

Hypercalvinistic Responses to Arminianism and the Marrow of the Gospel

A summary of various hypercalvinistic tendencies, and their effects

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Preface

Dear reader, by far the most obvious lack in the preaching of modern Christianity is its lack of doctrinal, experiential preaching. Men are encouraged to believe and accept Christ, without knowledge as to why they should accept Him, and without counting the cost of His suffering and the shedding of His precious blood. Thus, men claim to believe in Christ though they do not desire or exhibit the fruits of repentance; namely godly sorrow for sin, and love for God above all and their neighbor as themselves. This doctrine may be roughly classified as Arminian. It emphasizes the ability of man to save himself by “accepting” Christ with the human will, without emphasizing the need for true repentance and Christian experience; it de-emphasizes fallen man’s total depravity and inability to even desire to save himself, and hence does not place enough emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in regenerating and drawing sinners unto God.

Now, when we try to defend the church against this error, as we certainly must, we need to beware that we don’t lean to the other extreme. For on the other end of the spectrum, there is a branch of the Church of Christ which emphasizes God’s election of sinners, and in the process minimizes the responsibility of men to repent and believe. Here it is stressed that when God has elected a sinner, He will give them to experience their sin and need in a deep way, and then, in God’s time, He will reveal Christ to them as the only way of salvation. Eventually, the Lord may also confirm, through a special experience, that they are His children, chosen from all eternity. This view can be roughly classified as hypercalvinistic. Although it seems sound, it tends to focus on God’s sovereignty at the expense of man’s responsibility. The emphasis is on what the elect sinner must experience as he passes along these main steps of grace. The practical result is that, instead of encouraging men to believe on the Lord Jesus just as they are, and to look for their fruit from him, men are encouraged to search for something of this experience in their lives as an evidence that they are born again. In quite the opposite error of Arminianism, hypercalvinism emphasizes the necessary work of the Holy Spirit to such a degree, that it de-emphasizes the responsibility of man and the command of God that all who hear the gospel repent and believe. As a result, the hearers tend to feel that they should do nothing, but must wait for the work of the Spirit, which they look for by expecting some special “experience”. The focus of hypercalvinism, then, is too much on the Holy Spirit and the sinner, and not enough on Christ Himself.

In a nutshell, the Arminian stresses the responsibility of man without considering the sovereignty of God, and the hypercalvinist stresses the sovereignty of God without considering the responsibility of man. The Arminian runs the race that is set before him, but looks not to Jesus. The hypercalvinist, while thinking he looks at Jesus, neglects to run the race that is set before him (see Hebrews 12:1,2). True Calvinism, on the other hand, stresses the necessity of both responsibility and sovereignty. Charles Spurgeon stated “The system of truth is not one straight line, but two. No man will ever get a right view of the gospel until he knows how to look at the two lines at once”, and “Where these two truths meet I do not know, nor do I want to know. They do not puzzle me, since I have given up my mind to believing them both.”¹ We must be born again by the Sovereign work of the Holy Spirit, but in this process the Lord makes us willing, and we really do repent and believe. It is from this day-by-day repenting and believing, that Christian experience flows forth in our lives. The Bible clearly states that God has no pleasure in any person’s death, and that salvation is freely offered to all who hear the message of the gospel.²

The problem we encounter when we veer either to one side or the other, is that we become man-centered in our theology, and God is dishonored. The key is that we have to view both as true. The Lord is sovereign, working salvation in whom He will. Without the work of His Holy Spirit we can do nothing. On the other hand, we are commanded to repent and believe, and are therefore

¹ Iain H. Murray, Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism, The Battle for Gospel Preaching, Carlisle, PA; THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST, 1995, p. 82

² See Ezekiel 33:11, 2 Peter 3:9, Isaiah 55:1-3, Revelations 22:16-17

responsible to do so. With this view, man becomes totally guilty before God for rejecting His Son, and the Lord is glorified when sinners flee to Him alone as their only hope of salvation.

When we discuss the possible errors that can result from a tendency to hypercalvinism, it is critical to point out that the term “error” can refer to unbiblical teachings or doctrines that are taught or spoken, but it may just as well refer to scriptural teachings or doctrines that are minimized or not presented at all. Thus, there can be errors of “commission” and errors of “omission”. Ian Murray states that “the danger with hypercalvinism is not so much what it believes, but that it does not believe enough.”³

In summary, the hypercalvinist errs in limiting the Gospel offer, and in inordinately emphasizing what a Christian must experience. We will try to understand and explain these errors by studying how they tend to manifest themselves, followed by a discussion of the consequences or fruits of these errors.

³ Ian H. Murray, Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism, The Battle for Gospel Preaching, Carlisle, PA; THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST, 1995, p.xiv

Hypercalvinistic Errors and How They Manifest Themselves

Hypercalvinistic reaction to Arminianism manifests itself in many subtle ways and in varying degrees both in preaching and in personal Christian walk. We will concentrate in this section on showing how hypercalvinism manifests itself in teaching and preaching. In the next section, we will show how hypercalvinism subtly affects the Christian walk of its adherents.

Thus, hypercalvinism manifests itself in teaching and preaching by presenting the following:

1. A Conditional Gospel

The hope of salvation and the riches of Christ are offered and presented to those who are in a certain condition, or have had certain experiences. For example, only those who have felt their sin and need for salvation, or who feel it presently are offered the grace of God. Though perhaps not intended, the warrant⁴ to believe in the Gospel becomes the possession of these experiences, instead of being in the very freeness of the Offer of Grace and the merciful Character of God Himself.⁵ God's Word is very explicit about the lack of conditions in coming unto Him; we read in Isaiah 55:1 "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. **And whosoever will**, let him take the water of life freely (Rev. 22:17).

It is often stated that our hearts must be prepared to receive Christ; that we can't just take him. This is very true. A sinner will never receive salvation in another, unless he learns that his own righteousness is as filthy rags in God's sight. There is always a preparatory work to bring a sinner to Christ. However, to emphasize this need to a sinner removes his warrant to flee to Christ for salvation **just as he is** – preparatory work or not. A prepared heart is never a condition. A person never says, "Now my heart is prepared enough to go to Christ." When will we have enough preparation? God's preparatory work drives the sinner out to Christ just as he is. The sinner cannot remain internally focused. The wickedness, the lack of preparation he sees within, will not let him remain looking there, but will drive him out to cast himself upon another righteousness.

Thus, we must be so careful that we never imply that God's preparation work is a condition. A prepared heart is never a condition.^{6,7} This Charlotte Elliott knew well when she penned the well-known hymn:

⁴ The word "warrant" is a word used often by our forefathers which has a different meaning than that in common use today. The word means "to have authorization", "to have well-grounded permission", "to be allowed based on some law or proclamation", "to have confidence".

⁵ We have not fully preached a free gospel. We have been afraid of making it *too free*, lest men should be led into licentiousness; as if it were possible to preach too free a gospel, or as if its *freeness* could lead men into sin. It is only a free gospel that can bring peace, and it is only a free gospel that can make men holy. -- Horatius Bonar, Words to Winners of Souls, Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1995, p. 43.

⁶ Christ is freely offered to you in your present condition, whatever that may be. -- Robert M. M'Cheyne, Memoir and Remains of Robert Murray M'Cheyne, Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987 ed., p. 583.

⁷ But, beloved, the Lord demands of you, ere you approach Him in prayer, no self-fitness, no previous preparation, but that you, a poor, sinful, unworthy soul, needing Christ, coming empty to Christ, bringing all your sins and backslidings, and sorrows and wants to Christ, may "receive out of His fulness grace for grace." Approach Jesus as you are..." -- Octavius Winslow, The Precious Things of God, Ligonier, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1993, p. 342.

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidst me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, and waiting not,
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welome, pardon, cleanse, relieve,
Because Thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

2. Impersonal Preaching

Hypercalvinistic theology often results in an impersonal style of preaching. Because of an inordinate fear of the non-elect obtaining comfort from the gospel, the preacher fears to apply the gospel directly to his hearers. Thus, the sermon usually focuses on how the children of God are led, without the preacher attempting to apply the experience of God's people directly to his hearers and to bring them to faith in Christ. For example, the minister may preach *about convictions*, and how God's people are convicted of sin. But he often will miss the mark of attempting *to convict* his hearers, in order to bring them immediately to Christ for grace.

Impersonal preaching is particularly evident when the hypercalvinistic preacher deals with the gospel call, faith in Christ, or the assurance of faith. Generally, the minister will speak in the 3rd person about how God's people are led. The use of personal pronouns such as "we", "you", "us" is minimal.

The apostles, and our forefathers, on the other hand, were zealous to apply the Gospel immediately to their hearers.^{8,9,10} For example, Paul writes to the Romans (Chapter 4:23-25 and 5:1) regarding Abraham and his faith in God; "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it [the righteousness of faith] was imputed unto him; but for **us** also, to whom it shall be imputed, if **we** believe on him that raised up Jesus **our** Lord from the dead; who was delivered for **our** offenses, and was raised again for **our** justification. Therefore, being justified by faith, **we** have peace with God through **our** Lord Jesus Christ."

Observe also the apostle John's direct style in 1 John 2:1-3: "My little children, these things write I unto **you**, that **ye** sin not. And if **any man** sin, **we** have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for **our** sins: and not for **ours** only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And hereby do **we** know that **we** know him, if **we** keep his commandments."

Peter also, in his sermon after the blind man was healed, aiming for immediate application directly to the hearts of his hearers, used personal pronouns to convict and bring them to

⁸ The Heidelberg Catechism, for example, is written in an intensely personal style. See, for instance, Questions 26, 36, 53.

⁹ Martin Luther stated that religion consists much in personal pronouns. See, for instance his comments on Galatians 1:4, where he says, "Weigh diligently every word of Paul, and mark well the pronoun 'our'; for the effect consisteth in the well applying of the pronouns, which we find very often in the Scriptures, wherein there is ever some vehemency and power." --Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1979, pp. 11-14.

¹⁰ Other scripture references include John 20:31, I Corinthians 15:1-3, Isaiah 9:6.

Christ (Acts 3:14,15,19,25,26): "But **ye** denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the prince of life....Repent **ye** therefore, and be converted, that **your** sins may be blotted out....**Ye** are the children of the prophets....Unto **you** first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless **you**, in turning **every one of you** from his iniquities."

3. A Lack of Immediacy

An improper view of the freeness of the Gospel often results in a failure to require immediate repentance and faith in Christ. The hearers are told to beg the Lord to work within their hearts, and give them what they stand in need of. Although many sit in church with the question, "What must I do to be saved?,"¹¹ the answer given is not "Repent and believe the Gospel,"¹² but along the lines of "Bring it to your inner room", or, "Use the means of grace faithfully".¹³ Such advice too often sets the sinner about *doing*, and not about *believing*.^{14,15} Scripture is clear that immediacy is demanded of us, and the lack of immediacy can only be unbelief. In Psalm 95:7b, 8 we read, "Today if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness"^{16,17}.

¹¹ Acts 16:30

¹² Mark 1:15

¹³ Strange that sudden conversions should be so much disliked by some ministers. They are the most scriptural of all conversions. --Horatius Bonar, Words to Winners of Souls, Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1995, p. 43.

¹⁴ Keep not guilt in the conscience, but apply the blood of Christ immediately. God charges sin and guilt upon you to make you look to Christ, the brazen serpent. -- Thomas Willcox, "Honey out of the Rock," Chapel Library Booklet, p. 14.

¹⁵ You that are in doubt, solve it now by hasting to him. -- Robert McCheyne, From The Preacher's Heart, Christian Focus Publications Ltd., 1993, p. 351.

¹⁶ Some say: I hope God will forgive me. Ah! my friends, you greatly mistake the Bible. A present forgiveness is offered to you. The moment a soul closes with Christ, that moment is this word true of him: 'I have blotted out.' 'There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.'

