

THE RICHES OF DIVINE GRACE UNFOLDED DIALOGUE IV.

A Discourse, in which an Account is given how this Salvation is received, in the Knowledge of it, into the regenerate Mind, by the operation of the Holy Ghost upon it.

Mr. Enquirer. Sir, our last conversation, in which you discoursed on salvation, has been a mean of opening my mind to apprehend the importance of that subject beyond my former views of the same. I understand salvation originates from the will, council, and transactions of the Incomprehensible Three, in, the Incomprehensible Jehovah, and that it is wholly and comprehensively contained in the Person, Incarnation, Life, and Death, of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I used to conceive thus: If I were born again, or, in other words, if I were regenerated by the Holy Ghost, I was then a child of God, and should most assuredly be saved. From your account of that subject, I now see salvation is distinct from that of the new birth.

Pray say if I understand you right in this matter. **Mr. Instructor.** You know, Sir, the subjects we have been engaged in were, 1st. Of Sin-2-d. Regeneration-3d. Salvation. These subjects are thus connected one with the other. If we were not by nature the subjects of sin, we should not need to be regenerated in our minds, and be brought out of a state of death, into a state of life. When we are born again of God, then we begin to see and feel our need of salvation, which, when we have right apprehensions of, we perceive it to be altogether out of ourselves. The new birth is an act of God within us: salvation is an, act of God without us. We are the subjects of the new birth. We are partakers of salvation. We receive it by faith.

Whereas, regeneration is not received, it is, wrought in us once for all. It is our sole meetness for eternal glory.

Junior. Pray, my good Sir, give me leave to be very free with you in my enquiries; it will be of use to my mind. Am I right in what I

expressed concerning my former thoughts? which run thus: If I am regenerated by the holy Ghost, I am a, child of God, and shall most assuredly be saved.

Senior. It is ail eternal truth, without you are regenerated by the Holy Ghost, you cannot be manifested to be a child of God, nor have the least good and proper thought of salvation; yet the new birth is not salvation, it is the medium whereby we receive the knowledge of salvation into our minds.**Junior.** Indeed, when I reflect on what you have delivered concerning salvation, I must acknowledge, I conceive salvation must influence the whole mind: I want, therefore, to know the means whereby it does so.

Senior. I am very ready to inform you; only let these following truths be first acknowledged, that we may fairly understand each other, and not treat any of the subjects before us with confusion.

Junior. Sir, this will be to me most truly desirable.

Senior. You will be pleased to take up your words.

You say your former thoughts have been, were you born again, then you were a child of God, and should be saved. Now, I do not deny, that as sure as you are born of God, you are a child of God, and shall be manifestatively saved; but regeneration does not make you a child; it is the evidence of it: nor is there salvation in the new birth; it is a spiritual faculty, which, as the Holy Spirit is pleased to open, to receive the revealed account of salvation given in the everlasting gospel, is the very mean by which you enjoy the same, with all the blessings thereof.

Junior. This is to open a new scene indeed. I confess myself satisfied with your discourse on regeneration; also with your conversation on salvation. Pray, Sir, for my further improvement in the knowledge of spiritual and important subjects, let our present interview be confined to an account how salvation is received.**Senior.** I confess that I conceive this is a subject very interesting. I am truly willing to give you all the instruction I am capable of on the same.

Junior. You have, Sir, my best thanks; and pray let there be no delay, but proceed, as I desire to give the strictest attention to you; hoping the Lord will graciously bless it.

Senior. Salvation is the greatest blessing God himself can bestow, on you, on me, as sinners. It is entirely suited to us, as we are. It is freely given to us, without money or any qualification in ourselves. It is received by faith. This faith is by the operation of the Spirit of God in our minds. The Apostle says, For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Ephesians. 2:8. This is what the Scripture says concerning the subject before us.

Junior. It is so; yet I am as far from the subject as I was before. I want to know what faith, is, and where to find it? I can no more doubt, from what you delivered in the second conversation which passed between us, on regeneration, that I am born again, and have divine impressions of heavenly things on my mind, and do really hunger and thirst after Christ; but I do not know what faith is. Now that is a subject I want you to clear up unto my view.

