

FIRST WORDS
TO
YOUNG CHRISTIANS

by

Robert Boyd

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CHAPTER ONE -

1. A GOOD BEGINNING

I TAKE IT FOR GRANTED that my reader is really a converted soul; that, casting from you all other dependence, you now rest peacefully upon the atoning work of CHRIST. I ask not how this great change has been brought about, nor what has been the direct agency that the HOLY SPIRIT has blessed to bring you to JESUS. Whether you have passed through a long process of convictions, of alternate fears and hopes; or whether, like most of the conversions mentioned in the New Testament, you were suddenly brought to submit yourself to CHRIST's method of salvation, is now of no great consequence. You are now in CHRIST, and that is the really vital point. The great matter upon which two eternities turn - upon which life and death, heaven and hell depend - your personal faith in CHRIST, is now settled, and well settled; and I thank GOD on your behalf.

Dear reader, I congratulate you on the high honor, the lofty distinction, to which

THE MIGHTY GRACE OF GOD HAS LIFTED YOU

The greatest gift that GOD can bestow upon a creature is Himself. You are now an heir of GOD. You are able to say with holy boldness: "**My Beloved is mine, and I am His.**" The apostle John said to the converts of his day: "**Beloved, now are we the sons of God**"; and we may rest assured that the unchanging SAVIOUR has not abridged the honors and privileges of His people since that time.

Once in CHRIST by a living faith, the whole fullness of GOD is yours. Your feelings and frames are nothing; ceremonies, and notions, and creeds, and ordinances, and formal participation in worship, are all nothing without CHRIST; but with trust in Him, there is not any height of glory and honor in the whole universe to which a creature can attain, to which you may not ascend.

If you have faith in JESUS, then you are a new creature; if a new creature, then you are a son of GOD; if a son of GOD, then you are an "**[heir] of God, and [a joint-heir] with Christ.**" Thus united to JESUS, your inheritance is sure, for He is now in full possession of it.

You see, then, what a great thing it is to be a Christian. Indeed it will take all eternity to unfold to us the greatness of the privilege; and at present we can only wander around the edge of the boundless subject and exclaim: "**It doth not yet appear what we shall be.**" As Rowland Hill once said, when striving to illustrate GOD's love to His people: "I am unable to reach the lofty theme! yet I do not think that the smallest fish that swims in the boundless ocean ever complains of the immeasurable vastness of the deep. So it is with me: I can plunge, with my puny capacity, into a subject, the immensity of which I shall never be able fully to comprehend."

For a child of wrath, a slave of Satan, a condemned criminal, an heir of hell, to be raised to a height of privilege and glory to which even angels do not attain, is most wonderful to the thoughtful mind! And that you who, but a little while ago, were full of enmity against GOD, your heart set in you to do evil, your footsteps hastening down the broad road to destruction, should now be what you are, and where you are, is a miracle of grace.

No wonder that the angels rejoiced over you in the happy hour of your espousal to CHRIST! No wonder that the friends who had so long prayed and longed for your conversion, rejoiced over you with such a solemn gladness! And no wonder that you yourself rejoiced "**with joy unspeakable and full of glory!**"

And now that you are a Christian, it becomes a most important question, What kind of a Christian are you going to be?

Are you going to be one modeled after men's opinions, or after the Bible standard? Men have a way of turning aside the point of divine truth on this subject from their consciences, by saying, "Christians ought to do so and so"; but the Word of GOD does not speak in this way.

- The Bible does not say that Christians ought to be the light of the world, but that they are so.
- The Bible does not say that they ought to be holy, but that they are possessed of that character.

It is not merely that they ought to be bold and faithful witnesses for CHRIST in this dark and sinful world, but that they really are so testifying. That is a solemn passage: "**For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is**" (I Corinthians 3:11-13).

Here is a good foundation, a most precious foundation, the best that even GOD could lay, firm and secure as His eternal throne but

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO BUILD UPON IT?

Shall it be the wood, hay and stubble of worldly-mindedness, carnal affections, vile tempers, and low, narrow, selfish views? Or shall it be the gold, and silver, and precious stones of holiness, self-denial, heavenly affections and earnest love to GOD and man, showing itself in works of faith and in labors of love?

Depend upon it that day by day, and little by little, you are building up some kind of character, and it becomes you to see well to it that it is such as will honor the glorious foundation, and such as the fires of judgment will not have to burn up.

The temple of a holy life, built upon the foundation laid in Zion, greatly honors GOD, and commands the admiration of even bad men. The following fact, related by one familiar with all the circumstances, will illustrate this:

"In one of the older states resided an infidel, the owner of a saw-mill, situated by the side of the highway over which a large portion of a Christian congregation passed every Sabbath to and from the church. This infidel, having no regard for the Sabbath, was as busy, and his mill was as noisy, on that holy day as on any other. Before long it was observed, however, that a certain time before service the mill would stop, remain silent, and appear to be deserted for a few moments, when its noise and clatter would recommence, and continue till about the close of the service, when for a short time it again ceased. It was soon noticed that one of the deacons of the church passed the mill to the place of worship during the silent interval, and so punctual was he to the hour that the infidel knew when to stop the mill, so that it should be.

SILENT WHEN THE DEACON WAS PASSING,

although he paid no regard to the passing of others. On being asked why he paid this mark of respect to the deacon, he replied:

"The deacon professes just what the rest of you do; but he lives, also, such a life, that it makes me feel bad here (putting his hand upon his heart) to run my mill while he is passing."

Now it is undeniable that there are large numbers who, after their professed conversion, drop out of sight, and you would never know that they were Christians, unless they told you so, or you found their names upon the church book. It is true, every Christian cannot occupy a prominent and commanding position in the work of CHRIST's kingdom, but everyone can be a worker for JESUS, and can boldly unfurl his colors, and let it be known whose side he is on.

Resolve in your heart that you will be a laborer, not a loiterer, in the Lord's vineyard; that whether your life is to be a long one, or very short, as men use the term, it shall be

FILLED WITH CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY

A life is not to be numbered by years, but by what a man has done for GOD. McCheyne, Summerfield, Nott, and Dudley Tyng, all died young, and yet they were old in fruits unto holiness - their life's work done and well done! Let yours, like theirs, be a life in earnest, a life that shows - not religion as something among other things, but as absolutely everything! Let yours be a consecrated life: spirit, and soul, and body - your time, talents, and property, all wholly dedicated to GOD.

Let me warn you of one thing: as you have begun by finding peace in CHRIST, continue to seek it in Him.

Many young converts make great mistakes here. At first their feelings and affections have been warm and gushing. In the fire and fervency of their first love; they feel as if they could sing all the day long; and when these glowing feelings, from whatever cause, begin to decline, they sink into despondency, and feel as if they had lost CHRIST. Frames and feelings change with the state of our health, the state of the weather, the circumstances in which we are placed, and through a great variety of moral and physical causes; but JESUS CHRIST changes never! He is the same yesterday, to day, and forever.

We have known some who never thought they had any enjoyment of religion unless they were in the midst of a high excitement. The meeting that did not melt them into tears, or lift them up to the heights of ecstatic rapture, was not a good meeting. The calm statement of divine truth, the earnest study of the Bible to know the will of GOD, the prayerfulness and the self-examination of the closet, all appear to such persons dull and uninteresting.

They are like an habitual reader of exciting and sensational novels; they have no relish for what is solid and instructive.

My dear reader, avoid this at the very beginning of your Christian career, and let JESUS, who alone is the Author, be also the Finisher of your faith.

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