

Letter #1: Effectual Grace

My dear sinner-friend:

My heart is greatly burdened for you, knowing the time is short, and I want to think with you along this line: The Lord Jesus working in your heart by His effectual grace.

Beloved sinner-friend, there must be a Divine turning of your **heart** to the Lord Jesus Christ. If there is only a mere change of notions, that is, just a turning that is of the head, which may be mistaken for conversion, this is not salvation. You may say, "I used to be an Arminian, now I am a Calvinist." That is not salvation. You may say, "Well, I was once a Catholic, but now I am a Protestant." That is not salvation. You may say that you believed in certain doctrines, but now you see your error and you have changed your mind, but that is not salvation.

You must have a new nature. A thief is a thief, no matter what name he goes under. You may leave one denomination and join another, but that is not salvation. You may put a buzzard in a brass cage, or a silver cage, or a golden cage, and he is still an old buzzard. You may join the church and be baptized, but you are still just an unsaved sinner. *"YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN."*

All the changes that you may work in yourself will not make you fit to enter Heaven. Grace must have its effectual work in your heart. There must be the planting of a new nature, or you have no spiritual life in you. Even a corpse may be clean, but all the washing and cleansing will not make you a child of God. No turning is good for anything eternal except the renewing of the inward nature by the work of grace in your soul.

Suppose you were walking down the road, and all at once the whole earth should open up to you and you would see its lowest depths, wouldn't you turn back all frightened and trembling? Let me tell you, friend, when God opens up Hell to your heart and mind and lets you gaze down into the depths of it, first seeing your own wickedness, and that you ought to go to Hell, you'll turn to God, and you'll turn crying for mercy. As you are, you go on in your sins; you think them pleasant; you continue in them. But if you once feel God's grace effectively working in your heart, you will see that Hell is a real thing; you'll see that your own heart is a bottomless pit of Hell, and you'll clearly see that only the brittle thread of life is keeping you out of an endless, Christless Hell, which is your portion.

No sinner ever knows the love of God until he comes to see the wrath of God. May God so open your heart and mind that you may catch a sight of the wrath of God that abides upon you, and, sinner-friend, you'll stop and turn. You'll be like Ephraim, "Turn me, Lord, and I shall be turned" (Jer.31:18). May you come to know in your soul that the wages of sin is death. May the sight of the everlasting burning make you halt and cry for deliverance.

I know, when I was awakened by the Holy Spirit to feel that Hell was my just desert, I turned to Christ from the love of sin; I turned with a perfect horror of it, crying for mercy. This is one way the Lord Jesus turns us when we are turned indeed to Him for salvation. May there be such a turning in your own heart unto Him.

Then the awakened conscience is led to see the real nature of sin. No doubt you have seen a bear in his pen all hemmed in; no doubt you have seen a lion carved in stone, and they did not alarm you. But if a lion or a bear should suddenly leap from the roadside upon you, you would view it in a different manner; you would be frightened out of your wits, and the hair on the top of your head would stand up.

So it is when you hear the preacher talk about sin – you pay no attention to it; you go on in your usual way. But you let the Holy Spirit open that heart of yours, and you come to see the real nature of sin, the viper in your bosom, the poisonous nature of your old being – you'll be frightened. You will begin to cry for mercy and for deliverance from it... You'll say, "Away with it! I abhor it and hate it. I once loved it, but now I hate it." May the God of all grace so open your heart and mind that you will see the venom of your old nature until it will make you cry out, "I'm lost; I'm guilty; I'm ungodly; I deserve to go to Hell. I deserve the wrath of God." That's the turning that leads a sinner to Christ.

One of the greatest turning points in a sinner's life is a sight of Christ on the cross. If you could ever by the eye of faith see Jesus Christ dying for you, then sin no longer would be sweet to you. When you once discover that it was your iniquity, your wickedness, that put to death your best Friend, the Lord Jesus Christ, you vow a vengeance on your sins, and you come to hate sin with a perfect hatred. You say, "Oh, hateful thing!" You can't play with it any longer. You see that it killed the Lord Jesus Christ who died out of love for you, and you say, "Oh, hateful thing, I cannot endure you! I want Him who died for me. Oh, that I knew Him who loved me with aneverlasting love!"

Every sinner, before he gets saved, comes to the place that he wants Christ above everything else. May there come such a hunger for Him, for Christ who died for you, that you can't live without him; you must have Him. Then there will be such a turning to Him with your whole heart that you could never turn back, no matter what the cost may be. My prayer is that there will come such a turning in your heart to the Lord Jesus Christ until you can see by faith that He died for you, that your sins were nailed with Him on the cross. Then there will be rejoicing in your heart, singing praises unto Him who died for you.

Your Gospel Preacher,
L. R. Shelton, Sr.

Letter #2: What Must I Do?