Senior. The new birth is faith, and faith is the new birth. The soul born of God, has the faith of the operation of God. This is discovered in the following way: he hears, reads, and converses about Christ; this draws out the mind after Christ, and his thoughts are exercised on Christ in a particular way and manner. Now this is regeneration drawn out into act and exercise.

Junior. Then I must look into myself to see if I have it, must I not?

Senior. No. I will treat you with all the simplicity I can.

You look on yourself as born of God; do you not? You love to hear and read of Christ, and his great salvation; is it not so? You have some inward relish and delight, herein; have you not? Why this is the new birth drawn forth into act and exercise towards the Lord Jesus Christ.

Junior. If this be faith, it is quite different from the conceptions I have been entertaining concerning it in my own mind. I have considered it as some grace wrought in me, which laid the

foundation of all my confidence in the Lord, and which was to be supported, as I felt myself so and so conformed to the divine will.

Senior. I could wish, on your behalf, it might be given you to understand, that regeneration consists in creating in you a spiritual mind; and that every act of it, is drawn out by the Holy Ghost, and exercised on the Lord Jesus Christ: so that the new birth is faith in the habit; and the exercise of it in acts of love, faith, and hope, towards and upon our Lord Jesus Christ, is this same faith of the operation of God, of which the Scriptures speak.

Junior. You have given me some light into the subject, if I mistake you not; but give me leave just to give you my conceptions, I understand, if I were not born again, I could not have the least spiritual life in me. This spiritual life in me is faith. This is revived by thinking on Christ, and further expressed by its exercises on the person, grace, and salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Is this right?

Senior. It is. The Holy Ghost does not quicken your dead heart, and raise it up to believe on the name of the only begotten Son of God; but he quickens and raises up the spiritual life and faculty which he wrought in you in regeneration, and draws it forth into act and exercise.

Junior. Really, Sir, it is of great importance to know this, and have right and scriptural views of the same.

Senior. It is so; as it makes way for our so received in the knowledge of Christ and salvation into our minds, as lifts us off ourselves, and fixes us entirely on him.

Junior. But how am I made a partaker of Christ?

Senior. By faith; which is a receiving grace, and by which we actually receive Christ into our hearts.

Junior, But what must I do? I must act, that I may receive Christ. Must I not?**Senior.** There is nothing to be done by you, You are wholly passive in all the work and operation of the Spirit of the Living God within you and upon you.

Junior. This I cannot apprehend, How can I receive salvation, if I act nothing?

Senior. Just as you received natural and spiritual life, without acting any thing, Did you not receive natural life without any act of yours? What act did you perform, when a living soul was imparted to you? None. It was utterly impossible you should. You had being and life given you; all which followed was but the effect of it. You had a spiritual birth and life in regeneration bestowed on you; all the acts of the same are the fruits and effects of it. So the knowledge of Christ is bestowed on you, and Christ is received into the mind actually and passively, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, and formed in you the hope of glory, without any act of yours. Many spiritual acts of the mind follow, which give proof and evidence of all this; but not one of these goes before, to give being to the cause which produces them.

Junior. Sir, I confess your conversation on these subjects, appears more and more to me very interesting. I want you most clearly and expressly to explain these subjects. I perceive you speak of them, as though they existed in your own mind as spiritual and divine realities.**Senior.** Indeed they do. Not that it follows from hence, that I shall be able to give you such a clear statement of them, as will give you the fullest satisfaction.

Junior. I must confess, that what hath been delivered, has excited my attention; therefore, my mind being set upon thinking over, and pondering on what you may further deliver, it may be an encouragement, that your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord.

Senior. The new birth contains the spiritual faculties of understanding, will, memory, and affections. The Holy Ghost enlightens the understanding with the knowledge of Christ. The Apostle says, And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath 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. I John,5:20. The Holy Ghost enlightens the renewed mind, and opens the spiritual understanding to receive and apprehend Christ, as revealed in the everlasting gospel. By this means Christ is most truly known spiritually received. He exists in the mind. The renewed will bows, submits, yields itself unto him, as the one alone and only Saviour.

The affections are fixed on him as all sufficient for life and salvation. The memory is sanctified to think on, and, to remember his work of salvation, and the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth, and which are recorded in the Sacred Volume of Inspiration. The spiritual faculties of the renewed mind are altogether suited to Christ: to know him to apprehend him to receive him to believe on him to love him to cleave to him to delight in him to glory in him to live on him alone. You understand me, do you not?

