think that there are ministers who have no method whatever for meeting the anxious. From the very first you should appoint frequent and regular seasons for seeing all who are seeking after Christ, and you should cordially invite such to come and speak with you. Seek out the wandering sheep one by one, do not grudge your labour, for your Lord in His parable represented the good shepherd as bringing home his sheep, not in a flock, but one at a time.<sup>10</sup>

Speaking on the same subject, the seventeenth-century preacher Richard Baxter said:

The work of conversion is the first and great thing we must drive at; after this we must labour with all our might...We must be ready to give advice to inquirers, who come to us. A minister is not to be merely a public preacher, but to be known as a counsellor for their souls, as the physician is for their bodies.<sup>11</sup>

These two men from the past strongly urge us to love the lost enough to spend time with them and help them. This manual on conversion is given to help pastors in the counselling work which Spurgeon and Baxter described.

We do not believe that people are saved through our methods alone. Anyone who comes to Jesus is saved (John 6:37). But we believe that the following manual can be helpful in making sure inquiring souls actually do come to Him.

### **Are We Over-Reacting?**

A copy of this manuscript was sent to a lady to be reviewed. She is a very intelligent person with a seminary degree from a world-famous school. The manuscript came back from her with a comment that the first part of this book is insightful, but that we have "over-reacted" in this final section, on counselling the lost.

We thought about that for several days. Then it dawned on Dr. Hymers that this lady is the wife of a pastor! Of course she would think we have over-reacted! ***If we are right, then her own husband is wrong, because he doesn't use the methods we give here!***

Before you conclude that this section is too detailed or too lengthy, please, dear reader, at least consider the possibility that we may have rediscovered something you need to know. Please be open to that possibility. Try to look at the subject of counselling the unconverted through new eyes, as though you had never thought of it before. That way you will be less likely to close your mind, and emotionally reject what we say based on your own personal experience.

Remember, we are not giving a quick, untested answer to decisionism. Both of us are seminary graduates with earned doctorates. Dr. Cagan has twenty years' experience in the ministry. Dr. Hymers has forty years' experience. The ideas on counselling, which you are about to read, have been tested in our own church for many years. ***So, please, evaluate this section with great care.*** Don't simply reject our ideas with a knee-jerk emotional reaction.

#### **What is Conversion?**

A. We must have in mind a definition of salvation through Christ.

Conversion gives a man a new nature and standing before God and, thus, produces a new direction in his life.

Conversion is the result of that work of the Holy Spirit which draws a lost sinner to Jesus Christ for justification and regeneration, and changes the sinner's standing before God from lost to saved, imparting divine life to the depraved soul, thus producing a new direction in the life of the convert. The objective side of salvation is justification. The subjective side of salvation is regeneration. The result is conversion.

1. Historically:

"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (I Corinthians 15:3-4).

2. Personally:

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31).

As Spurgeon said, "That faith which saves the soul is believing on a person, depending upon Jesus for eternal life."<sup>12</sup>

3. The act of believing on Christ (also called trusting Christ) is the means by which the atonement historically given for all mankind is received by the individual sinner and applied to him. Christ died for all men and women, yet not all are saved, because most people do not trust Him.

4. This act of believing on Christ or trusting Him is no mere agreement to the historical facts of the gospel. It is instead an act in which the sinner trusts in Christ the person, Christ Himself (John 1:12). A. T. Pierson was quoted by H. C. Thiessen in his *Lectures in Systematic Theology*. Dr. Pierson wrote:

"Here, then, is the starting point for any who would exercise saving faith; he must *receive* Jesus as Savior, Christ, Son of God; not simply the witness God gave concerning His Son, but the Son of God *Himself*."<sup>13</sup>

Or, as C. H. Spurgeon put it, "The mere knowledge of these facts will not, however, save us, unless we really and truly trust our souls in the Redeemer's hands."<sup>14</sup>

5. This act is unique among all the things that a human being does. Although called a "work" in John 6:29, it is in a class of its own and is distinguished from all human works, such as going to church, giving up sins, witnessing, fasting, giving money, praying, rededicating your life, and so on.

Believing on Jesus is the *only* "work" or "decision" that will save a person (John 6:29).

The act of trusting Christ is actually supernatural:

- a. It reaches from earth to heaven, going outside of a person and even outside of this earthly universe.

While a sinner can of his own power give up sins, pray, come to church, read the Bible, and so on, he cannot perform either aspect of salvation: he cannot pay for his own sins (I Cor. 15:3-4) and he cannot of his own abilities, without the grace of God, come to Christ (John 6:44), who is in Heaven (Mark 16:19; Colossians 3:1; I Peter 3:22).