My dear sinner-friend:

I note from your letter what you say about being awakened to the fact that you have missed Christ and that you are a lost sinner. That is God's first step in the salvation of your soul. You must be awakened to the fact that you are lost. If an individual is never awakened to the fact that he is lost, he can never be saved (Luke 19:10). The individual who cannot go back to the time that he was awakened, and to the time that he took his place as a lost sinner before God and asked for mercy, is not saved, as God saves only lost sinners (Ezek.34:16).

As an awakened sinner, you should be deeply concerned about your soul's salvation: your one cry should be, "*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*" (Acts 16:30). Let me warn you, my friend, that you let nothing interfere with your coming to Christ. You must condemn all indifference and everything that stands in your way of getting to Christ (Heb. 10:38,39). You are an immortal creature; you are born to live forever, and every day brings you nearer death, judgment, Hell and eternal torment (Luke 16:19-31). Remember, you are a sinner – a lost sinner: you have broken God's Law (Gal.3:10). You have rebelled against God's authority (Eph.2:1-3), and you are under the wrath of a sin-avenging God (Rev.6:12-17).

Let's consider what the loss of your soul includes. I remember, when I was definitely awakened to the fact that I was lost and admitted it in my heart, I went to the preacher in charge, who was my associate pastor, and said to him, "Pastor, be true to my soul; I'm going to Hell. If God does not save me, I am bound for Hell." My friend, the loss of the soul includes the loss of Heaven. The loss of your soul includes the loss of God's favor. The loss of your soul includes the loss of all happiness, the loss of all hope, the endurance of God's wrath, the curse of Almighty God upon you for eternity, and your future abode in Hell. It is Christ or Hell!

Mark 8:35-37 says, "*For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*" Yes, the cry of your very soul should be, in the face of the awfulness of eternity, "*What must I do to be saved?*" And that cry, according to Luke 18:13, is, "*God be merciful to me a sinner.*" May He break you down as a completely lost sinner, crying for mercy. Every awakened sinner should give the more earnest heed lest he fall away from the truth (Heb.2:1-3; Heb.6:4-6; John 8:32), because the eternal loss of the soul is not a rare thing, but a common occurrence: I meet it every day – sinners turning away from the Gospel. Are you going to listen to the comfort of your friends? or, are you going to face the reality of things and come to Christ for salvation? Remember, it is Christ or Hell!

Matt.7:13,14 says, "*Enter ye in at the strait gate: 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.*" My friend, not many are being saved. The way is narrow; it is Christ. The door is Christ (John 10:9), and I praise God that it is narrow. Luke 14:33 says, "*Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.*" Remember, do not stop short of Christ!

Yes, salvation is possible to you; salvation has come to many others, why may it not come to you? Christ died for others, then He died for you. Others came to Christ, and He didn't turn them away; why should He turn you away (John 6:37)? Remember, Christ came to save sinners (Luke 19:10).

Let me call your attention to some of the blessings of salvation. First, it includes all the riches of God's eternal grace and the riches of His glory (Eph.1:7; 2:4). Salvation is a deliverance from sin (Col.1:13,14). Salvation is a deliverance from death (Heb. 2:14). Salvation is deliverance from judgment (John 5:24). Salvation is also a deliverance from Hell (Luke 16:19-31). Let's notice again that salvation is a possession: it is Christ, and when we have Christ we have all the blessings that go with salvation. There is pardon from the guilt and penalty of sin (Isa.55:7). There is peace: Christ is our peace (Col.1:20; Eph.2:14). There is holiness, purity, and power, and – when we come to die – there is Heaven. Ponder these, and be ready to let go everything for Christ.

Now let me call your attention to some things which are favorable to your salvation. First, God loves you (John 3:16; Rom.5:8). Second, Christ paid the price for all your sins (Isa.53:5,6), and He finished your salvation on the cross (John 19:30). Remember, Christ became what you are, and God made Him your Substitute (II Cor.5:21). Third, the Holy Spirit loves you and has power to deliver you (Rom.15:30; Rom.1:16,17). He is the One who opens your heart and lets you see that you are lost (John 16:7-11). Don't rebel against Him, no matter what He shows you. Ask Him to break the rebellion in your heart (Jer.17:9). There are two prayers you can pray: first, "Lord, show me myself, and I will acknowledge it; show me my lost, ruined condition according to Your Word" (Jer. 17:9; Isa.64:6; Rom.3:10-12). And the second prayer is, "Lord, show me Christ as my Lord and Saviour, and I will believe Him."

Remember again, no matter how sinful, how wicked you may be, God is willing to save you, according to II Pet.3:9, and Christ invites you to come to Him, according to John 6:37.

Let me call your attention to some things unfavorable toward your salvation, some things which will fight you every step of the way in coming to Christ. The first is your old corrupt heart (Jer.17:9): you possess a heart of unbelief. Second, everything around you will draw your attention away from Christ. Be careful and watch, lest you lose the first impressions that the Holy Spirit has made upon your heart. Third, Satan blinds your mind (II Cor.4:3-6), and fills your imagination and heart with other objects. He will try to convince you, first, that you are saved and that you have made a mistake. If he cannot do that, he will try to convince you that Christ did not die for you, or that you are too big a sinner, or that God will not hear your prayers. But, my friend, pay no attention to him – cry out against him. And remember one thing – you must get to Christ or you will go to Hell.