Junior. Yes, I do. You say the Holy Ghost reveals Christ to the enlightened mind. This revelation is from the word of grace, and altogether agreeable with it.

He takes of the things of Christ revealed in it, and gives to the mind a real spiritual apprehension of the same. He realizes them in the mind, that they have their existence there, and are found and experienced by the soul born of God to be divine realities. Is it not so?

Senior. It is even so. And hereby your new birth is most clearly evidenced; as you have a real knowledge of Christ formed in your mind, and of the Father's love in him, and are drawn insensibly to yourself, by the grace and energy of the Holy Spirit, to think and meditate on Christ's salvation, and the Father's love to you in him.

Junior. I could wish to request you, in the most simple and clearest manner, to give me an account how you received Christ; I conceive it will serve, should I have made any mistake in what hath been delivered on the subject before us, to set me right.

Senior. I most certainly will, and with the greatest pleasure. You are to know, that the Lord had wrought effectually on my soul, some years before I knew Christ as he is set forth in the everlasting gospel of the blessed God. When I was, through his good pleasure, to hear the everlasting gospel, it was under the ministry of the truly excellent Mr. Romaine, a man whom I never conversed with. I am truly glad I never did, as I conceive it has answered a far better end, to receive what I did from him in ordinance way, than in a way of conversation. When I first heard him, I was struck exceedingly with

the subject. He was at that time constantly speaking concerning the covenant of the Eternal Three. He used to express how the Father had laid on Christ all sorts of sin that Christ had offered himself as the sacrifice for them that his offering had perfected for ever the putting away of sin that, the Father was infinitely and everlastingly well pleased with the life and death of his co-equal Son, and well pleased with that sinner who was well pleased with Christ that the Holy Spirit bore his testimony to the truth of all this in the word and that there was now nothing, to be done for salvation. He used to express himself thus: When persons begin to be, concerned about salvation, they all think there must be some great work wrought, that they may be saved. Sirs, there is nothing to be done for salvation, but what hath already been. The sacrifice which takes away all sin, hath been offered. The Father hath accepted it, and Christ is entered with his own blood into the holiest of all; and nothing remains but for God to send down his Spirit, to bring you to believe in the righteousness and sacrifice of Immanuel. I used to be all ear in hearing these important sentences: and my whole attention being most powerfully arrested with a consideration of the importance of what was contained in the subject, my mind was led secretly and imperceptibly to believe on the righteousness, and most precious blood shedding of the Lamb of God, and the Father's infinite and everlasting delight in him, and acceptance of his work, without any thought about faith, or interest in the subject. This is the way in which the Lord the Spirit led me to receive Christ. It was thus Christ was formed in my heart; and hereby I was led to rest and center in Christ for my whole salvation.

Junior. But did you not experience something very remarkable and particular when you received Christ?

Senior. No: I did not. My whole mind was engaged with the subject. Christ was my one object. All my thoughts were exercised on the everlasting perfection of his righteousness, and the eternal worth and virtue of his blood.

Junior. It seems faith is nothing, according to your account. I always conceived it a great and surprising act, to believe in the name

of the only begotten Son of God. I have heard many say it is as hard a work to believe, as to make a world.

Senior. I have nothing to do, my good Sir, with what you have heard, or with what others say., I am very freely disposed to speak to you of the subject now before us; and I can but speak according to my own knowledge and experience thereof..

Junior. My good Sir, I dare say nothing against what you have said. I know not but it may all be truth. All I say is, it seems to make no difficulty of believing. I should really, like the subject to be more freely and fully opened; for, it really appears to me, what you have said, amounts to this that you found no difficulty in believing on Christ for salvation that you believed without any regard to what you were in yourself that you did not examine yourself, whether you ought to believe or not and, that you did not attend, in the act of believing, to whether you were interested in Christ or not. I gather all this from what you have before delivered unto me in this present conversation.

