

## **ROAD TO REVIVAL**

By

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and  
The Secret of Christian Joy"

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### **JESUS CHRIST THE SAME**

HERE are many who do not believe this to be a century of progress, but no one will deny that it is a century of change. A cynic has remarked that nothing is permanent except change. From ladies' hats to legislation, from automobiles to art, from furniture to finances, styles and customs and conditions change overnight. World events tumble over each other with barely enough time to happen. A week-old newspaper is as out of date nowadays as was a month-old paper fifty years ago. Pity the lecturer on current events! By the time he has prepared his speech and found somewhere to deliver it his current events will have begun already to breathe the fragrance of lavender and old lace.

In such a breath-taking age men look here and there for a point of permanence. Some rely upon financial investments, but money has been setting a record for a quick getaway. Others seek to endure through fame, honors, position; but bricks follow bouquets and the famous are soon the forgotten. Some rely upon friends, but too many friends, like shadows, follow only in sunny weather and even the best must sometime be called away.

Thousands seek to escape life's boredom through modern fads and isms of many a shade and hue. Someone has said: "The religion of China is Confucian: the religion of America is confusion." Men wander in a wilderness of cults seeking lasting satisfaction.

A man who had been a Baptist, Methodist, and a Presbyterian told his temporary pastor, "I'm planning to join the Congregationalists." Thoughtfully, the old minister replied, "Well, I don't think it does any harm to change labels on an empty bottle!" Millions of "empty bottles" today think to fill themselves by a change of labels.

A friend of mine gave me a book containing the statements of faith, or rather of the lack of faith, of many prominent modern writers. I read it one afternoon and was growing weary of it, when the radio began to broadcast from somewhere those dear old lines:

"Change and decay in all around I see;

O Thou Who changest not, abide with me!"

I threw down the book and said, "Thank GOD, I don't have to read such drivel, for I know the changeless CHRIST in this changing world, JESUS CHRIST the same yesterday, today, and forever."

Have you ever thought what a boundless satisfaction there is for us in those first four words, "**Jesus Christ the same**"? I am sure that many who read this have found along the trail of the years that in this life things do not stay the same. Perhaps there are some who know that once your eye was bright and your nerves atingle with the wine of health, but the years have taken their toll and now when the doctor shakes his head and pain cuts its furrows, you know that health does not stay the same.

Or maybe a few years ago you were in better circumstances: you were meeting your financial obligations and not wrestling nightly with a nightmare of notes and mortgages; but now adversity has become a regular boarder at your house and you know that circumstances do not stay the same.

Again, you have been impressed, doubtless, with the fickleness of human nature - your own, for instance. You have had your rare moments when you wanted to build tabernacles and house the vision, but you have had to descend to the drab and commonplace and you sigh, "Why am I not always like I am sometimes?" So you grieve over your uncertain nature, as changeable as a thermometer in March, and you know that does not stay the same.

Or you may have been made aware in a bitter manner of the changeableness of others. You have trusted and been disappointed; your own familiar friend who did eat your bread has lifted his heel against you. Perhaps you must live or work with someone who can change moods faster than a chameleon can turn color and you sometimes wish he were not so ideal at any particular time, if only he were dependably the same all the time.

More serious still, it may be that years ago you enjoyed the fellowship of one who meant more than anything else earthly, but there came the day when as the minister said the old familiar committal and, as one grave closed, another opened in your heart and you realized as never before that earthly relationships cannot remain the same.

Since all this is true, what a relief it is to turn from these changing scenes to JESUS CHRIST, the same. Here is One Who never fails the heart that leans on Him for repose.

- Health may fail us but His strength is made perfect in our weakness.
- Adversity may crash upon us, but He draws nearer than a brother, and whispers, "**In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.**"
- Friends may desert us, so that, like Paul, we may have to say, "**No man stood with me.**" But we may also say with him in the next verse, "**Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me**" (II Timothy 4:16, 17).

We may have to say with Jeremiah: "**The crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us, that we have sinned! For this our heart is faint; for these things our eyes are dim**"; but we may also

say with him, "**Thou, O LORD, remainest forever; thy throne from generation to generation**" (Lamentation 5:16, 17, 19). And even when death draws near He assures us, "**I am the resurrection and the life**" (John 11:25).

My love is oftentimes low;  
My joy still ebbs and flows;  
But peace with Him remains the same;  
No change JEHOVAH knows.  
I change, He changes not;  
My CHRIST can never die;  
His love, not mine, the resting place;  
His truth, not mine, the tie."

The Word declares that He is JESUS CHRIST the same yesterday, today, and forever. If we are to appreciate what JESUS CHRIST the same today means, we must know something of JESUS CHRIST the same yesterday. That truncated Christianity which disregards the pre-incarnation CHRIST, the CHRIST of history, and the CHRIST of the future, and emphasizes only a subjective experience of a CHRIST Who need not ever have lived at all is as absurd as it is impossible.

We need to be careful as to how we speak of JESUS CHRIST the same yesterday.

Many think of our Lord as though He began to be only nineteen hundred years ago in Bethlehem. But there is an eternity in "**Jesus Christ the same yesterday**," as well as in "**Jesus Christ the same... forever**." Eternity stands on either side of the CHRIST of today in Hebrews 13:8. Strictly speaking, there is no past tense with the Lord JESUS CHRIST. He Himself used the eternal present tense in John 8:58: "**Before Abraham was, I AM**." "**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God**" (John 1:1, 2).