Let's never get away from this one fact – you must not lose your anxiousness and desire to be saved. Your soul must want Christ and His righteousness above everything else, or why should God stoop to give you salvation through Christ! Make much of God's Word. Learn to live alone in prayer and meditation, asking God to open your heart. God wants to save you: Christ died for you: the Holy Spirit loves you.

My heart is burdened for you. If you can hear me in person or over the radio, be sure to listen. I'll be true to your soul: I am your friend. Take comfort from no one. Remember, it is Christ or Hell!
Let me hear from you. I am

Your Gospel Preacher,
L. R. Shelton, Sr.

Letter #3: Surrendering to Christ

My dear sinner-friend:

In my contact with you during this past month (by letter, by phone, by personal visit) you have impressed me very deeply with some things that I want to point out to you in this brief letter, that I might help you by the revelation of the Holy Spirit so that you might see why you, awakened sinner, are not saved.

One of the things I have noticed is, you have never been weaned from the arm of flesh. "*Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm.*" No sinner ever gets saved until the Holy Spirit breaks that sinner completely off the arm of all flesh. As long as a sinner leans upon anything or anybody apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, he can never be saved. He must be brought to the place where he is broken completely off every creature, or from relying upon his own righteousness, his own ability, or his own possessions.

The sinner has to come to see and to know and to acknowledge that he himself belongs to the Lord and that everything that he possesses belongs to the Lord. He must forever and eternally take his hands off and acknowledge in his heart that it all belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ and he is to trust Him and Him only. The word "believe," or "trust" means to commit oneself to and to lean wholly and to rely completely upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, Christ is then his Lord. He has no will of his own. The Lord tests the sinner's will by crossing it at given points to let the sinner know whether he has surrendered unto Christ as Lord. Christ is your Lord, whether you ever acknowledge it or not. For the sinner to be saved he must confess with his mouth Jesus as Lord (Rom.10:9). Then, when you confess Him as Lord, you release unto Him, first, yourself, and then everything you touch or have or possess, and you don't argue with Him. You do everything He tells you to do.

When the sinner will not surrender unto Christ as Lord, he is always seeking Christ and never comes to know Him, because the Holy Spirit does not now, nor will He ever reveal Christ to the heart that is not surrendered to Him. To seek Christ with your whole heart, or to turn to Christ with your whole heart, means you have turned loose everything else; there is no divided attention. You have forsaken your thoughts, your opinions, your ideas, your wicked ways (Isa. 55:7,8), and you have turned unto Him as your absolute sovereign Lord. The sinner can't save himself. "*Salvation is of the Lord*" (Jonah 2:9), but as the Holy Spirit opens your heart and mind, by His grace you can acknowledge what He shows you. Christ does not stand before you to be accepted or rejected; you stand before Him to be accepted or rejected by Him, and He will not accept you or reveal Himself to you until you have forsaken all. Christ said, "*Whosoever... that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple*" (Luke 14:33).

Now, my dear awakened sinner-friend, what do you want? Do you want Christ, or do you want to have your own way? Do you want Christ, or do you want your own money? Do you want Christ, or your own will? Make your choice. I had to give up everything that I ever thought I knew, everything that I had, everything that I possess, or everything that I ever hope to have or hope to be, and with my whole heart turn to Him by His grace with no will of my own. Then the

vail was lifted from my heart (II Cor. 3:16) and Christ was made known to me as my own personal Lord and Saviour, my own Substitute and Sin-Offering.

I have noticed from reading letters and in conversation with many that the reason many of you are not saved, and never will be, is because you are hanging on to some experience you have had somewhere back in your past life that you call salvation. You are doing your best to hang on to it and convince yourself that you know Christ, when you don't know Him. The result that this experience, whatever it may be, has produced is a hard heart.

Your testimony is cruel and empty. There is not being produced in your heart the fruit of the Spirit, which is "*love, joy, peace,*" etc., found in Gal.5:22,23. You are under the Law and know nothing about grace, because Christ has never become your personal Lord and Saviour. Most of the time this produces a critical attitude, a prejudiced mind, a self-righteous life, a root of bitterness, a spirit of strife, an earthly attitude, and a devilish nature. But the individual to whom Christ has been revealed as Lord and Saviour is first pure, then peaceable, then gentle and easily intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy (James 3:17).

Another fruit of such a life is, there is no compassion for lost souls. You may have a zeal of labor, but you know nothing about interceding for the lost, because you never have become a lost sinner yourself. May God break you off that hellish, devilish experience that you have had and let you see yourself in the light of God's holy Word.

Your Gospel Preacher,
L. R. Shelton, Sr.