--Robert McCheyne, From The Preacher's Heart, Christian Focus Publications Ltd., 1993, p.77

You will be pardoned all the sins that you have done the moment you receive the Lord Jesus Christ. Free, full, immediate salvation is what Jesus gives.

--Robert McCheyne, From The Preacher's Heart, Christian Focus Publications Ltd., 1993, p. 520

"It is finished," is God's message to the sons of men in their inquiry, "What shall we do to be saved?"

Horatius Bonar, "How Shall I Go To God?", Pensacola, Florida: Chapel Library, Tract, p. 5

Yes; pardon, peace, life, are all of them gifts, Divine gifts, brought down from heaven by the Son of God, presented personally to each needy sinner by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. They are not to be *bought*, but *received*; as men receive the sunshine, complete and sure and free. They are not to be earned or deserved by exertions or sufferings, or prayers or tears; but *accepted* at once as the purchase of the labors and sufferings of the great Substitute. They are not to be waited for, but *taken* on the spot without hesitation or distrust, as men take the loving gift of a generous friend.

--Horatius Bonar, "How Shall I Go To God?", Pensacola, Florida: Chapel Library, Tract, p. 7

No sooner is the eye turned than the filthy garments fall.

-- Robert McCheyne, From The Preacher's Heart, Christian Focus Publications Ltd., 1993, p. 230.

God as much accepts a sinner who only believed in Christ five minutes ago, as he will a saint who has known and loved Him eighty years, for He does not accept men because of anything they do or feel, but simply and only for what Christ did, and that is finished. -- Charles Spurgeon,

Christ's Words from the Cross, Grand Rapids; Baker Book House, 1984, p. 101.

We stand at Calvary and hear Christ say, 'It is finished.' We say 'Amen,' and put the cup of life to our lips. -- Andrew Bonar, Heavenly Springs, THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST; 1986, p. 200.

¹⁷ For other references on the call to immediate faith, see the following:

Octavius Winslow, Life in Jesus, A Memoir of Mrs. Mary Winslow, Pittsburgh, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, pp. 113.

Reid, William, The Blood of Jesus, Pensacola, FL: Chapel Library, pp. 5,7,9,12,15,38,40.

Bonar, Horatius, The Everlasting Righteousness, Carlisle, PA; The Banner of Truth Trust, 1993 Edition., pp. iv, 23, 113, 177.

Bonar, Horatius, Christ the Healer, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1977, pp. 90.

4. The Gospel Improperly Defined

The simplicity, beauty, and freeness of the Gospel can be distorted (in turn actually distorting the very Character of God) by a failure to clearly explain what the Gospel is; namely, the good news to all of us that God has provided redemption for us in His Son, and that we are called to repent and trust Him to save us through that finished work. This is the Gospel that Paul preached to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 15:1-3; “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 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.” And again, in 2 Corinthians 5:21, Paul declared that God “hath made him (the Lord Jesus) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” This is the gospel that Peter preached when the Jews were pricked in their hearts, and asked the apostles what they should do in Acts 2:38,39. “Repent,” said he, “and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” And this is the gospel John preached in I John 5:10-12 when he declared us liars if we believe not the record that God has given of His Son. “And this is the record,” said he, “that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.”

The hypercalvinist, on the other hand, often has difficulty accepting that the gospel comes to all men. Therefore, his definition of the gospel is that God has provided salvation for the elect. The problem with this definition is that it strips away the sinner’s warrant to come to Christ¹⁸, and so the gospel is stripped of its power, and does not come home to the sinner. Certainly Scripture is abundantly clear that it is the Lord’s delight that all would believe the gospel, and not exclude themselves by limiting the gospel message or distorting its definition. “Ho, **everyone** that thirsteth, come ye to the waters....(Isaiah 55:1). “The Spirit and the bride say, come. And let him that heareth say, come. And let him that is athirst come. And **whosoever will**, let him take the water of life freely (Revelations 22:17). The Gospel comes to us as we are, elect or non-elect, converted or unconverted, inviting us to come just as we are to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness (Zechariah 13:1). In fact, the scriptures declare that sinners are commanded to repent and believe (Acts 17:30, I John 3:23).

5. Improper Foundation of Assurance

Assurance of faith rests primarily upon the promises of God, and in what Christ has done¹⁹. The Bible directs us to faith in Jesus, and that in Him we have a sure foundation for our salvation. “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ,” (I Corinthians 3:11). “For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, to the glory of God by us” (II Corinthians 1:20). An improper foundation of assurance leads to a

The Christian Family Annual, 1884, Mrs. Robert Peddie, Ed., Edinburgh, Religious Tract Society, Bound Volume of the year’s Issues, p. 345, 348.

Sketches from Life; or, Illustrations of the Influence of Christianity, American Tract Society, published mid 1800’s, pp. 13, 32, 167, 239, 242.

R.M. McCheyne, From The Preacher’s Heart, Christian Focus Publications Ltd., 1993. pp. 22, 25, 27, 42, 77, 110, 127, 191, 195, 351, 358, 364, 520.

Spurgeon, Charles, Morning and Evening, Peabody, Mass.; Hendrickson Publishers, 1991, 91, 249, 257.

¹⁸ See Appendix A of this paper, as well as Thomas Boston’s comments in Edward Fisher, The Marrow of Modern Divinity, Edmonton, Alberta Canada; Still Waters Revival Books, 1991 Ed., p. 119.

¹⁹ See Joel R. Beeke, Assurance of Faith; Calvin, English Puritanism, and the Dutch Second Reformation, New York; Peter Lang Publishing, 1994.

founding of our hope of salvation on what we have experienced, or the work of the Holy Spirit within us, rather than on the work of Christ outside of ourselves, and the revealed promises of God.

However, there is a type of assurance which is obtained by viewing how the Lord has led us to believe on Christ, and how He has worked within us and led us since that time. John referred to this type of assurance when he wrote, "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren" (I John 3:14). This is sometimes called the assurance of sense, because we can see what the Lord has done. This type of assurance, however, must always be subordinate and secondary to the assurance of faith based upon God's promises²⁰. It must not be the foundation of our assurance. This is so for three reasons. First, we are called to walk by faith, and not sight (II Corinthians 5:7). Second, there is a danger of grounding our salvation on the sandy ground of our experience instead of on the finished, rock-solid, and all-encompassing work of Another²¹. Third, insisting upon assurance based on experience precludes us from attaining assurance of faith from the moment of conversion²². The Bible encourages us to come to Christ from the very beginning in full assurance of faith. Ebenezer Erskine states; "I affirm that there is a sufficient ground laid in the gospel revelation and promise, for a sinner even in his first approach to God in Christ, to come with full assurance of faith."²³ "He that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).

Finally, the Lord sometimes gives assurance through a special application of a text to our soul. This assurance, while nice to have, is not often experienced, and is not essential to assurance of faith. We fall into error if we rest the foundation of assurance on some special application or experience²⁴.

²⁰ Your evidences, your comfort, your hope, do not spring from your fruitfulness, your mortification, or anything within you; but solely and entirely from the Lord Jesus Christ. "Looking unto Jesus" by faith, is like removing the covering and opening the windows of a conservatory, to admit the sun, beneath whose light and warmth the flowers and fruits expand and mature. Withdraw the veil that conceals the Sun of Righteousness, and let him shine in upon your soul, and the mortification of all sin will follow, and the fruits of all holiness will abound.

--Octavius Winslow, No Condemnation in Christ Jesus, Carlisle, PA; THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST, 1991, pp. 156.

²¹ The reason why many real Christians are harassed with doubts, fears, and darkness, is that they leave off leaning entirely upon their beloved Saviour, and rest part of the weight of their souls' eternal well-being on their own experience.

--William Reid, The Blood of Jesus, Pensacola, FL: Chapel Library, p. 33

²² Our fathers, from the Reformation downwards...held that a man ought to know that he is justified; and that it was Popery to teach uncertainty, or to set aside the full assurance of faith, or to hold that this sureness was not to be had from the beginning of a man's conversion, but only to be gathered up in process of years, by summing up his good feelings and good deeds, and concluding from his own excellences that he must be one of the elect, a man in favour with God.... All the Reformation creeds and confessions take this for granted; assuming that the doctrine of uncertainty was one of the worst lies of Popery.

-- Horatius Bonar, The Everlasting Righteousness, Carlisle, PA; The Banner of Truth Trust, 1993 Edition, pp. 144-145.

²³ Rev. Ebenezer Erskine, "The Assurance of Faith," The Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth, Vol. 5, No. 8, October 1997, pp. 210-211. He also states in the same article; "I find the Lord directing sinners, even in their first approaches, to draw near to Him in Christ with full assurance of faith in such passages as Jeremiah 3:19. 'But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations?' Here is a very puzzling question which only God Himself can answer. And what is the answer which the Lord puts in the sinner's mouth? 'Thou shalt call me, my Father, and shalt not turn away from me.' The first breath of the Spirit of adoption is, 'Abba, Father' which is a word of faith or confidence (Rom. 8:15). Christ puts words of assurance in our mouths, teaching us to pray, 'Our Father which art in heaven,' and every individual is encouraged to say, "My Father which art in heaven."

²⁴ "Learn to read your title to the family of God by what God has said, not by a special message to yourself."
--Andrew Bonar, Heavenly Springs, THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST; 1986, p. 199.

We must emphasize what the Bible emphasizes, and our forefathers emphasized, that the assurance of faith based upon the promises of God is the primary way of assurance.^{25,26} We must take God at His word,^{27,28} for "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (I Corinthians 1:9). "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it" (I Thes. 5:24). We must be as Abraham, "who staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God" (Romans 4:20). Notice, that such faith outside of ourselves gives glory God.^{29,30}

6. *Comfort outside of Christ*

For the hypercalvinist, closing with Christ and assurance are considered to be more advanced steps of grace. Therefore, the hypercalvinist may have a tendency to prematurely comfort those who have felt or are feeling something of their misery before they have seen something of the righteousness of Christ. This is done by saying or implying that because of some conviction of sin or other revelation outside of Christ that the Lord is at work, and therefore will finish that work. This is certainly a very dangerous and premature comfort.³¹ William Reid writes that "convictions of sin are precious; but they bring no safety, no peace, no salvation, no security, but war, and storm, and trouble. It is well to be awakened from sleep when danger is hanging over us; but to awake from sleep is not to escape from danger. It is only to be sensible of danger, nothing more."³² Scripture exhorts us to cast ourselves upon Christ today (Hebrews 3:7,8,15), and never gives us rest unless we come unto Him (Matthew 11:28).

²⁵ The Israelite was not partly sheltered by the blood, and partly exposed to the sword of the destroyer. He knew he was safe. He did not hope so. He was not praying to be so. He was perfectly safe. And why? Because God hath said, 'When I see the blood, I will pass over you,' (Exod. 12:13). He simply rested upon God's testimony about the shed blood. He set to his seal that God was true. He believed that God meant what He said, and that gave him peace. He was able to take his place at the paschal-feast in confidence, quietness, and assurance, knowing that the destroyer could not touch him, when a spotless victim had died in his stead.

--William Reid, The Blood of Jesus, Pensacola, FL: Chapel Library, p. 22.

²⁶ It is not said he who 'feeleth' is passed from death unto life. It is he who 'believeth.' It is not he who 'loveth,' but he who 'believeth'; not he who 'prayeth,' but he who 'believeth'.

--Andrew Bonar, Heavenly Springs, THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST; 1986, p. 199

²⁷ It cannot be wrong to feel confidently in a manner where God speaks unconditionally, - to believe decidedly when God promises decidedly, - to have a sure persuasion of pardon and peace when we rest on the word and oath of Him that never changes. It is an utter mistake to suppose that the believer who feels assurance is resting on anything he sees in himself. He simply leans on the Mediator of the New Covenant, and the Scripture of truth. He believes the Lord Jesus means what He says, and *takes Him at His Word*.