Thus, it would be impossible for a person to come to, trust, or otherwise contact Jesus, if it depended upon purely human faculties: but Jesus as the omnipresent Son of God is actually "standing at the door and knocking" (see Rev. 3:20) and the grace of God actually makes saving trust possible (Ephesians 2:8-9). How wonderful is the love of God!

- b. Furthermore, the sinner in his depraved state cannot be saved, and does not even want to be saved. He is "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1) with the "understanding darkened" (Eph. 4:18).

It is only God that awakens a sinner and places within him both a desire to come to Christ and the ability to do so, John 6:44.

Were it not for the grace of God, no lost sinner could or would trust in Christ, or even want to. But God's love is so marvellous and so great that not only did Christ die for us (Rom. 5:8) but God draws each person (through prevenient

grace) at least once in his life and makes it possible for him to trust Christ (Titus 2:11) if he chooses. "He first loved us" (I John 4:19).

"Herein is love, not that we loved God (we did not) but that he loved us (first), and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins (I John 4:10).

6. When a person trusts Christ, he receives (whether he feels it or even knows it) all the benefits associated with Christ: forgiveness of sins, the new birth, and many other benefits. Christ Himself thus takes priority over all the results that go along with trusting Him: joy, peace, assurance, a new life, and even the new birth. If a person comes to Christ, he receives all the benefits of Christ thrown in, I Corinthians 1:30-31.
  7. The act of trusting Christ or believing on Christ or coming to Christ is the goal to be sought. The lost sinner must seek to trust Christ, and the pastor or personal worker must speak to the lost sinner with the intention of motivating him to trust Christ, Acts 8:30-37; Romans 10:14.
- B. There are many errors regarding salvation, declaring that it is not through Christ.
1. Salvation not necessary at all, with a person's "life-interest" or "life-trust" somewhere else: money, friends, family, knowledge, sex, self, etc. Often combined with a denial of Christian doctrine openly or practically; the person may think the Bible isn't true, deny the existence of Hell, think there is no afterlife, and so on.
  2. Salvation necessary, but obtained without Christ; by works, holiness, study, attendance at meetings, religiosity, abstaining from sins, prayer, confession, and so on. (e.g. Judaism, Islam, etc.)

3. Salvation allegedly by Christ, but in fact Christ is subjected to or "piped through" something else.
  - a. Catholic: Christ is mediated through baptism, communion, confession, church attendance, etc. (Worse: salvation through saints or the Virgin; Christ distant.)
  - b. Evangelical: Christ is obtained or mediated through a sinner's prayer (without saving faith in Jesus), doctrinal belief, study, church attendance, or something else; doing one of these things confers Christ or proves that a person has Him.
  - c. Pentecostal: Christ is obtained/mediated through experiences, tongues, good feelings, life going well, etc.

These errors are *ontologically* wrong; that is, they put Christ under or "pipe Him through" something less than Himself, such as church attendance, the mass, the sinner's prayer, or doctrine. In fact, we are saved by a *direct* trust in Christ, who is greater than these other things: "And he is before all things, and by him all things consist" (Colossians 1:17).

- C. All of these errors come short of actually trusting Christ, although His name may be used. Just as a Catholic who names Jesus but in fact trusts baptism is not saved, in the same way an evangelical who names the name of Jesus but in fact trusts the sinner's prayer or doctrinal belief instead of trusting Christ, Himself is not saved. This explains why many professing "born again" believers have no real Christian life, live in habitual gross sin, and in general give no evidence of union with Christ - simply because they have in fact not trusted Christ, not rested in Him, not entered into a saving union with Him, John 5:40; John 6:40.

The pastor is to guide the lost person towards a salvation experience through trusting Christ, just as Evangelist did in *Pilgrim's Progress*.

This *may* happen while a person prays a sinner's prayer, but does *not* happen *because* he prays the prayer. The key element is trusting Christ, not the prayer. John R. Rice wrote that a person can be saved without prayer in his tract, "What Must I Do to be Saved?" Charles Spurgeon, John Wesley, and Dr. Hymers were all saved without saying a "sinner's prayer," by a simple act of faith in Jesus Himself, John 3:18. These men did not pray when they were saved, they simply put the trust of their hearts in Jesus. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness" (Romans 10:10).

### Two Sides of Salvation

A. The subjective side of salvation - regeneration. (John 3:3; I John 3:9)

This is what is called the new birth itself; when the Holy Spirit imparts new life to the person who has trusted Christ. This gives him the power to live the Christian life and the new (divine) nature. This new life reflects itself in the convert, I Corinthians 6:11.

