

**FIRST WORDS**  
**TO**  
**YOUNG CHRISTIANS**

by

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**CHAPTER TWO -**  
**MAKING A PUBLIC PROFESSION**

THERE IS NOT A NOBLER SIGHT IN THE WORLD than to see a man commit himself unreservedly to the best of causes - the cause of CHRIST; determined to stand by it at all hazards; to live for it, to work for it, to suffer for it, and (if need be) to die for it; but never to forsake it. Such a sight is morally sublime, and challenges the admiration of all who are capable of appreciating moral beauty. Said David: **"I will pay my vows unto the Lord now, in the presence of all his people."**

As soon as a soul is converted, it becomes an imperative duty to make a public profession of

**ATTACHMENT TO THE LORD JESUS**

Some churches are in the habit of keeping young converts back for a time, to prove their sincerity and their firmness. As a pastor, I have formerly to some extent encouraged this practice in some cases; and I am now sorry for it. It has not a shadow of support in the Word of GOD.

When CHRIST sent forth His disciples, clothed with His high commission to preach the Gospel, and to establish churches, the promised SPIRIT accompanied the word spoken by them, and in some cases thousands were converted, and on the same day, often in the same hour, were baptized and added to the church. To put a tender little lamb out on a snow bank exposed to the bleak winds, to see whether it will live, is entirely a modern invention.

The primitive churches were never guilty of such folly. They required a profession of conversion, of repentance toward GOD, and of faith in the Lord JESUS; and where this was given and there was nothing in the life of the candidate to contradict the profession, they were at once baptized and added to the church. It is true, they were sometimes deceived, and admitted unworthy persons, just as churches are deceived now; but that belongs to the imperfection of human nature, and is an evil that no amount of delay in the reception of members will either mitigate or prevent. It is your duty as a Christian at once to offer yourself to the church of CHRIST, and if they throw any delay in your way, the responsibility is theirs, not yours.

But you may say: "Can I not be as good a Christian without belonging to a church as with it?"

To this I can give a most decided answer in the negative. No, you cannot. Indeed, the question itself is absurd. It is equivalent to asking: "Cannot I be as good a Christian without obeying CHRIST as with it?" CHRIST established His church upon earth. He purchased her with His own blood. He laid the foundation upon which He has built with His own bleeding hands. He has appointed her ordinances and her government; established her officers, and given them their gifts and qualifications for her special edification. He has watched over her in all ages, and has pledged His princely word that "**the gates of hell shall not prevail against it**"; and now do you think that it can be agreeable to the Saviour's will to see His church neglected by His professed followers? No.

To live out of the church of CHRIST is to live in sin, in constant disobedience, and this must bring condemnation and darkness upon the mind.

The church is the Christian's home while upon earth. There he is supported and comforted, and fitted for the society of the just made perfect, the church of the firstborn, written in heaven. Though the church here is perfect in her Great Head, she is not perfect in her members. They have their imperfections and evil tempers; jangling and contention sometimes mar her holy beauty; but her most pious members can say: "O Zion, with all thy faults I love thee still!"

"Beyond my highest joy,  
I prize her heavenly ways,  
Her sweet communion, solemn vows.  
Her hymns of love and praise.

"For her my tears shall fall,  
For her my prayers ascend;  
To her my cares and toils be given,  
Till toils and cares shall end."

For those who try to live as Christians without joining the church, there is another consideration worthy of attention. If it is right for you to remain out of the church, it is right for another to do it; and if it is right for two to do it, it would be right for two thousand, or for all Christians to do it. Thus, on the principle mentioned, there would be no churches, no places of worship, no ministers of the Gospel, no bond of union to bind Christians together, no organization by which the body of the faithful could work together for the overthrow of evil and the establishment of good in the world. Would this be a desirable state of things? You feel that it would not, and yet, as far as your influence goes on this point, it leads to just such results. Our Lord says: "**He that is not with me is against me**," and the same is true concerning His church. If you are not with it, you are counted against it, at least to a certain extent.

The world will point to you as one who has something against the church, or else you would have cast in your lot with her; and the better your character and reputation, the greater damage your standing aloof will do. That scoffers will say that you are too good a man to have anything to do with such people. They will count you on their side.

But there are some young converts who are kept back by conscientious, though mistaken, views in regard to themselves.

One says: "I feel utterly unworthy to belong to the church of CHRIST."

Now this self-distrust is a good thing when kept in its proper place. True faith in JESUS always has connected with it self-distrust, for before we can depend entirely on Him, we must be emptied of self.

It has been compared to a young tree: the trunk grows upward from the little seed, and the root grows downward from the same seed; growing and springing in different directions from the same source. So from the same seed of faith in CHRIST springs upward confidence toward GOD, and downward distrust in our selves. But if this distrust is used to lead us to neglect CHRIST's plain commands, it is perverted to a bad object. It is turning the grace of GOD into sin. CHRIST does not ask you to make a public profession of your faith because you are worthy. It was not because you were worthy that He pardoned your sins, and shed His love abroad in your heart; and He asks you now to

### **SHOW YOUR LOVE TO HIM:**

by keeping His commands, and doing those things that will be pleasing in His sight, from a principle of right.

There are others who say: "I am afraid to make a public profession, lest I should fall away and dishonor it."

This sounds very humble, but it really springs from pride of heart. It goes upon the principle that you are to be your own support and to stand without divine support. Did GOD make you a Christian, or did you make yourself one? And if He made you a Christian, do you not think that He is able to keep you one? **"O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt?"**

He who gives the strength to do one duty, can support in the discharge of another. Go on boldly, and in the path of right you have nothing to fear. The Master you serve will surround you with invisible armor, so that none can do you hurt. The promises of GOD will stand up around you like the mountains around Jerusalem.