--JC Ryle, Assurance, Christian Focus Publications Limited, 1989, p. 33.

²⁸ It is the glory of a christian to live by faith on Jesus, to judge of his love from the word of truth, more than by sense and feeling.

--William Mason, "A Spiritual Treasury for the Children of God: A meditation for each day of the year." Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, p. 41.

²⁹ We cannot honor God more, nor please him better, than to hear and believe his beloved Son. --William Mason, "A Spiritual Treasury for the Children of God: A meditation for each day of the year." Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, p. 495.

³⁰ See also Rev. Ebenezer Erskine, "The Assurance of Faith," The Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth, Vol. 5, No. 8, October 1997, pp. 210-211.

³¹ Whatever comes in when you go to God for acceptance, besides Christ, call it anti-Christ; bid it be gone; make *only* Christ's righteousness triumphant.

--Thomas Willcox, "Honey out of the Rock," Chapel Library Booklet, p. 4.

³² William Reid, The Blood of Jesus, Pensacola, FL: Chapel Library, pp 14-15.

7. The Perceived Need for Special Revelations

An emphasis on the need for **special** revelations of God through the word, rather than on the **daily feeding** on Christ through His word, tends to promote unbelief. In order to be sure that the seeking sinner does not receive Christ in an Arminian fashion, hypercalvinists greatly discourage him from taking the innumerable promises of God in the Bible literally, but instead instruct him that a “special” promise must be given – that the promise must be applied to him personally before he can appropriate it to himself.

However, such a view of God’s word is not scriptural.³³ We read in John 20:31, “These [things] are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” In Revelations 22:17 we read, “and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” We also read in Numbers 23:19 that “God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?” Unbelievers are condemned as guilty of crucifying the Son of God afresh (Hebrews 6:6), and judging themselves unworthy of eternal life (Acts 13:46). “Behold ye despisers, wonder and perish” (Acts 13:41) Thus, Scripture makes it very plain that we have no right *not* to believe *all* the promises of God.

8. Fear of Presuming on Christ – That Christ is Only Given to the Elect

Very related to the perceived need of a special revelation discussed above, is an excessive fear of presuming on Christ. The hypercalvinist emphasizes that the Lord Jesus may not be accepted, received or appropriated unless He first manifests Himself in a special way to us as our salvation. If we believe in Him before He is revealed to us in this special way, we are guilty of stealing Him. It is often stated that “Christ must be given to me first before I can appropriate Him.”

We maintain that Christ’s atonement is efficacious for the elect only, yet we emphasize that He is freely offered to all men as a gift, so that all are warranted (that is they have sufficient ground and right), and all are commanded to believe on Him for everlasting life.³⁴ God’s word makes it abundantly clear that we can not “steal” Christ; we read in Revelations 22:17 “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And **whosoever will, let him take** the water of life freely.” This position was most eloquently defended by Thomas Boston, the Erskines and others during the Marrow Controversy. Their defense on this subject is included in Appendix A of this paper.³⁵

³³ The Holy Spirit leads us, not in some miraculous way, or by some mere exertion of power, but by revealing to us more and more of that work, in the first knowledge of which our peace began. - Horatius Bonar, The Everlasting Righteousness, Carlisle, PA; The Banner of Truth Trust, 1993 Edition, p. 61.

³⁴ Christ with plain words saith, that God gave not His Son only for Mary, Peter, and Paul, but for the world [John 3:16], that all should receive Him that are the sons of men. Then if thou or I should receive Him as if He did not appertain to us, truly it would consequently follow that Christ’s words are not true, whereas He saith He was given and delivered for the world. --William Reid, The Blood of Jesus, Pensacola, FL: Chapel Library, p. 17, quoting one of the English Reformers.

³⁵ Surely there can be no greater honor to Christ than this: in the sense of sin, wants, stains and blemishes, to wrap ourselves in the righteousness of Christ, and with boldness to go, clothed in his heavenly garments, to the throne of grace. --William Mason, A Spiritual Treasury for the Children of God: A meditation for each day of the year, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, p. 371.

As soon as ever a man believes that Jesus is the Christ, let him hook himself on to Him. The moment you believe Jesus to be the Saviour, seize upon Him as your Saviour.

--Charles Spurgeon, Christ’s Words from the Cross, Grand Rapids; Baker Book House, 1984, p. 45.

If I remember rightly, Augustine called this man, “*Latro laudabilis et mirabilis*,” a thief to be praised and wondered at, who dared, as it were, to seize the Saviour for his own. In this he is to be imitated. Take the Lord to be yours, and you have Him. Jesus is the common property of all sinners who make bold to take Him. Every sinner who has the will to do so may take the Lord home with him. He came into the

The Biblical and proper view of election is one of “hindsight”. The sinner must be advised to “Knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Matt. 7:7). Upon knocking, and entering the door through faith, however, the newborn in grace is made acutely aware that “no man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (John 6:44).³⁶ Thus, election is celebrated as the amazing grace and love of God, and should never be a stumblingblock to the unregenerate sinner.³⁷

9. A Limitation of the Promises to the Elect

Most hypercalvinists have a tendency to limit the promises of the Gospel only to the elect. They will state that the promises are only for Gods people – and that we cannot appropriate them unless they are applied. By this they usually mean that God intends the promises of His word only for the elect, and that He will apply them to His people’s hearts. The practical result of this view is that the unbeliever is afraid to plead the promises for fear of stealing the children’s bread.

We do not deny that there are many promises in scripture which are made out to God’s children. The problem we are addressing here is the tendency

1. To view all of the promises of God as given only to the elect, and
2. To think that they may only be appropriated once they are applied in a special way.

The problem with this view of the promises is that it

1. Neglects the Gospel promises which are made to all men.
2. Does not provide for or encourage a day-by-day feeding upon God’s promises in the word. It looks for some special application of the promises.

Although there are certainly promises in the Bible which are peculiar to the elect, there are many universal promises, given that all men might believe and be saved. John 20:31 states emphatically that the words and works of Jesus “are written, **that ye might believe** that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” And Hebrews 4:1 assumes that God had left us promises by which we may enter into His rest; “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.” By limiting the promises of the Gospel only to the elect, the needy sinner

world to save the sinful. Take Him by force, as robbers take their prey; for the kingdom of heaven suffereth the violence of daring faith. Get Him and He will never get Himself away from you. If you trust Him, He must save you.

--Charles Spurgeon, Christ’s Words from the Cross, Grand Rapids; Baker Book House, 1984, p. 45.

For this end is Christ set before you in the gospel as the sent of God, the compassionate Saviour, the Mediator and Intercessor, that ye may believe on him.

--Robert M’Cheyne, From The Preacher’s Heart, Christian Focus Publications Ltd., 1993, p. 503.

There is such an evil among God’s children, that they scar at that which Christ out of great love hath provided for them, and dare not with confidence make use of, nor apply to themselves the great and comfortable promises, to the end they might be encouraged; they will not take their allowance, as thinking themselves unworthy; and that it would be presumption in them to challenge a right to such great things; and they think it commendable humility in them, to stand a-back, and so wilfully refuse the advantages and helps, that make so much for their growth in grace.

--John Brown, Christ: the Way, the Truth, and the Life, Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, p. 102.

He loves us to bathe in his blood—to enfold ourselves in his righteousness—to draw from his grace—and to cast ourselves upon his boundless sympathy. --Octavius Winslow, No Condemnation in Christ Jesus, Carlisle, PA; THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST, 1991, p. 154.

³⁶ No sooner does the soul begin to feel the life of a promise warming his heart, freeing him from fear, worries and troubles, than it may know, and it ought to know, that the Holy Spirit is doing his work.

--John Owen, Free Grace Broadcaster, Issue 154, Fall 1995, p. 27.

³⁷ Whether you are elected or not, I know not, but this I know – if you believe on Christ you will be saved.

--Robert M’Cheyne, Sermons of Robert Murray M’Cheyne, THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST, 1986., p. 143.

is afraid to plead the promises, and so often gropes in despair. He is like Christian in Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, who had a key in his pocket which would enable him to escape from the very dungeon of despair. The key was given him, but he remained in despair because he was ignorant of it.

Another thing that discourages many in hypercalvinistic circles, is that, though the gospel promises be to all men, yet they may not be appropriated unless they are applied in some special way personally. Now it is absolutely necessary that the Holy Spirit apply the promises of God. However, as the Spirit applies the Word to our hearts we take hold of it, we believe it, and we grasp it for our own. At the moment, we will most likely not even be aware that it is the Holy Spirit taking the things of God and showing them unto us. This He shows us later.

So it is a question of order in the preaching. If we emphasize that the Spirit must apply the promises before a sinner can appropriate them, we drive the sinner to look within: to examine what is going on within him, instead of looking *out* in faith to the finished work of *another*. In effect, when we emphasize the need for the application of a promise, we are taking away the warrant to believe in Christ. We are telling people not to believe unless they know a promise is applied or directed to them. We are telling them to see before they can believe. But we must preach faith before sight.

"That which breeds so much perplexity is, that we would invert God's order. "If I knew," say some, "that the promise belonged to me, and Christ was a Saviour to me, I could believe:" that is to say, I would first see, and then believe. But the true method is just the contrary: "I had fainted," says David, "unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord." He believed it first, and saw it afterwards."³⁸

10. The Holy Spirit as the Object of Faith.

In presenting the Gospel to sinners, scripture consistently emphasizes faith in Christ, rather than directing the sinner immediately to the necessary work of the Holy Spirit. While the Holy Spirit's work is absolutely necessary, it is never presented to the inquiring sinner as the object of his attention.³⁹ Sinners are invited to come to Christ, not to come to the Holy Spirit for salvation. For example, Matthew 11:28 says; "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."⁴⁰

Hypercalvinists often present the work of Christ and then explain that Christ's work needs to be applied by the Holy Spirit for a person to see it personally and be able to appropriate it. While this is true, it is not the way in which Scripture presents Christ to needy sinners. The scripture always, upon presenting Christ, exhorts the sinner to trust in Him.⁴¹ The hypercalvinist directs the sinner's gaze to the Holy Spirit and His work. The true Calvinist directs the sinner to Christ and His work. Only after the sinner trusts Christ is the sinner's gaze directed to the cause of his believing – the work of the Holy Spirit⁴².

Only once in scripture was an inquiring sinner exhorted that he needed the work of the Holy Spirit, and this was Nicodemus. However, this was to show him the reason that he had not

³⁸ Archbishop Leighton, as quoted in Ryle, J.C., Assurance, Christian Focus Publications Limited, 1989, pp. 88.

³⁹ The Holy Spirit is our Comforter, but the holy Jesus is our comfort. And to Jesus—to his person, to his offices, and to his work, in life and in death, the Divine Guide ever leads us. --Octavius Winslow, No Condemnation in Christ Jesus, Carlisle, PA; THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST, 1991, p. 162.

⁴⁰ Other references are numerous, but include Isaiah 55:1, John 3:15.

⁴¹ Though faith, as all other acts of grace, be *efficiently* the work of the Spirit, yet it is *formally* our work: we do believe; but it is the Spirit that worketh faith in us.

--John Brown, Christ: the Way, the Truth, and the Life, Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, p. 89.

⁴² See, for instance John 1:12-13, 6:29, 36-37, 40, 44, 63, 65, Acts 13:38-39, 48, Romans 9 and 10, 1Cor. 1:21, 26, Ephesians 1:13, 2:1, 5-10, Colossians 1:4, 12-13, Luke 10:5,6.

believed in Christ. Then, once his need was aroused, he was directed not to the Spirit, but to believe in the work of Christ (John 3).