Senior. I cannot but address you very affectionately, and say, my dear friend, I have said all you suggest; and it pleases me well that you have so clearly perceived what I have delivered. I have made no difficulty of believing; and I have expressed myself clear enough for you to perceive, that I paid no regard to what I was in myself, in the act of believing on Christ for salvation. You understand me right, in suggesting, that I did not examine myself whether I ought to believe or not; nor was I in the least concerned, for it was not in all my thoughts whether I had interest in Christ or not: so that you have clearly understood my words. Now, I am very free to explain myself on all this, if you are disposed to attend.**Junior.** Indeed, that I am; and should be quite pleased to have the whole explained: for, I must confess, your conversation hath done me good; yet the present is such, as I really want and wish much, to request you would explain it to me.

Senior. I am willing, and want nothing but your attention. If you will give me your ear, I will give you my whole heart on these subjects.

Junior. I will, Sir, most assuredly; for I never attended to the voice of information more, than when you are pleased to converse with me.

Senior. We will both of us avoid all compliments. I am a sinner. When I heard the gospel, I heard it as containing life and salvation; whilst, as to its great and grand subject salvation by the blood and righteousness of Christ, I had no right knowledge of it; yet the novelty of the subject, its sublimity, the freeness and generosity of Christ as expressed in it, and set forth by it, wrought on my mind. Thus I found that the Apostle says to be true, that faith cometh by hear in and hearing by the word of God. Rom. 10:17.

Through the supernatural light and teaching of the Holy Ghost, I received into my mind the knowledge of Christ. I was altogether passive in this. Having been led by the Holy Ghost, under the preaching of Christ, into some real and gospel apprehension of him, I was led to think over, and exercise my mind on the same.

Thus I was actually admitted into the knowledge of Christ and salvation, and found therein life everlasting: so that, if you understand me, I was wholly passive in all this. The Lord the Spirit opened my ear to hear Christ preached: the Lord the Spirit conveyed the true knowledge of Christ to my understanding, by means of what I heard delivered concerning him: the Lord the Spirit by this very means revealed Christ in me. It was thus that he took of the things of Christ, and made them known unto me; and thus he brought me to trust wholly on Christ for eternal life.

Junior. But did you not feel some very sensible comfort in your soul when you first believed?

Senior. No. Christ was the object of my faith. His salvation was the subject my faith was exercised on. I was therefore taken off myself entirely. I was not led to think concerning myself. It was no subject of importance with me what I was, or what I was not; but who Christ was, and what he had done. These, in my views, were the only subjects I had any concern with.

Junior. It may all be very right; yet, if it be, I am confident I want a more clear view of the subject.

Senior. Possibly so. I can only inform you how I was brought to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to the saving of the soul, and what I believed concerning him. It may be, were I to tell you all I believe regarding him, and what the substance of my faith is, or what it consists in, you would think still less of my faith. **Junior.** I cannot say as to this; yet I should really like you to touch on this part of the subject. I cannot but confess, I conceive you may, and must be right in the subject; but you are so far above me, I want you to descend lower, and come down to me, that I may most plainly understand you, **Senior.** Christ himself is the object of my faith. What I believe concerning him is this that God made him sin, that I might be made the righteousness, of God in him, My faith consists in believing the everlasting virtue of Christ's blood to make me clean from all sin; and the infinite perfection of his obedience to make me now and evermore righteous before the Lord, at this present moment, and when I stand before him at his bar; and on this I rest my everlasting all.

Junior. Yet I have not heard you say one word relative to your believing your interest in Christ, and Knowing he died for your sins in particular, and that you are brought to believe that you are a pardoned and saved person.

Senior. You have not. Yet that I am a saved man, a justified, pardoned person, is as clear to me, as that I exist. This is not, however, what I look at and believe in for salvation. No. The true knowledge of Christ, and faith in Christ, make way for the knowledge of this.

Yet my faith is not exercised on any of these; but my faith in Christ makes way for my knowledge and enjoyment of all these blessings and benefits of salvation. **Junior.** Why, don't you look on Christ dying for me, and my justification, and pardon, and knowledge of this salvation?

Senior. My friend, I am for Christ alone to wear the sole glory of salvation; which consists in his taking away sin, and bringing in everlasting righteousness.

The Apostle sets the great subject of believing before us very clearly in the following words. The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession, is made unto salvation. Romans 10:8,9,10. Here is Christ in his death and resurrection set forth, as what faith is exercised on and believes in.