B. The objective side of salvation - justification. (Romans 5:1, 6-9, Romans 4:5; Isaiah 53)

This refers to the forgiveness of sins through the shed Blood of Christ who died on the Cross to pay for sins, Romans 5:8-9.

The proper order - justification precedes regeneration. This order places Christ in the most important place, where He ought to be. (The order is logical rather than chronological, since both happen in an instant when a person trusts Christ.)

C. The result - conversion.

1. A person who turns to Christ and trusts Him (believes on Him, unites with Him, comes to Him) for forgiveness (justification) is objectively justified and subjectively receives the new birth, Romans 4:5. As a result, he is converted, Matthew 18:3.

2. A person who looks to Christ for a mere spiritual "experience," for personal power (even to overcome sin), for feelings, for a change, and so on, will get neither justification nor regeneration, Acts 8:18-23. As a result, he will not be converted.
3. So, we want the inquirer to turn to Christ for the forgiveness of his sins, which are written in God's books in Heaven (e.g. Revelation 20:12-15). These sins will accuse the lost sinner at the Judgment even if he no longer commits them, because they are recorded in Heaven (Revelation 20:12). They can only be forgiven by the Blood of Christ, Hebrews 9:14, 22.

### **Stages of Conversion**

#### A. Introduction: Preliminary considerations

1. The only thing needed to be saved is to trust Christ. Thus, a person does not need to pass through a noticeable or discernable period of awakening or conviction of sin in order to be saved.
  - a. Some have been saved without being under conviction of sin at the moment of their conversion such as blind Bartimaeus, Mark 10:47-52, though he was undoubtedly aware of his sinful and miserable state and in that sense was prepared for conversion by prevenient grace.
  - b. However, in most cases people *do* need to see their sins at the moment of conversion, or they will not trust Christ. As Dr. J. Gresham Machen wrote:

"Without the consciousness of sin, the whole of the gospel will seem to be an idle tale."<sup>15</sup>

- c. Some wish to focus on the details of salvation and "how to" trust Christ, but have no sense of sin, so the entire process is an "idle tale" at best, John 8:44.
  - d. Some wish to analyze themselves and seek for a consciousness of sin as an end in itself rather than looking at Christ. This too is fruitless, Ephesians 4:18-19; I Timothy 4:2.
2. Trusting Christ is instantaneous.
- a. The "stages" suggested here usually come to pass over time. As Charles Haddon Spurgeon wrote, "There may be such a thing as faith at first sight; but usually we reach faith by stages: we become interested, we consider, we hear evidence, and so are led to believe"<sup>16</sup> (cf. Mark 8:22-25). But the moment of belief is itself instantaneous.
  - b. However, these stages can happen quickly and be a logical order rather than an order in time, Acts 8:30-38. The important thing is to lead the person to Christ rather than to make an idol out of a process of awakening and conviction and seek that as though it were the goal itself.

B. The unawakened or careless sinner

Almost everyone who comes for counselling the first time or two is in this state. To be in this state does not mean that a person is not religious, does not have an outwardly clean life, or is not interested in the Bible, the church, or the external things of God. Nicodemus, the apostle Paul, and John the Baptist were unawakened yet religious and clean before their conversions, John 3:10; Acts 26:4-5; Acts 9:5; John 1:31, 33, 34.

"I knew him not" (John 1:31).

"I knew him not" (John 1:33).

"I saw" (John 1:34).

This is John the Baptist unconverted and then converted. John is a transitional figure between the Old and New Dispensations, so this cannot be emphasized too dogmatically. However, the above verses must have deep significance regarding John's own conversion.

It is the pastor's job through the use of the Bible, pleading and reasoning as the human instrument, and by the power of God as the divine instrument, to move the sinner into an awakened and convicted state, and finally to conversion.

Unawakened sinners, whether they are new to the church or whether they have been coming to church for a long time, tend to have these two characteristics:

1. They have preconceived religious opinions about God (the Father), Jesus Christ, salvation (how to get to Heaven), Heaven and Hell, and so on. Unawakened sinners hold to these opinions even though they may have been sitting under gospel preaching for years. They may outwardly profess orthodox Christianity but in fact upon examination have an entirely different religion (true of lost but orthodox Christians before the Great Awakening, the 1859 revival, etc.).

These opinions can be acquired at any time in life, usually by attending a church or religious meeting and hearing the gospel preached.

It is not necessary to attend a church many times in order to form a religious opinion. Many people have formed their opinions by attending a single religious meeting, or even by watching Christian television or by reading a book, or by conversations with others, during which religious opinions are expressed.

- a. It is important for the pastor to ask the sinner what was his church or religion in the past. This will give you an idea of how the sinner thinks.























