If we reverse the prescribed order, sinners begin to look for a sign or experience to prove the Holy Spirit is working before they will venture to believe in Christ, and thus stumble at that same stumblingstone as the Jews in 1 Corinthians 1:22-24. We are to look out for salvation, not in.^{43,44,45} We have to be careful that we do not substitute the work of the Holy Spirit in us for the work of Christ without us as our hope of salvation.⁴⁶ The Spirit always glorifies Christ and brings Him to the foreground⁴⁷.

Octavius Winslow eloquently described this error in his writings. Some of these can be found in Appendix B.

11. Making Doubting Seem Like Believing

Because of its emphasis on experiences within the sinner, hypercalvinism tends to make the sinner always look inside himself. Due to the fickleness and instability of fallen man, this tends to promote doubts regarding the sinner's eternal state. Horatius Bonar states that "it is not good to be always doubting; and, when challenged, to make the untrue excuse that [we] are only doubting [ourselves], and not God; that [we] are only dissatisfied with [our] own faith, but not with its glorious object. It is not good to believe in our own faith, still less in our own doubts, as some seem to do, making the best doubter to be the best believer."^{48,49,50}

Doubt in a faithful Jehovah dishonors Him. Therefore scripture soundly condemns doubt.⁵¹ "Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6). Doubting Thomas said, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of

⁴³ See Charles Spurgeon, Morning and Evening, Peabody, Mass.; Hendrickson Publishers, 1991, p. 360.

⁴⁴ We look out for peace, not in. --Robert M. M'Cheyne, as quoted in Bonar, Andrew A., Memoir and Remains of Robert Murray M'Cheyne, Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987 ed. p. 77.

⁴⁵ It is the work of Christ without you, and not the work of the Spirit within you, that must form the sole ground of your deliverance from guilt and wrath, and of peace with God.
--William Reid, The Blood of Jesus, Pensacola, FL: Chapel Library, p. 14.

⁴⁶ When thou trustest in Christ within thee, instead of Christ without thee, thou settest Christ against Christ. The bride does well to esteem her husband's picture, but it were ridiculous if she should love it better than himself, much more if she should go to it rather than to him to supply her wants. Yet thou actest thus when thou art more fond of Christ's image in thy soul than of Him who painted it there.
--William Gurnall, as quoted in an article by Beeke, J.R., "Holiness," Free Grace Broadcaster, Issue 146, October 1993, p.9.

⁴⁷ For further study, see
William Reid, The Blood of Jesus, Pensacola, Florida: Chapel Library, pp. 37-38, 40-41,
Iain H. Murray, Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism, The Battle for Gospel Preaching, Carlisle, PA; THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST, 1995., pp. 114-117.
Octavius Winslow, No Condemnation in Christ Jesus, Carlisle, Penn.:The Banner of Truth Trust, 1991, pp. 12-13.
Octavius Winslow, Personal Declension and Revival of Religion in the Soul, Carlisle, Penn.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1978, pp. 88-89, 135-138.
Octavius Winslow, Life in Jesus, A Memoir of Mrs. Mary Winslow, Pittsburgh, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, pp. 139.

⁴⁸ Horatius Bonar, God's Way of Peace, Durham, England: Evangelical Press, 1989, p. 8.

⁴⁹ If you say it is good to have doubts, you are just saying it is not good to take all that God offers.
--Andrew Bonar, Heavenly Springs, THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST; 1986, p. 199.

⁵⁰ It is false humility that keeps any back from Christ.
--Robert M'Cheyne, From The Preacher's Heart, Christian Focus Publications Ltd., 1993, p. 178.

⁵¹ The Bible gives not quarter to unbelief or doubting. It does not call it humility. It does not teach us to think better of ourselves for doubting. --Horatius Bonar, The Everlasting Righteousness, Carlisle, PA; The Banner of Truth Trust, 1993 Edition, p. 144.

the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe” (John 20:25). But Jesus said, “Be not faithless, but believing.” “Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (John 20:27,29). “O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you?” (Mark 9:19)⁵²

Unbelief was the sin that condemned the Israelites to forty years of punishment in the wilderness, and barred them from entering into Canaan.⁵³ “And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? And how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have showed among them?” (Numbers 14:11). So “a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel; because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation: though he had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven” (Psalm 78:21-23).⁵⁴

Abraham, the Bible says, was “strong in faith, giving glory to God” (Romans 4:20). Reader, unbelief dishonors God, but faith glorifies Him.⁵⁵ Do you trust in Christ for your salvation? “Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?” (Mark 4:40).^{56,57} Abel, Enoch, Noah, Sara, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samuel, David, and all the saints receive a good report through faith, not through doubt (Hebrews 11:2,39). Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:1,2).⁵⁸

12. The Gospel Seldom Offered

An unscriptural focus on election and God’s sovereignty, combined with an unscriptural lack of focus on the responsibility of man, often reduces in frequency or even eliminates the Gospel offer or invitation (also often referred to as the “offer of grace”). Christ spoke clearly to Nicodemus in John 3:14,15 about being “lifted up” or offered: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” A clear and consistent Gospel offer or invitation is warranted not only by scripture (cf. Mark 1:15, 16:15, Luke 14:23), but by our Confessions and forefathers. For example, Rev. Kersten insists that “The Word must be preached to all without exception; the Gospel must be offered to converted and unconverted.

⁵² Believers are great unbelievers. They are afraid to believe *all*.

--Andrew Bonar., Heavenly Springs, THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST; 1986, p. 199.

⁵³ We are expressly *commanded* to believe, and that upon the highest promises and under the greatest penalties.

--John Owen, as quoted in Iain H. Murray, Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism, The Battle for Gospel Preaching, Carlisle, PA; THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST, 1995, p. 91.

⁵⁴ Our want of faith has done more mischief to us than all the devils in hell, and all the heretics on earth. Some cry out against the Pope, and others against agnostics; but it is our own unbelief which is our worst enemy.

--Charles Spurgeon, as quoted in Iain Murray, The Puritan Hope: Revival and the Interpretation of Prophecy, Carlisle, PA; he Banner of Truth Trust, 1971, p. 231.

⁵⁵ God is more glorified by your suffering in Christ, than by your own suffering in hell. It will be far more honouring to God if you will cleave to that bleeding silent Lamb, than if you were to bear the wrath of God for ever and ever.

--Robert McCheyne, From The Preacher’s Heart, Christian Focus Publications Ltd., 1993, p. 402.

⁵⁶ Do you think that you honour Christ by doubting if his blood and righteousness be enough to cover you? Do you think you honour God by making him a liar, and refusing to believe the record which he hath given of his Son?

--Robert McCheyne, From The Preacher’s Heart, Christian Focus Publications Ltd., 1993, p. 263.

⁵⁷ Mourn for your unbelief, for unbelief is but a setting up of guilt in the conscience above Christ, and under valuing the merits of Christ, accounting His blood an unholy, a common, and unsatisfying thing.

--Thomas Willcox, “Honey out of the Rock,” Chapel Library Booklet, p. 6.

⁵⁸ Many, I fear, have only a half look at Christ, and this causes only grief. Many are slow of heart to believe all that is spoken concerning Jesus. They believe all except that he is free to them. They do not see this glorious truth: “That a crucified Jesus is free to every sinner in the world,” that Christ’s all is free to all.

--Robert McCheyne, From The Preacher’s Heart, Christian Focus Publications Ltd., 1993, p. 230.

Some object to this as if it would make the offer of grace too general. But the Lord Jesus has commanded it.”⁵⁹ The Canons of Dordt, Head 2, Art. 5 state, “Moreover, the promise of the gospel is, that whosoever believeth in Christ crucified, shall not perish, but have everlasting life. This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be declared and published to all nations, and to all persons **promiscuously** and without distinction, to whom God out of his good pleasure sends the gospel.”

The most significant outcome of a hypercalvinistic theology or emphasis is that, in an effort to avoid the Arminian error, it tends to emphasize the need for real Christian experience in a person’s life. Indeed, in emphasizing this need, it tends to present it as **the** need that we all have. Thus, instead of directing a person to the Lord Jesus Christ as our hope of salvation, hypercalvinism directs a person to search for certain experiences in their lives. In this way, the **fruit** is held up, instead of the **Head**, from Whom all our fruit is must flow⁶⁰. While its written doctrines or beliefs almost certainly do not state that a focus on real Christian experience is more important than a focus on the Lord Jesus Christ, the practical result of a hypercalvinistic emphasis indeed almost invariably causes such an improper focus.

⁵⁹ *Reformed Dogmatics*, G. H. Kersten, p. 369

⁶⁰ “From Me is thy fruit found,” Hosea 14:8.

The Consequences or Fruits of these Errors

The consequences of inordinately stressing Christian experience are seen in a variety of ways. These perceptions and misconceptions about what God's Word says are discussed in what follows. Many of these overlap and influence each other, and may be found in varying degrees; they also may not be in evidence in all cases. However, in general each of these will exist to some extent.

1. *Believing that a person must experience his sin in a special way, before he may entertain a hope outside of himself in Christ.*

Perception: It is essential that a person knows his sins in order to see his need of Christ. If the Holy Spirit is working, then He will give a person a strong sense of his sin. When that happens, he will know it is God's work, and will flee to Christ. Without this strong sense of sin, a person may take Christ presumptuously, so we should plead that the Lord will give us a deep sense of sin. Also, most saints we admire from the past, as well as the converted people we know today, all had a deep experience of their sins and misery, and therefore if we have similar experiences we will be able to easily convince ourselves and others that God is working in us.⁶¹

God's Word: Christ certainly made it plain that if the Spirit is working in our hearts, we will have knowledge and experience of our sins and miseries, albeit in varying degrees: "They that are whole need not a physician" (Luke 5:31). However, it is abundantly clear in Scripture that there are NO conditions, including a certain depth of experience of sin, that need be fulfilled before we come to Christ. Isaiah 55:1 states clearly that we may come "without money and without price."⁶² "In Revelations 22:17, Christ proclaims, 'Let him that is athirst come;' and as if the Holy Ghost had so long since answered the same objection that yours is, it follows in the next words, 'And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely,' even without thirsting, if he will; for 'him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out' (John 6:37).⁶³

2. *Waiting, and doing nothing, due to a lack of urgency under the preaching.*

Perception: Because the Holy Spirit must apply the Word, and work within a person's heart, he must wait for His influence. Be the preaching ever so strong, or come so close to us and our condition, we will not presume to come to Christ, but wait for the Spirit's influence.⁶⁴ For when He works we will surely know it. It will be as we have heard from the pulpit. Without that work, we can do nothing, and we dare not do anything lest we deceive ourselves, and

⁶¹ You must *begin* with receiving Christ, and not make that the *termination* of a *fancied* preparation.

--William Reid, The Blood of Jesus, Pensacola, FL: Chapel Library, p. 14.

⁶² Beware lest you fall into the common mistake of supposing that you will be more welcome and accepted of Christ if you are brought through a terrible process of "law-work." You are as welcome to Christ now as you will ever be. Wait not for deeper convictions of sin, for why should you prefer conviction to Christ?

--William Reid, The Blood of Jesus, Pensacola, FL: Chapel Library, p. 14.

⁶³ Quote from Edward Fisher, The Marrow of Modern Divinity, Edmonton, Alberta Canada; Still Waters Revival Books, 1991 Ed., pp. 142-143.

⁶⁴ We can never honour the Holy Spirit by waiting for his special motions, but that we always yield to and co-work with him when we, while seeking his guidance and assistance, use all the means of grace, and all our own best energies, in being and doing all that the law of God requires. It is never the *waiters* for grace, but always the active *seekers* for grace and *doers* of his word, whom God approves.