The revelation of Christ in the word, is the ground and warrant for faith. The Lord Jesus Christ in his life and death, is the immediate object of our faith. It is the record and testimony which God hath given us of his Son in the scriptures of truth, that are the support and encouragement of our faith. It is in believing in Christ, we have actual fellowship with Christ, and know our interest in him. When we trust on Christ, we wholly and altogether renounce ourselves. It would be well to look at such scriptural expressions concerning faith as these: Christ styles it faith which is in me. Acts, 26:18.

Whosoever believeth in him, shall receive remission of sins. Acts, 10:43. Us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Acts, 11:17. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. Acts, 16:31. We believe, that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved. Acts, 15:11., Also the acts of faith are represented by looking, by coming, by flying, by taking hold of Christ. Look unto me. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. Him that cometh unto me, .I will in no wise cast out. This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, shall have everlasting life. Who hath fled for refuge to lay hold, of the hope set before us.-He is able to save to the uttermost, them that come unto God by him. Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely. If you look at all these expressions, you may clearly perceive the

object of faith, and the act of faith, distinguished; also, that faith is the act of the spiritual mind on Christ the object.

Junior. You have set forth Christ as the object of faith, and his salvation as the subject on which faith is very particularly exercised, in a way I have not been accustomed to consider it. If I conceive aright of your expressions, you make the knowledge of interest in Christ, or your personal justification, pardon, and salvation, the fruits of your knowing Christ, do you not?**Senior.** Yes The knowledge of Christ is life everlasting. Communion with him is the fruit of it, and one of the greatest of all blessing this side heaven. In this holy communion between Christ and the believer, he is admitted into a knowledge of his personal interest in Christ, and all the blessings and benefits of his salvation.

Junior. So, then, according to what you have delivered to me, Christ and salvation are received, in the knowledge of him and it, into the regenerate mind, by a spiritual perception and apprehension thereof?

Senior. Most assuredly it is even so. I would recommend the following scripture to your consideration, that you may see for yourself it is so.

The apostle says, Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all. Rom. 4:16. I conceive these words are very expressive how Christ, salvation, and every spiritual blessing, are received into the renewed mind.

It is by faith. It is through faith. All which proves it to be wholly through grace. I look on it a real blessing rightly to know salvation in its clear and proper distinction from all other subjects, and also how it is received. When this is clearly understood, it saves from many perplexities, and makes way for living Christ, which we cannot do, until we have a true, clear, and gospel knowledge of him. The whole of Christ is set before us in the word. We receive the same distinctly into our minds. Hereby Christ dwells in our hearts. Our faith is the exercise of our minds on him. Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us. He takes of

the things of Christ; He shews the same to us; He leads us to hold fellowship with Christ by these discoveries which He gives us of him. Thus the Lord Jesus becomes increasingly precious to our hearts. We have increasing knowledge of him, and hereby are brought under the mighty influence and authority of his grace.

Thus we are made partakers of Christ, and have the true knowledge of him in our renewed minds, by the divine energy and operation of the Holy Ghost, and his sealing home the truths and doctrines of the everlasting gospel on our hearts. The Lord Jesus Christ, in his life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, glorification, and advocacy, is received, in the knowledge of the same, into our minds. Our thoughts are spiritually engaged hereon. In the subject the life of our souls consist. In the enjoyment of it, we have communion with the Father, and the Son, through the Spirit. What will follow on it, are the fruits and effects of believing on the Son of God. I hope I have made the subject clear and plain, so as for you to understand me.

Junior. Indeed, Sir, I am bound to thank you for the same. I understand faith in Christ springs from the word of God: that he is spiritually apprehended by it: that he is looked at, trusted in, enjoyed, lived on, so far as we receive the knowledge of him into our minds from the word and by the Spirit. I confess it conveys such views of him to my understanding, as exceed all my former conceptions. I was prone to look for Christ, and expected the enjoyment of him, in some wonderful ecstasies and raptures of spirit. I had no idea of looking for him in the revelation given concerning Him in the Holy Scriptures. I should be glad of further conversation on subjects like unto these; but as time will not at present admit of this, I most heartily thank you for the present interview, hoping for another. Farewell.