

## Christian Retirement

By [Thomas Reade](#)

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### ON SELF-DECEPTION

A good thought does not consist in simply thinking about good things. We may meditate upon the most excellent subjects, and even feel some delight in them, while our meditations are neither pleasing to God nor profitable to ourselves. From the habit of attending a Gospel ministry, and reading religious publications, we may be led into an evangelical train of thinking; and yet, both the faithful preacher and the pious author may be to us only as the summer shower falling upon the barren rock.

"Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves," is the cautionary voice of revealed truth. There is a danger of being satisfied with the sentimentalism of religion. If a person can express himself with energy and elegance on the grand peculiarities of the Gospel, and thus convey his thoughts with acceptability and usefulness, he may be in danger of substituting this knowledge and gift of utterance, for humble, heart-felt religion.

As he is not a Christian who only talks about Christ, so he is not a spiritually-minded man who only thinks about spiritual things. It is a great blessing to have spiritual views; but what do they avail, without spiritual affections, and a spiritual walk?

We are in continual danger of self-deception. What is knowledge without love? What is a ready tongue without genuine experience? David said, "I believed, therefore have I spoken." And Paul, when quoting this passage, adds, "We also believe, and therefore speak." Hence the apostle exhorts the Ephesian converts to speak the truth in love, that they might grow up into Christ in all things; who is the head of his mystical body the church. I would, then, with all solemnity put these searching questions to my heart: Do I esteem Jesus precious? Do I feel him precious? Do I love him as my only Savior? Do I trust wholly in his atonement and intercession? Do I delight in his precepts as well as in his promises? Do these views and feelings make me humble and self-denying, thankful and obedient? Is it my aim so to walk, that I may please God in all things? Am I looking continually to the Holy Spirit for power to repent, believe, love, and obey? Do I daily come as a humble suppliant to the foot of the cross? Have I laid hold by faith on the promised salvation, so freely held out to me in the Gospel of grace? If this be the character of my religion; then my thoughts on

good things are good thoughts; they are the inspiration of the Spirit of God, from whom alone "all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed." They are evidential of that spiritual-mindedness, which is life and peace.

Come, Oh my soul, and pour out your heart at a throne of grace. There you may ask for whatever you need, with the fullest assurance that the blessed Jesus will supply your every need out of his inexhaustible fullness.

"Blessed Savior! I ask for a more spiritual mind; a greater purity of heart; an increasing deadness to the world; a growing likeness to you; a more lively faith; more ardency of affection; more love for souls; more knowledge and wisdom; more meekness and forbearance; yes, more of every grace, which will enable me to adorn your Gospel, and glorify your holy name."

How awful is the state of the self-deceiving and self-righteous professor! He builds upon a false foundation; buoys himself up with false hopes; and lulls his conscience to sleep with a false peace. He trusts to an arm of flesh—and his heart departs from the Lord. He cannot brook the thought of being altogether indebted to another, even Jesus, the eternal Son of God, for a free justification; and therefore uses the Savior's merits only as a make-weight in the scale of his own virtues, to counterbalance the weaknesses and failings incident to human nature. "But Christ will sooner abdicate his own, Than stoop from heaven to give the proud a throne."

How different are the views and feelings of the convinced sinner. He sees himself ruined and undone, lying under the curse of a broken law, without strength, without righteousness, and without hope. He feels the weight of the burden of his sins. He sinks under the ponderous load, and finds no help from men or angels. When he views God through the medium of a broken law, he beholds him as an offended Judge, whose uplifted arm is ready to execute the awful sentence. He dreads to think upon God; a slavish fear fills his heart; and horror seizes upon his frame. He looks to the right hand, but finds no rest; and to the left, but obtains no deliverance. In some highly-favored hour, some precious moment, grace, like a stream of light, darts upon his benighted soul. The clouds of despondency begin to break. The thunders of Sinai cease to roar. He hears a still small voice speaking pardon and peace through the blood of Jesus. He listens—he can scarcely believe the sound, which in an inward, yet powerful manner, reaches his trembling soul. But he is not deceived. The light gradually increases. The divine Spirit, through the written or preached word, reveals to his now prepared mind the adorable crucified Jesus, in all the glories of redeeming love. He now views the Almighty in a new, endearing aspect. He sees him as a tender, reconciled Father in Jesus Christ; infinitely just and holy, yet forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. He flies to the hope set before him in the Gospel, and seeks refuge from the storms of wrath in the wounded side of Jesus.

"Rock of ages! cleft for me, Let me hide myself in thee," is the earnest prayer of his heart. By faith he is clothed in the Savior's righteousness, armed with strength for the spiritual combat, and sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. Joy and peace now fill his soul; love constrains him to obedience; and childlike confidence in the promises supports him under every trial. He seeks the glory of his Redeemer; loves his cause and people; pleads nothing but his merits before the throne; and counts all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ his Lord. He hates and resists those sins which once he loved, and renounces that world which so much enamored him. Thus, by a progressive sanctification, he goes on from strength to strength, until he finally appears before God in Zion.

Such are the blessed effects of the Gospel, when it comes with power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance. It invariably produces works of faith, labors of love, and patience of hope. It brings glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will towards men. It turns the lion into the lamb; the desert into the garden of the Lord. It converts the impure and savage heart into a habitation fit for the mild and holy Dove. Old things pass away—and behold, all things become new.

How divinely glorious, then, is the religion of Jesus! It restores the sinner to the divine favor; it renews him after the divine image; it redeems him from the depths of hell; and raises him to the highest seats in glory! What tongue can speak, or what heart conceive, the richness and extent of human redemption? How cheering is the soul-enlivening truth: that "all are welcome to these blessings to whom these blessings are welcome." Lord, make me willing in the day of your power. Seal this great salvation to my heart, and make me your henceforth forever.

Come, Holy Spirit, from above,  
Oh source of light and fire of love;  
Come, dwell within my longing breast,  
And give my troubled conscience rest.

Almighty Visitant, dispel  
The dark designs and storms of hell;  
Exert your mighty power divine;  
While beams of mercy o'er me shine.

Subdue every rebel inbred foe,  
Which only you and conscience know:  
Purge out that hated leaven, sin,  
How deep soever it lies within.

Take from me unbelief and pride,  
That spear which pierced my Savior's side;

Destroy each lust, until you alone  
Are seated on affection's throne.

Come, Holy Spirit, from above,  
In all the energy of love;  
Come, seal salvation to my heart,  
And never from my soul depart.

Through all my journeyings here below,  
Oh, do your light and truth bestow;  
And when my earthly toils are over,  
Oh, be my bliss for evermore!

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