--A. A. Hodge, The Confession of Faith, Carlisle, PA; THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST, 1978., p. 224.

take what is not given us.⁶⁵ We will continue to use the means and pray for the Lord's work; in the meantime, the preaching is not really for us. We hope that it will some day be applied to our hearts.⁶⁶

God's Word: When Peter preached in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, and the people asked "Men and brethren, what shall we do?", the answer given was NOT to wait, use the means, and hope that the preaching will be applied to their hearts. The answer given was a clear "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:37,38) In fact, Scripture gives clear and awful warning to those who "wait" and neglect the command of the gospel that "**today** if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation, *and as in* the day of temptation in the wilderness" (Psalm 95:7-8). Proverbs 1:24-28 solemnly declares "because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me." Dear reader, we beg you that you would not delay another hour; but lean on the infallible Word of God, which tells us that "those that seek me early shall find me" (Proverbs 8:17).

3. Putting off dealing with salvation to another time because it is difficult and monumental.

Perception: Throughout our life, we see salvation and conversion as such difficult and impossible things to obtain, given the significant changes required in our life, and the difficulties of the experiences that we must pass through, that we put it off until another time.

God's Word: It is indeed a truth that salvation is an impossibility from our side. We read in Jeremiah 17:9 that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?." and in Ephesians 2:1 that we are "dead in trespasses and sins." But, thanks be to God, salvation **is to be had** out of His free and sovereign grace. Christ says "look unto me, **and be ye saved**, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else (Isaiah 45:22)." Our tendency to put off salvation to another time is only because we do not see, have not been sufficiently told, or do not believe the greatness of God's grace and willingness to save, and the simplicity of it; that salvation is promised to a prayer – to a look. Furthermore, we need not and can not look to ourselves for the ability to change our entire lives; the Lord says in Ezekiel 36:26 "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 an heart of flesh." Blessed be God, Who provided the Lamb of God, "who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (1Peter 2:24).

⁶⁵ But you say: This is a contradiction; 'If I am deaf, how can I hear? If I am blind, how can I look?' Leave God to settle that difficulty. Only listen and look up.

--Robert McCheyne, From The Preacher's Heart, Christian Focus Publications Ltd., 1993, p. 353.

⁶⁶ The work of the Spirit is not, and never was designed to be, a substitute for the personal work of the believer. His influence, indispensable and sovereign though it is, does not release from human and individual responsibility. --Octavius Winslow, No Condemnation in Christ Jesus, Carlisle, PA; THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST, 1991, p. 151.

4. Blaming God for not giving us what we think we need.

Perception: Since God sovereignly elects His people, we cannot do anything anyway for our own salvation. Therefore, though we dare not say it outright, we blame God. He could save us if He wanted to, but until now He has not saved us, so we are stuck. Furthermore, God will save me and convert me if I am elect; until then, I may just as well live any way I want to, because there is nothing I can do if I am not one of the elect.

God's Word: In light of the free offer of the Gospel, this attitude is terribly blasphemous, completely contrary to the whole tenor of the Bible, and a great sin.⁶⁷ The real problem is in us, and in our unwillingness to believe the gospel, and to take God at His word in Scripture. "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" (John 5:40)." This attitude has been adequately addressed by the authors of the Canons of Dordt in the Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, Articles 8 and 9, where we read that "It is not the fault of the gospel nor of Christ, offered therein, nor of God, who calls men by the gospel and confers upon them various gifts, that those who are called by the ministry of the Word refuse to come and be converted. The fault lies in themselves . . ." Refer also to Sections 8 and 9 of the previous head of this paper for a proper, Biblical view of election.

5. Grounding our salvation on our experiences.

Perception: We can not and will not believe that Christ is for us until our experiences can match those heard from the pulpit or found in an autobiography. Thus, with Thomas, we will not believe unless we can see our experiences matching what we think they must be.

God's Word: We have addressed the proper grounding of salvation and assurance in Section 5 of the last head. A review of Appendix B at this point would also be beneficial. The ground of our salvation is outside of ourselves in Him alone Who's name is Jesus: "Jehovah Salvation." *He* is our Savior. We must cast ourselves upon Him, for He saves from sin. Just as we are, we are called to come to Him. With experience, or without experience, we are commanded to trust in Him. "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5). He will save us from whatever malady we have.

Waiting to believe and trust Him until we know He is working within us is unbelief. It actually eliminates believing. "For what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" (Romans 8:24). "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things *not seen*" (Hebrews 11:1). A review of Hebrews 11 is most helpful on this point. How many times is it recorded that these heroes of faith went forward blindly at the command of God! Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet...prepared an ark to the saving of his house (verse 7). Abraham went out not knowing whither he went (verse 8). Through faith Sara received strength to conceive when she was past age, for she judged Him faithful which promised (verse 11). By faith (not sight) Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come (verse 20). By faith Moses endured, seeing Him Who is invisible (verse 27). See also verses 3, 13, and 17-19. None of the heroes of faith saw what they hoped for until later, and some only after they died (verse 39). Now we have the command of God to believe in His Son for all our salvation. Our salvation is *without* ourselves in Jesus Christ, and the foundation of our salvation rests in Him and His work. Through Him and His promise, we experience the forgiveness of sins, and all the benefits of salvation. However, it is only through resting in Him

⁶⁷ It is Christ's own glory and happiness to pardon.

--Thomas Willcox, "Honey out of the Rock," Chapel Library Booklet, p. 10.

by faith.⁶⁸ O reader, will you not cast your all on Him, trusting in His salvation? Do so at once. He will not cast you out.

6. A lack of peace and joy in believing.

Perception: Because of an over-emphasis on self-examination in the preaching, and a placing of experience before the hearers constantly, there is more focus on experience than on Christ in the life of a Christian. This leads to a lack of simplistic, childlike faith, and consequently to a lack of peace and joy in believing.^{69,70,71}

God's Word: A focus on experience tends to lead to bondage, fear, and despair, because we can never measure up to where we should be. Only a focus on the Righteousness of God, provided outside of ourselves can lead to stability, freedom, peace and joy. This can be seen by reading Romans 7. When Paul viewed himself, he came almost to despair – “O, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” But when he viewed who God is in Jesus Christ, then he found stability, hope, peace, victory, and joy – “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

The life of a believer should be a life of joy—not in himself, but joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:11). The apostle Paul, in Romans 8:15, states that “ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father”. We also read in Romans 15:13, “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost;” and in Galatians 5:22, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith.”

Dear reader, may you learn to place your trust and confidence **outside** of yourself in the firm, everlasting, immovable rock of our salvation—Jesus Christ. When we trust in Jesus we are to **rejoice**. How can we do that? The secret is found outside of ourselves in who He is, and what He has done. Rejoice **in the Lord** always; and again, I say, rejoice (Phillipians 4:4). The joy **of the Lord** is your strength (Nehemiah 8:10). The gospel is good news of great joy to all people—For unto us a child is born (Luke 2:10, Isaiah 9:6). Our Lord has said, “Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16:24).

⁶⁸ Be persuaded to close with Christ, freely offered to you. Put away entirely the question as to whether you ever believed before. Believe now.

--Robert M'Cheyne, From The Preacher's Heart, Christian Focus Publications Ltd., 1993, p. 409.

⁶⁹ Oh, how much more joyful would the saints of God be did they deal less with themselves, and more with Jesus! --Octavius Winslow, The Precious Things of God, Ligonier, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1993, p. 52.

There are far more people made to think by seeing a believer's joy than by any words he may speak.

--Andrew Bonar, Heavenly Springs, THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST; 1986, p. 60

⁷⁰ Assurance will make a man fervent, constant, and abundant in the work of the Lord. When the assured Christian hath done one work, he is calling out for another. What is next, Lord, says the assured soul; what is next? An assured Christian will put his hand to any work, he will put his neck in any yoke for Christ; he never thinks he hath done enough, he always thinks he hath done too little, and when he hath done all he can, he sits down, saying, I am an unprofitable servant. --Thomas Brooks as quoted in Ryle, J.C., Assurance, Christian Focus Publications Limited, 1989, p. 73.

Assurance would make us active and lively in God's service; it would excite prayer, quicken obedience. Faith would make us walk, but assurance would make us run; we should think we could never do enough for God. Assurance would be as wings to the bird, as weights to the clock, to set all the wheels of obedience arunning. --Thomas Watson as quoted in Ryle, J.C., Assurance, Christian Focus Publications Limited, 1989, p. 72.

⁷¹ We are not to indulge for a moment in the belief, 'Oh, I must count on a season of langour in my Christian life.' Where did you find that in the Bible?

--Andrew Bonar., Heavenly Springs, THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST; 1986, p. 159

7. A lack of evangelism

Perception: Because of an emphasis on the need to experience various things, even believers can feel so much of their short-comings that they have no thought for the salvation of others. Being preoccupied with their state, condition, and lack of what they think they must experience, they become self-centered. They forget to lay themselves at Christ's feet just as they are, and they lose sight of the fact that, despite their shortcomings, He has promised to receive them graciously, and abundantly pardon. Thus they lose sight of Christ's all sufficiency and the peace, joy, and hope that is in Him, and consequently know not how to commend Him to others.

God's Word: When we see that our life is hid outside of ourselves in Christ (Colossians 3:3), and that He offers full salvation to all, then our desire is that others might know this salvation.⁷² Although the Bible constantly shows us how we come short of the glory of God, it always points us to that substitutional righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. In him there is hope, salvation, peace, joy, liberty, victory, complete salvation and reconciliation with God. When the believer through faith gets but a glimpse of that finished and full salvation, he cannot but sing (Isaiah 44:23, Zephaniah 3:14); he cannot but proclaim to sinners God's salvation (Jeremiah 31:7,10-12). Knowledge of God's salvation does not make us selfish, but fills us with such liberty and fullness that we overflow to others. We want others also to know Him, Whom to know is life eternal. Thus we see the woman at the well. One little glimpse of what Jesus is, and she leaves all to tell others; "Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ?" (John 4:29) So with Andrew. One glimpse of the Messiah, and he was off to tell Peter, "We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph" (John 1:45). So with Paul—"and straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God" (Acts 9:20). And what shall we say more? For the time would fail to tell of Joseph's brothers (Genesis 45:26), Naaman's maid, (II Kings 5:3), David (Psalm 26:7), the lepers (2 Kings 7:9), the angels (Luke 2:10-14), the man once possessed with a devil (Mark 5:20), the disciples (Luke 19:37), the women at the resurrection (Matthew 28:7) who saw something of Who God is, and went straightway, and told others. And so it is with all believers. Though profoundly disappointed in themselves, they look out of themselves, see Jesus, and immediately desire that others may see Him too.

And so a healthy church that has her eyes fixed on Jesus desires to go out into the highways and hedges to bring others to the King.⁷³ She then goes out, beginning at her own Jerusalem;

⁷² You must have got very little if you do not try to tell others of it.

--Andrew Bonar, Heavenly Springs, THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST; 1986, p. 128

No man can be contented to go to the Well of salvation alone. Joy in Christ is not a selfish joy... The moment a man has found Christ, his cry is, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did". O! that all I love but knew Him.

--Robert M'Cheyne, Watching Unto Prayer, Glasgow; Free Presbyterian Publications, 1995, p. 12

The Spirit of Christ is essentially a *missionary* Spirit. --Octavius Winslow, No Condemnation in Christ Jesus, Carlisle, PA; THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST, 1991, p. 120.

⁷³ A church which does not exist to do good in the slums, and dens, and kennels of the city, is a church that has no reason to justify its longer existing. To rescue souls from hell and lead to God, to hope, to heaven, this is her heavenly occupation. O that the church would always feel this!

--Charles Spurgeon, Christ's Words from the Cross, Grand Rapids; Baker Book House, 1984, p. 25.

Church of God, your mission is not to the respectable few who will gather about your ministers to listen respectfully to their words; your mission is not to the elite and the eclectic, the intelligent who will criticize your words and pass judgment upon every syllable of your teaching; your mission is not to those who treat you kindly, generously, affectionately, not to these I mean alone, though certainly to these as among the rest, but your great errand is to the harlot, to the thief, to the swearer and the drunkard, to the most depraved and debauched. If no one else cares for these, the church always must, and if there be any who are first in her prayers it should be these who--alas!--are generally last in our thoughts.