This reminds me of an incident which occurred on board a British ship at the battle of the Nile. The narrator says:

"There was but one Bible among seven hundred men. This was owned by a pious sailor, who did not forget to let its light shine before men. He read it over to others, and at length, by its means, a little praying circle was formed, numbering thirteen in all.

Just before the engagement, they all met, and commended themselves to GOD in prayer, expecting never again to meet in this world. Their ship was in the thickest of the storm, and all

around their comrades fell, never to rise again. At one gun, where two of the number were stationed, three other soldiers were killed by one ball, but there they stood firm to their posts, clad in an armor invisible to mortal eyes, but more impregnable than steel. When the battle was over, those who were left had agreed to meet if possible. What was their joy to find the whole thirteen assembled - not one of them even wounded! What a thanksgiving meeting that must have been!"

Now, my dear reader, the same GOD who preserved those men from physical danger, can keep you from all moral danger; so that in the severest temptations, when the fiery darts of the enemy fall thick around you, the divine shield will defend you, and you will stand "**steadfast, [and] unmovable.**"

Sometimes persons are kept back from making a public profession of their faith by the fear of man.

They fear the displeasure of their ungodly relations, or the sneers of their former companions or friends. They dread, too, to appear before the great congregation and testify to what CHRIST has done for their souls.

This is very unworthy of those for whose salvation the blessed SAVIOUR "**endured the cross, despising the shame.**" That gracious Friend tells us: "**If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily.**" We must often sacrifice the less that we may enjoy the greater. We must often pass by the favor of men and the smiles of the world, in order that we may have the favor of GOD and the happiness of a good conscience.

These are the

### **PLAIN AND SEARCHING PRINCIPLES**

that JESUS lies down, and we can see that they are highly reasonable and proper. If any are disposed to shrink back from them, it must be because they prefer the favor of men to that of GOD, or because they are ashamed of the Lord JESUS. "**Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels.**"

You must come out from this halting, hesitating, compromising spirit, or you can never be a happy and a useful Christian. Your mind will be tossed to and fro by conflicting influences, and you will grope about, wrapped up in a dark and gloomy haze of doubt and uncertainty. Suppose, when Paul was converted, that he had tried to keep it all to himself in order to avoid persecution, what would his religion have amounted to? Or if Luther, when he discovered in his Bible the doctrine of justification by faith, had kept it all in his own heart and in his cell, lest he should get involved in some trouble, would GOD ever have honored him as He did? No; the principle that GOD acts on in such matters is: "**Them that honour me, I will honour.**"

Perhaps my reader has some difficulty about the denomination of Christians with which to identify himself.

This is a matter of importance, and demands the prayerful and careful study of the Word of GOD. You should not join a church because your friends and companions are going to join it, or have already done so. It is no good reason for joining a church that you think you would feel more at home there. It should not be a matter of mere feeling, but of intelligent principle, what church you shall join.

The Bible is the only standard of appeal in all matters of faith and practice; and after an honest and faithful examination of that holy Book, you should join that body of Christians which you conscientiously believe to be nearest to the divine rule.

I believe that the church to which I belong comes nearer to the faith and practice of the church established by CHRIST and His apostles than any other that I know of. If I did not so believe, it would be my duty to leave it. If I knew of any other nearer to the Bible, it would be my duty to join it. Every intelligent and conscientious Christian, it is to be presumed, acts on the same principle. \*

A sham liberality would no doubt call this bigotry; but those who have learned to "**earnestly contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints,**" are not easily frightened by big swelling words of vanity. On this matter let the Word of GOD be your only guide.

Though I do not feel at liberty to counsel you as to your denominational relations, I do most earnestly entreat you to place yourself under a faithful and evangelical ministry. Attend the ministry of no man who does not preach CHRIST, in the fullest sense of the word. CHRIST may be in his creed, but if He is not in his sermons

## YOUR SOUL WILL STARVE

under him.

\*Other considerations, however, may modify this course of action. Increasing light may show us defects in our own communion which do not exist in another. But it does not necessarily follow that we should forsake the former and join the latter; always providing that the foundations of the faith are preserved. - EDITOR.

Mr. Spurgeon tells us that when he was awakened, he wandered from church to church to find out how he could be saved, but could not hear the Gospel. One minister preached the experience of the people of GOD, and he felt that he had nothing to do with that. Another told him of the blessedness of the regenerated, and he felt that that did not apply to him. On one Sunday the text would be: "**Be not deceived, God is not mocked**"; and again: "**The wages of sin is death.**"

He tells us that he became worse and worse after hearing discourses that nearly drove him to despair; and then would come the text for good people, but not a word for him.

At last he accidentally heard a very humble preacher, and his text was: "**Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.**" That was what he wanted to hear. He felt that it was

intended for him. "Look, look to JESUS," said the preacher, "and you shall be saved this moment, you shall be lightened of your burden!"

Spurgeon tells us that he did then and there look to JESUS by faith, and he felt as if he could have sprung into the air, for his burden of sin was gone!

A minister may preach ably and eloquently; he may be a good man, and preach a great deal of valuable truth; he may even preach a great deal about CHRIST, and yet not preach CHRIST in the Scripture sense of the term. Place yourself under the instruction of one who will delight frequently to lead you around the Cross.

"Oppressed with noon-day's scorching heat,  
To yonder Cross I flee;  
Beneath its shelter take my seat,  
No shade like this for me!

"Beneath that cross dear waters burst,  
A fountain sparkling free,  
And there I quench my desert thirst,  
No spring like this for me!

"For burdened ones a resting-place  
Beside that cross I see;  
Here I cast off my weariness,  
No rest like this for me!"

~ end of chapter 2 ~

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