--Charles Spurgeon, Christ's Words from the Cross, Grand Rapids; Baker Book House, 1984, p. 26.

her own sphere of influence, and then extending her work all over the world. Believing in Him by faith, it is her ardent desire to do so. Yea, it is the Lord's command that she do so (Psalm 48:12,13; Isaiah 40:9; Isaiah 48:20; Matthew 10:27; Matthew 28:18-20). He calls His church beautiful when she does so—"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation" (Isaiah 52:7).

8. *Having an exclusive spirit.*

Perception: Since the "Christian" world today is so full of easy-believism and Arminianism, it appears that many are therefore deceiving themselves for all eternity. There must then be very few who are truly on the "straight and narrow" way. As a result, given that we still have the truth, we really should stick to ourselves, and not mix with people from any other denominations, because we place ourselves in great peril of having us or our children gradually and subtly fall into the same errors as these many others. We really should not trust others if they do not sound exactly like us; they are likely false Christians.

God's Word: God's Word surely does make it clear that few overall are saved, "for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:13-14). Scripture also points out that many who call themselves Christians deceive themselves; "not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). At the same time, however, Scripture tells us to "judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven" (Luke 6:37). We are called to look upon men and "know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit" (Matthew 7:16-17).

In addition, we can not ignore those clear portions of Scripture which make it very clear that the universal Church of God is so much broader than any one small denomination or ethnic group. We read in Revelations 5:9 that "they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of **every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.**" We also read that the Kingdom of God had not few, but a very great many subjects in it; "the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" (Revelations 5:11).

Furthermore, the Apostle Paul teaches us in numerous passages in Scripture of the universal nature of the "body" of Christ, meaning of course the universal Church of true believers. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also *is* Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many" (1 Corinthians 12: 12-14). The authors of the Canons of Dordt also exhort us to think favorably upon other parts of the body of Christ in Article 15 of Head III/IV; "With respect to those who make an external profession of faith, and live regular lives, we are bound, after the example of the apostle, to judge and speak of them in the most favorable manner. For the secret recesses of the heart are unknown to us."

Dear reader, let us then not have such an exclusive spirit towards others, but pray for the grace and love to look both at ourselves and others for the Biblical fruits of the Spirit. Let us heed the advice of the apostle Paul in Romans 12:3-5; to "every man that is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body,

and all members have not the same office: so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.” Let us by grace seek to see something of the broader Kingdom of God, praying that we, though sheep in the midst of wolves, would be “wise as serpents, and harmless as doves” (Matthew 10:16).

9. Not taking hold of the promises, for fear of stealing them.

Perception: Since so many have taken hold of Christ in what is considered a flippant way, there is a perceived need to be extremely careful. And so, the needy sinner would rather stay away from Christ until he is sure the Spirit is truly at work, than have any possibility of accepting Christ before the right time.

God’s Word: Scripture is very clear that we honor Christ when we take Him at His word, especially when it seems impossible to believe personally. So it was with Abraham. It was impossible, humanly speaking for him to have a son. Yet, scripture says, Abraham staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God (Romans 4:20). We see here, that faith glorifies God. So God commends the eunuchs in Isaiah 56 for taking hold of His covenant. They were excluded from the temple because of their condition. Yet they were bold to take hold of His covenant, and the Lord promised them that they would have a place better than of sons and daughters.

It is impossible to steal what is freely given. Yes, it borders on blasphemy to say that we cannot appropriate the promises which God so freely gives us. This is the very sin of unbelief—the chief of all sins, which accuses God of insincerity in offering us salvation freely for the taking (Revelations 22:17), for the asking (Luke 11:13), yea, even for a look (Isaiah 45:22).

“But,” you say, “Some take hold of the promises of God, and yet seem to do so in a flippant way, and do not seem to live out the Christian life.” These are the stony ground hearers. They do not really need Christ or His promises for everyday life. They need them for a safety net, but do not live out of them. They are not a daily reality for them. They do not impinge on and affect their life. However, the fact that this happens should never discourage us from taking hold of those promises, from clinging to them, from pleading them. This is to feed on Christ. This is to abide in Him—to live out of Him. This is to come unto Him. And this is the very reason the Lord has given the promises. Yes, this is precisely the Spirit’s work. For He causes us to flee to Christ through the promises. The promises are not the end for us. Christ is. It is through the promises that we feed on **Him**. How do we know it is the Spirit’s work? When we are brought to flee from our unbelief and trust in Christ through the promises. The Spirit will convince the world of sin because they believe not, and He will also convince of Righteousness (John 16:8-10).

Finally, we can never go and fall at the feet of Christ too early. Today is the day of salvation. If the thief on the cross had waited to see if he had the Spirit’s work, he would never have been saved. No, he saw he had need, and he flew to Christ just as he was—“Lord, remember me.” So should we. Seeing our need, or seeing our lack of knowledge of our need, we should flee directly to Him. He that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out (John 6:37). Dear reader, Christ was crucified with His arms wide open. I counsel thee to buy. He says, “Come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price” (Revelations 3:18, Isaiah 55:1).

10. Having a lack of hope in God.

Perception: There is so much a person needs to understand, feel, and experience before he can really hope in God. Otherwise his hope might be presumptive hope. Also, since all men are sinners, and God is a God of justice, and is “angry with the wicked every day” (Psalm 7:11), it must be presumptive to hope in God. Through being directed to look at ourselves, and having election and the work of the Spirit over-emphasized, a hypercalvinist begins to lose his hope in God, the knowledge that God is love, and that He is willing to pour out His Spirit and graces upon the chief of sinners. Thus, his religion becomes drudgery, and is not lively, and his light before the world grows dim. Furthermore, such thoughts and attitudes cause him to stop **expecting** his own conversion, the conversion of his children, or the conversion of others.⁷⁴

God's Word: Dear reader, must you not confess that the whole tenor of God's Word really has the opposite effect of diminishing our hope? The apostle Paul instructs us to put “on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him” (1 Thessalonians 5:8-10). When that hope is kindled once more in a sinners breast, then all becomes new.⁷⁵ This is how Abraham believed; hoping against hope, bringing glory to God, and by it was justified, that we too might believe (See Romans 4:18-25).

Oh, let us not be “fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?” (Luke 24:25-26). Pray that the precious Spirit of God will open up our foolish and often blasphemous understanding, and, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, expound unto us in all the scriptures the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, the only name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.⁷⁶ There is great and abundant hope in His great Name; hear Him cry out, dear reader, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I *am* God, and *there is none else*” (Isaiah 45:22). Indeed, how backward our thinking is! Surely there is no hope **outside** of God; rather, all hope is **in** Him. “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost (Romans 15:13)!

11. Desiring to know the precise moment of our conversion in order to believe the Gospel.

Perception: Because of the perceived need for special revelations and the fear of presumption, concerned souls often have the perception that they need to know the precise moment of their conversion. Sometimes this perception is reinforced when preachers speak of examples such as Andrew and John who knew it was about the 10th hour that they first abode with Jesus (John 1:39).

⁷⁴ I have known all the doctrines of grace to be unmistakably preached, and yet there have been no conversions; for this reason, that they were not expected and scarcely desired. --C.H. Spurgeon as quoted in Iain H. Murray, *Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism, The Battle for Gospel Preaching*, Carlisle, PA; THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST, 1995, p. 113.

⁷⁵ The message, "God is love," is like the sun bursting through the clouds of a long tempest. The good news "through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins," is like the opening of the prisoner's dungeon-gate. Bondage departs, and liberty comes. Suspicion is gone, and the heart is won. --Horatius Bonar, "Horatius Bonar (1808-1889) Talks About Holiness," Free Grace Broadcaster, Issue 146, October 1993, pp. 32 (from Bonar's "God's Way of Holiness").

⁷⁶ Luke 24:27, Acts 4:12

God's Word: As we study God's word, we find that not all those who are saved know the exact hour or the details of their conversion. In fact, the conversion experience of most of the saints in the Bible is not mentioned. If we look instead to the fruits of conversion, which are "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith" (Galations 5:22), then, in the absence of a clear knowledge of the moment of our salvation, we may confess with the blind man in scripture: "one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." (John 9:25) John Owen writes: "He that is alive may know that he was born, though he know neither the place where nor the time when. And so may he that is spiritually alive, and has ground of evidence that he is so, that he was born again, though he know neither when, nor where, nor how. And this case is usual in persons of quiet natural temper who have had the advantage of education under means of light and grace. God often in such persons begins and carries on the work of his grace insensibly, so that they come to good growth and maturity before they know that they are alive."⁷⁷

As we look at the experience of God's children, we find that many were called in their youth, and a great many who grow up within the church do not know a precise moment when the Lord began to work in their lives. In a natural sense, we do not know the moment of our birth, or the events surrounding it. Indeed, we cannot often remember anything in our first couple years of life. So in spiritual life the Lord often does not hurry, but works little by little, from one experience to another to cause us to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

It is common, however, that those who have lived in open rebellion against God do have a more dramatic conversion experience, and so tend to remember the specific time of their conversion. However, this only shows us how that the Lord must often use dramatic means to convert such hardened hearts. The drastic change in such a person's life is then a very noticeable and observable thing.

As God works in our hearts, we will often remember times and places that His word has entered our hearts to convict of sin or to bring us to some new discovery of the wonder of His grace, causing us to fall in the dust and leap for joy in His one-sided salvation. We may not minimize these special times, and we should thank God for them. However, we can never look to them as the ground of our salvation, or say that because we do not remember any special times that we are not saved. Our ground of salvation is outside of ourselves in the accomplished work of Jesus offered freely to all; yes, even to us (see Matthew 22:2-4).

The time, or the way, or the details concerning our conversion may be precious, but they are not vital to true salvation. What is vitally important is that we come to need another Righteousness – to look out of ourselves to Jesus' righteousness. We need to cling to Him, to hope in Him, to base our salvation on His work only. Reader, have you come to confess your sins and flee to Him? He is faithful and just to forgive your sins and too cleanse you from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). Whosoever, (whatever experience he has known) will call on the name of the Lord shall be saved (Acts 2:21).

12. Not taking God at His Word.

Perception: A person cannot take God's Word, including the many promises contained in it, literally, unless it is applied to him personally. Otherwise, he would surely be "stealing" it if he appropriates it to himself. It is better for him to be sure he learns and understands how it really goes in the life of a sinner before he applies God's Word to himself, and takes God literally at His Word.

God's Word: Scripture makes it plain that we have no right *not* to believe *all* of God's Word. We read clearly that "these [things] are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ,

⁷⁷ *The Forgiveness of Sin: A Practical Exposition of Psalm 130*, J. Owen, p. 355

the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:31). The Lord Himself testifies against those who will not take Him at His Word. He asks, “How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?” (Numbers 14:11). Oh, let us learn to take God’s Word for what it really says, and with joy “draw water out of the wells of salvation” (Isaiah 12:3). Let it never be said of you or your loved ones, dear reader, what we read in Hebrews 3:19: “So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.” (See also section 7 of the previous head of this paper for additional thoughts on this subject.)

13. Doubting Christ’s willingness to save.

Perception: Perhaps one of the most devastating effects of hypercalvinistic teaching is that it tends to distort the very character of God in the eyes of a sinner. Through the one-sided emphasis of God’s justice and election, and the simultaneous neglect of the preaching of the gospel, the sinner begins to view the Lord as an “austere man” (see Luke 19:21) and as an “unjust judge” (see Luke 18:1-8). The sinner views God as One who randomly chooses who to save or not to save, who will only hear the prayers of His elect, and who is reluctant to forgive. Although he may not admit it, he begins to view God as a tyrant, who, though he is very rich, yet is stingy in dispensing His gifts. He views God as One unwilling to save; One who needs to be persuaded to forgive. The sinner sees no hope but to pray that he may be one of God’s elect, and that the Lord would one day have mercy upon him. And so, when he reads the wonderful promises and invitations of God to sinners, he buries them in the ground as we read in Matthew 25:24,25, and does not trade them in for gain as the wise stewards did.

God’s Word: The scriptures, on the other hand, represent the Lord in a far different light, showing us the beautiful perfection of His person. God is just (Deuteronomy 32:4). He is holy (Isaiah 6:3). He is sovereign (Matthew 20:15). He is Lord of lords, and King of kings (Deuteronomy 10:17). He does what He will (Daniel 4:35). And at the same time, He is full of grace (John 1:14). He has bowels of mercies (Philippians 2:1), His is love itself (I John 4:8), He readily forgives sin (Psalm 86:5), and He is full of compassion (Psalm 111:4). Notice, that He is all these things at the same time. These attributes do not strive together, but are in perfect agreement. As we read in Exodus 34:6,7, He is “merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, **AND** that will by no means clear the guilty.” That little word “and” is so precious, for it points to the Lord Jesus Christ. Because God’s wrath for sin has been poured on Him, therefore, He can be just **and** the justifier of the ungodly (cf. Romans 3:26). Therefore, He can pour out His Spirit upon us (Zechariah 12:10), and because of Jesus, the Lord will freely give us all things (Romans 8:32). We are more than welcome to come to Him just as we are and drink (Proverbs 9:5, John 7:37). “I will **pour** water on him that is thirsty, and **floods** upon the dry ground” (Isaiah 44:3).

The scriptures represent the Lord to us as a loving Father⁷⁸ who will give us all good things we ask of Him ; “And shall not He give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?” (Luke 11:13). He is not willing that any should perish, but that all come to repentance (II Peter 3:9). The whole book of Jeremiah is the story of God’s love, faithfulness, and care for such rebellious sinners as we (refer to chapters 3:1,12, 4:14, 5:1, 32:34-38, 51:5). The Lord’s willingness to save is also seen through His command to send the word of the gospel into all the world (Mark 16:15); “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” He invites sinners, yes, **sinners** to come to Him just as they are. And what does He willingly do for

⁷⁸ We are commanded to call Him “our Father” 15 times in Matthew 5-7! See also the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32.

them? Why, he frankly forgives them all (see Luke 7:42). Be their sin great or small, He frankly forgives.⁷⁹

Indeed, the very character of God is manifested so clearly to us through the incarnation and passion of the Son of God. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son..." Why? What was His goal? "...that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world...." Why, then, did He send Him? What was His aim? "...but that the world through Him might have life" (John 3:16,17). In the very passion of Jesus we see how God is just and yet at the same time full of love to men (Romans 3:26). Through the satisfaction of Jesus He can now pour out His Fatherly love upon sinful men. The very heart of God is manifest in the rending of the temple veil when Jesus gave up the Ghost. It is as if the Lord could not wait to welcome sinners into His very presence. As soon as His justice was fully satisfied, He **rent** the veil in twain from the top to the bottom (Matthew 27:51).

O reader, taste and see that the Lord is good. Trust also in Him (Psalm 37:5). Herein is love, not that we loved God, **but that He loved us**, and gave His Son to be the propitiation for all our sins (I John 4:10). O, He says to you, "Come unto me" (Matthew 11:28). "Your words have been stout against me" (Malachi 3:13), but "hearken unto me, ye stout hearted, that are far from righteousness: I bring near **my** righteousness" (Isaiah 46:12,13). "Come now, and let us reason together." "Your sins shall be as white as snow." "Yea, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18). "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" (Mark 10:51).

⁷⁹ And what a madness is this in many, to stand a-back from Christ, because of their infirmities; and to scar at him, because of their weakness, when the more corruption we find the more we should run to him? --John Brown, Christ: the Way, the Truth, and the Life, Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, p. 48.

I feel, when I have sinned, an immediate reluctance to go to Christ. I am ashamed to go. I feel as if it would do no good to go, - as if it were making Christ a minister of sin, to go straight from the swine-trough to the best robe, - and a thousand other excuses; but I am persuaded they are all lies, direct from hell. John argues the opposite way: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father;" Jer. iii. 1 and a thousand other scriptures are against it. I am sure there is neither peace nor safety from deeper sin, but in going directly to the Lord Jesus Christ. This is God's way of peace and holiness. It is folly to the world and the beclouded heart, but it is *the way*. --Robert M. M'Cheyne, as found in Andrew Bonar's, Memoir and Remains of Robert Murray M'Cheyne, Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987 ed, p. 151.

The arms of Christ were nailed wide open, when he hung upon the cross; and this was a figure of his wide willingness to save all, as he said: 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.'

--Robert M'Cheyne, From The Preacher's Heart, Christian Focus Publications Ltd., 1993, p. 295. God is willing to receive me on the footing of His perfection; and if I am willing to be thus received, in the perfection of another with whom God is well pleased, the whole transaction is completed. I AM JUSTIFIED BY HIS BLOOD. --Horatius Bonar, The Everlasting Righteousness, Carlisle, PA; The Banner of Truth Trust, 1993 Edition, p. 44.

If you are willing, He never was otherwise. --John Mason, as quoted in Tom Wells, Come to Me! an Urgent Invitation to Turn to Christ, Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1986, p. 113 xxx check this reference.

Believe but Christ's willingness, and that will make you willing. --Thomas Willcox, "Honey out of the Rock," Chapel Library Booklet, p. 6.

Conclusion

Dear reader, we have tried to point out, based largely upon the study of and comparison between portions of God's own infallible Word and the works of many of our Godly forefathers, the errors you can fall into when you unknowingly fall into the hypercalvinistic "ditch" while attempting to flee or veer away from the Arminian "ditch". We would beg you, though, not to simply take our word for it; rather, be as the Bereans in scripture, who were praised for verifying in God's Word the truth of what they heard or read: "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few" (Acts 17:11, 12).

What a blessed fruit is found among the Bereans when they searched the scriptures daily: therefore many of them believed! The Lord Jesus Christ also testified to us of our need to search the scriptures. We read in John 5:39: "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." Dear reader, it is our fervent prayer for you that you, through prayerful study of God's Word, might not depend on your feelings, as the hypercalvinist is so inclined to do, but that you, through the indwelling work of the blessed Holy Spirit, might have a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We read in Romans 10:17: "So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

Let us trust in God's changeless Word, however changeable our feelings may be. Martin Luther wrote a beautiful poem on feelings versus true faith:

*For feelings come and feelings go, and feelings are deceiving;
My warrant is the Word of God, nought else is worth believing.
Though all my heart should feel condemned for want of some sweet token,
There is One greater than my heart whose Word cannot be broken.
I'll trust in God's unchanging Word till soul and body sever;
For though all things shall pass away, His Word shall stand forever.*

May we never be guilty of the charge of Christ in Matthew 15:6: "Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition." Instead, it is our prayer and hope and exhortation: "Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper" (II Chronicles 20:20).

Appendix A

On the Sinner's Warrant to Come to Christ

The famous Marrow Controversy in the Church of Scotland in the early 1700's included an issue on the warrant that sinner's have to come to Christ. Many maintained that it was sound doctrine to teach that men must forsake their sins in order to come to Christ. However, the Marrow Men⁸⁰ disagreed, saying that that proposition was "unsound, and most detestable - as if men ought only to come to Christ, the alone Saviour from sins, after they have got rid of them by repentance."⁸¹ Subsequently the General Assembly of the church posed a number of questions for the Marrow Men to answer in order to clarify their position. The question regarding the warrant that sinners have to come to Christ is included below (underline has been added).

Query X (from the Assembly) -

Whether the revelation of the divine will in the word, affording a warrant to offer Christ unto all, and a warrant to all to receive him, can be said to be the Father's making a deed of gift and grant of Christ unto all mankind? Is this grant to all mankind by sovereign grace? And whether is it absolute or conditional?

Answer (from the Marrow Men) -

We answer to the first part of the question, that by the "deed of gift or grant unto all mankind," we understand no more than the revelation of the divine will in the word, affording warrant to offer Christ to all, and a warrant to all to receive him; for although we believe the purchase and application of redemption to be peculiar to the elect, who were given by the Father to Christ in the counsel of peace, yet the warrant to receive him is common to all. Ministers, by virtue of the commission they have received from their great Lord and Master, are authorized and instructed to go preach the gospel to every creature, i.e. to make a full, free, and unhampered offer of him, his grace, righteousness, and salvation, to every rational soul to whom they may in providence have access to speak. And though we had a voice like a trumpet, that could reach all the corners of the earth, we think we would be bound, by virtue of our commission, to lift it up, and say, "To you, O men, do we call, and our voice is to the sons of men. God hath so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And though this "deed of gift and grant, that whosoever believeth in Christ shall not perish," etc. is, neither in our representation, nor in the passages of the book⁸² condemned on that head, called a "deed of gift, and grant of Christ," yet, being required to give our judgment on this point, we think, that agreeable to the Holy Scripture, it may be so called, as particularly appears from the text last cited, John iii.16, where by the giving of Christ, we understand not only his eternal destination by the Father to be the Redeemer of an elect world, and his giving him unto the death for them in the fullness of time, but more especially a giving of him in the word unto all, to be received and believed in. The giving here cannot be a giving in possession, which is peculiar only to them who actually believe, but it must be such a giving, granting, or offering, as warrants a man to believe or receive the gift, and must therefore be anterior to actual believing. This is evident enough from the text itself: he gave him, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish," etc. The context also, to us, puts it beyond controversy: the brazen serpent was given, and lifted up as a common good to the whole camp of Israel, that whosoever in all the camp, being stung by the fiery serpents, looked thereunto, might not die, but live. So here Christ is given to a lost world, in the word, "that whosoever believes in him should not perish," etc. And in this respect, we think, Christ

⁸⁰ The Marrow Men included the following: James Hog, Thomas Boston, John Williamson, James Kid, Gabriel Wilson, Ebenezer Erskine, Ralph Erskine, James Wardlaw, Henry Davidson, James Bathgate, and William Hunter.

⁸¹ Edward Fisher, The Marrow of Modern Divinity, Edmonton, Alberta Canada; Still Waters Revival Books, 1991 Ed., p. 344.

⁸² Namely, Edward Fisher's Marrow of Modern Divinity, including the footnotes by Thomas Boston.

is a common Saviour, and his salvation is a common salvation; and it is "glad tidings of great joy unto all people," that unto us (not to angels that fell) this Son is given, and this child is born, whose name is called Wonderful, etc. Isa. lx. 6.

We have a Scripture also to this purpose, John vi. 32, where Christ, speaking to a promiscuous multitude, makes a comparison between himself and the manna that fell about the tents of Israel in the wilderness, and says, "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven." As the simple raining of the manna about their camp is called a giving of it, (ver. 31) before it was tasted, or fed upon; so the very revelation and offer of Christ is called (according the judicious Calvin on the place) a giving of him, ere he be received and believed on.

Of this giving of Christ to mankind lost, we read also, I John v. 11, "And this is the record, that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." This giving in the text is not, we conceive, a giving in possession, in greater or lesser measure, but a giving by way of grant and offer, whereupon one may warrantably take possession, and the party to whom is not the election only, but lost mankind; for the record of God here must be such a thing as warrants all to believe on the Son of God. But it can be no such warrant to tell, "that God hath given eternal life to the elect;" for the making of a gift to a certain select company of persons, can never be a warrant for all men to receive or take possession of it. This will be further evident, if we consider that the great sin of unbelief lies in not believing this record of God, -- "He that believes not hath made God a liar," says the apostle, ver. 10, "because he believes not the record that God gave of his Son;" and then it followeth, ver. 11, "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life," etc. Now, are we to think that the rejecting of the record of God is a bare disbelieving of this proposition, "That God hath given eternal life unto the elect? No, surely; for the most desperate unbelievers, such as Judas and others, believe this; and their belief of it adds to their anguish and torment. Or do they, by believing this, set to their seal that God is true? No: they still continue, notwithstanding of all this, to make him a liar, in "not believing this record of God," that to lost mankind, and to themselves in particular, God hath given eternal life, by way of grant, so as they, as well as others, are warranted and welcome, and every one to whom it comes, on their peril, required by faith to receive or take possession of it. By not receiving this gifted and offered remedy, with application and appropriation, they fly in the face of God's record and testimony; and therefore do justly and deservedly perish, seeing the righteousness, salvation, and kingdom of God, was brought so near to them, in the free offer of the gospel, and yet they would not take it. The great pinch and strait, we think, of an awakened conscience, does not lie in believing that God hath given eternal life to the elect, but in believing or receiving Christ, offered to us in the gospel, with particular application to the man himself, in Scripture called "an eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of man." And yet, till this difficulty be surmounted, in greater or lesser measure, he can never be said to believe in Christ, or receive and rest upon him for salvation. The very taking or receiving must needs presuppose a giving of Christ: and this giving may be, and is, for the most part, where there is no receiving; but there can be no receiving of Christ for salvation where there is no revelation of Christ in the word of the gospel, affording warrant to receive him, and then, by the effectual operation of the Spirit, persuading and enabling the sinner to embrace him upon this warrant and offer. "A man," says the Spirit of God, John iii. 27, "can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven." Hence, Mr. Rutherford, in his "Christ Dying and Drawing," etc., page 442, says, that "reprobates have as fair a warrant to believe as the elect have."

As to the second part of this question, i.e., "Is this grant made to all mankind by sovereign grace? And, Whether is it absolute or conditional?" we answer, that this grant, made in common to lost mankind, is from sovereign grace only; and it being ministers' warrant to offer Christ unto all, and people's warrant to receive him, it cannot fail to be absolutely free; yet so as none can be possessed of Christ and his benefits, till by faith they receive him.

Appendix B

Quotes From Our Forefathers on the Object of Our Faith

Octavius Winslow, *No Condemnation in Christ Jesus*, Carlisle, Penn.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1991, pp. 12-13, commenting on Romans 8:1; "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit:

It has been shown, that our being in Christ, is the ground of our not being in condemnation. It then follows, that as a fruit – a consequence of our immunity from condemnation – is our walking after the Spirit. Thus, while justification and sanctification are separate and distinct conditions, they yet are cognate truths, and co-exist in the experience of all the regenerate. The deduction which the apostle here makes of holiness from acceptance; or rather, the order of sequence which he observes, is worthy of the reader's closest attention. Its want of observance has kept numbers of sincere seekers of Christ in the cold dreary region of embarrassment and doubt, who, but for thus overlooking the order observed, or perhaps rather, by reversing that order, might have fully received into their souls that "kingdom which is righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." Their great error has been an attempting to shape their course, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, before having ascertained their being in Christ and consequent freedom from condemnation. In plainer language, their placing sanctification in advance of justification; in substituting the effect for the cause; in looking to the Spirit rather than to Christ. How painfully distressing is the struggle of such an one! Sincere and earnest in his desire to love God, but with his back turned upon the cross, and his face towards the "mount that burneth with fire," he can see everything in God to awaken his fear, but nothing to inspire his love. He longs to obey God; but, lacking the impelling motive to obedience, he fails in every attempt. He sighs for rest; but his incessant effort to recover the ground perpetually sliding from beneath his feet, places that rest further and further beyond his reach. He would fain be holy; but seeking his holiness in the way of doing, and not in the way of believing, he never attains it.

Octavius Winslow, *Personal Declension and Revival of Religion in the Soul*, Carlisle, Penn.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1978, pp. 88-89.

Be careful of not making a Saviour of faith. There is a danger – and it cannot be too vigilantly guarded against – of substituting the work of the Spirit for the work of Christ; this mistake it is that leads so many of God's saints to look *within*, instead of *without*, themselves for the evidences of their calling and acceptance; and thus, too, so many are kept all their spiritual course walking in a state of bondage and fear, the great question never fully and fairly settled, or, in other words, never *quite sure* of their sonship. The work of Christ is a great and finished work; it is so glorious that it can admit of no comparison, so complete that it can allow of no addition, and so essential that it can give place to no substitution. Precious as is the work of the Holy Ghost in the heart, and essential as it is to the salvation of the soul, yet he who places it where the work of Jesus ought only to be, deranges the order of the covenant, closes up the legitimate source of evidence, and will assuredly bring distress and uncertainty into his soul. "Righteousness, peace, and joy," are the fruit of a full belief in the Lord Jesus Christ; and he who looks for them away from the cross, will meet with disappointment: but they *are* found in Jesus. He who looks away from himself, from his vileness, guiltiness, emptiness, and poverty, fully and believingly unto Jesus, shall know what the forgiveness of sin is, and shall experience the love of God shed abroad in his heart.

Octavius Winslow, Personal Declension and Revival of Religion in the Soul, Carlisle, Penn.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1978, pp.135-138.

A substitution of his own work in the soul for the atoning and finished work of Jesus, greatly grieves the Holy Spirit of God. One essential and important office of the Spirit is to glorify Christ: "He (the Spirit) shall glorify me," said Jesus; "He shall testify of me"; "He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you." This being his work in reference to Christ, it must be, of course, the great delight of the Spirit ever and at all times to lift up Jesus and glorify him. And how does the Spirit most glorify Christ, but by exalting his atoning work, -- giving to it the pre-eminence, the importance, and the glory it demands, -- leading the sinner, whom he has first convinced of sin, to accept of Jesus as a willing, and all-sufficient Saviour, -- to cast away all trust in self, all reliance upon a covenant of works, which is but a covenant of death, and thus going entirely out of himself, to take up his rest in the blood and righteousness of Immanuel, the God-man Mediator. Oh, what sweet, holy delight must it be to the Spirit of God, when a poor sinner in all his conscious nothingness is led to build upon Jesus, the "tried stone, the precious corner-stone, the sure foundation!"

Let the reader, then, imagine how grieving it must be to the Spirit, when there is any resting in *his* work in the soul, either for acceptance, or for comfort, or for peace, or for strength, or even for evidence of a state of grace, and not *solely* and *entirely* in the atoning work which Jesus hath wrought out for the redemption of sinners. The work of the Spirit and the work of Christ, though they form parts of one glorious whole are yet *distinct*, and to be *distinguished* in the economy of grace, and in the salvation of a sinner. It is the work of Jesus alone, his perfect obedience to the broken law of God, and his sacrificial death as a satisfaction of Divine justice, that form the ground of a sinner's acceptance with God, --the source of his pardon, justification, and peace. The work of the Spirit is, not to atone, but to *reveal* the atonement; not to obey, but to *make known* the obedience; not to pardon and justify, but to bring the convinced, awakened, penitent soul to receive the pardon and embrace the justification already provided in the work of Jesus. Now, if there is any substitution of the Spirit's work for Christ's work, --any undue, unauthorized leaning upon the work *within*, instead of the work *without*, the believer, there is a dishonour done to Christ, and a consequent grieving of the Holy Spirit of God. It cannot be pleasing to the Spirit to find himself a substitute for Christ; and yet this is the sin which so many are constantly falling into. If I look to convictions of sin within me, to any motion of the indwelling Spirit, to any part of his work, as the legitimate source of healing, of comfort, or of evidence, I turn my back upon Christ, I remove my eye from the cross, and slight his great atoning work; I make a Christ of the Spirit! I make a Saviour of the Holy Ghost! I convert his work into an *atoning* work, and draw the evidence and the consolation of my *pardon* and *acceptance* from what *he* has done, and not from what *Jesus* has done! O, is not this, again we ask, dishonouring to Christ, and grieving to the Holy Spirit of God? Think not that we undervalue the Spirit's work: great and precious is it. Viewed as a Quickener, John vi. 63 --as an Indweller, 1 Cor. vi. 19 --as a Sanctifier, 2 Thess. ii. 13 --as a Sealer, Eph. i. 13 --as a Witness, 1 John v. 10 --as a Comforter, John xiv. 26 --as the Author of Prayer, Rom. viii. 26, --his person cannot be too ardently loved, nor can his work be too highly prized: but the love we bear him, and the honour we give him, must not be at the expense of the honour and glory and love due to the Lord Jesus Christ, whom it is his office and his delight to glorify. The crown of *redemption* must be placed upon the head of Jesus; he alone is worthy to wear it, --he alone has a right to wear it. "*Thou* hast redeemed us by thy blood," is the song they sing in glory, and "*Thou* shalt wear the crown," should be the song echoed back from the redeemed on earth.

See, then, that you grieve not the Spirit, either by misplacing or by undervaluing the atoning work of Jesus. His blood, applied by the Spirit, pardons; his righteousness, received by faith, justifies you; and "the peace of God which passeth all understanding," is the certain and blessed fruit of both. The constant evidence of a pardoned and justified state, must spring from a constant dealing with, and looking to, the Lord Jesus; it is "in his light that we are to see light"; he is the Sun that shines upon the work within us. The eye of the soul withdrawn from his cross, and fixed in intense gaze upon itself, will soon be lost amid shadows and gloom.

Inward joys may be lived upon, until the spring of joy ceases to flow; evidences may be looked to, until they melt away into darkness. What, under these circumstances, is the poor, distressed, alarmed soul to do, but to fly afresh to the cross? Where is it to look, but again unto Jesus? What is to speak a sense of pardon, but the atoning blood; and what is to assure of "perfect peace," but the justifying righteousness of the Son of God? O that there were a more simple and direct looking out of, and away from, self, to the atoning Saviour! Then would the precept be sweet, then would obedience be easy, then would the cross be light, and then, too, would peace flow as a river, and righteousness roll in as the waves of the sea.

Horatius Bonar, How Shall I Go To God?, Pensacola, Florida: Chapel Library, Tract, pp.5-6.

You are not justified by the Spirit's work, but by Christ's alone; nor are the motions of the Spirit in you the grounds of your confidence, or the reason for your expecting pardon from the Judge of all. The Spirit works in you, not to prepare you for being justified, or to make you fit for the favor of God, but to *bring you to the cross*, just as you are. For the cross is the only place where God deals in mercy with the transgressor.

William Reid, The Blood of Jesus, Pensacola, FL: Chapel Library, p. 24

It is of the utmost importance to distinguish between the Spirit's work *in* us and Christ's work *for* us. Where they are confounded, one rarely finds settled peace as to the question of sin. The type of the passover illustrates the distinction very simply. The Israelite's peace was not founded upon the unleavened bread or the bitter herbs, *but upon the blood*. Nor was it, by any means, a question of what *he* thought about the blood, but what God thought about it. This gives immense relief and comfort to the heart. God has found a ransom, and He reveals that ransom to us sinners in order that we might rest therein, on the authority of His word, and by the grace of His Spirit. And although our thoughts and feelings must ever fall far short of the infinite preciousness of that ransom, yet, inasmuch as God tells us that He is perfectly satisfied about our sins, we may be satisfied also. Our conscience may well find settled rest where God's holiness finds rest.

Repentance is, properly speaking, *a change of mind*, or a new mind *about* God; regeneration is *a change of heart*, or a new heart *towards* God; conversion is *a change of life*, or a new life *for* God; adoption is *a change of family*, or a new relationship *to* God; sanctification is *a change of employment*, or a consecration of all *to* God; glorification is *a change of place*, or a new condition *with* God; but justification, which is *a change of state*, or a new standing *before* God, must be presented to the anxious inquirer as going before all, for being "*accepted in the Beloved*" is the foundation and cause of all, or more properly speaking, the "precious seed" from which all the rest spring, blossom, and bear fruit: and, consequently, the first and great duty of those who have to deal with awakened souls is to make this very clear, and to keep them incessantly in contact with the blessed evangelical truth: "A man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ," (Gal 2:16)