We need to assert afresh the eternal pre-existence of our Lord. The "**yesterday**" of Hebrews 13:8 is without beginning.

But because this truth is infinite and we are finite, we more readily think of JESUS CHRIST yesterday as the human CHRIST Who trod the roads of Galilee. Critics ridicule our "theories" and insist that they want to live by facts. Then what will they do with the historic CHRIST, the greatest fact of all time? It is amazing how men will boast of "living by facts" and ignore the pre-eminent fact of history, the life of our Lord.

Consider JESUS CHRIST yesterday: born in another man's stable, buried in another man's tomb; living in a little land about one-fourth the size of Illinois; in His public ministry never over a hundred miles from home; writing no books, leading no armies, trusting His truths with a few plain and unpromising disciples; dying the death of a criminal outside the city walls. Yet that life stands alone, the one perfect chapter in all the annals of time. What He said and did proves Who He is. There is no answer save Simon Peter's (Matthew 16:16) to the CHRIST of yesterday.

Here again we need to speak carefully. JESUS CHRIST of yesterday did not end in a sepulchre.

Christians are not living on a memory. Our Lord only began to do and teach yesterday (Acts 1:1). How else can you explain another stupendous fact of history, the Christian Church? A few days after Calvary the disciples were brokenhearted, in despair. Some of them went fishing to forget the bitter disappointment. The fair dream had faded; there was a guarded grave. But a few days later these disciples were defying the world with a message of victory.

They were not the same men and never were again. What happened? The Lord JESUS CHRIST had come from the grave with a new body, had promised them His Presence, had returned to the Father, had sent them the Paraclete. No other explanation can account for the early church, a fact second only to the life of our Lord.

The heroes of faith of the past nineteen centuries were not living upon a mere memory.

Our Lord has been living in the hearts and working through the heads and hands of men: indwelling Paul, so that he could say, "**Not I, but Christ**"; sustaining martyrs through dungeon, fire and sword; transforming Augustine from a slave of lust into a saint; in Luther heralding the Reformation; guiding Tyndale's hand in Bible translation; preaching in earth's far corners through missionaries; evangelizing England through Wesley and America through Moody; healing broken bodies through consecrated physicians and nurses; ministering to the slums in mission work; teaching the Word in faithful pulpits; living in millions of ordinary Christian lives; shining through pain-furrowed faces of invalid saints in Galilee. He only began to do and to teach!

JESUS CHRIST yesterday is the Eternal SON from everlasting with the Father, sharing Him in creation. JESUS CHRIST yesterday is the Word made flesh, taking the form of a servant, made sin for us, though He knew no sin. JESUS CHRIST yesterday is the risen and glorified CHRIST, living His life in millions of lives through nineteen centuries.

He is also JESUS CHRIST the same today. Some Christians, like John the Baptist in prison, have grown discouraged because our Lord is not setting up His kingdom as they expected. Some have begun to wonder in their hearts, "**Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?**" It is true that the world is not being converted: that never was our Lord's purpose.

But He is doing exactly what He purposed to do in the present age, and His program is following the Father's schedule.

- The blind are seeing,
- the lame walk,
- the lepers are cleansed,
- the deaf hear,
- the dead are raised up,
- the poor have the Gospel preached to them.
- Eyes blinded by the god of this world are still being opened.
- Sin's cripples walk in newness of life.
- Modern Naamans dip in the fountain filled with blood and lose their leprosy.
- Ears are opened to the music of Heaven.
- The dead in trespasses and sins are quickened to eternal life.

- And over the wide world the poor hear the Gospel.

The Lord JESUS CHRIST is still the same and blessed is he whosoever is not offended in Him.

There are many believers today who are actually offended with the Lord. From dungeons of doubt and discouragement they ask cynical questions, their hearts are rebellious. The Lord is not doing things as they expected, and they are offended in Him. Now we know that He is an offence to Israel (Isaiah 8:14; Romans 9:33); we know that the cross is an offence to the world (Galatians 5:11; I Corinthians 1:23); we know that our Lord was and is an offence to the Pharisees (Matthew 15:12) and to the unbelieving Nazarenes (Matthew 13:57) and to superficial disciples (Matthew 13:21; John 6:61).

But what a sad thing that true disciples should ever be offended because of unanswered prayer, or adversity, or because He does not follow their schedule! He has spoken precious truths to us that we should not be offended (John 16:1), and they that love GOD's Word shall not be offended (Psalm 119:165); but it is a very prevalent weakness today among Christians in these tragic times. We need a fresh realization of JESUS CHRIST the same today.

He is still doing mighty works and if He is not doing them in your life, your church, your community, it is because of your unbelief. The only thing in existence that can limit the power of the Lord JESUS CHRIST is our unbelief. He is hindered today by the same things that have always hindered Him - unbelieving Nazarenes calling Him the carpenter's son and reducing Him in their thinking to the stature of a common man, and discouraged Christians letting the dungeon of circumstances becloud His deity. He is the same as ever, but He can mean to us only as much as our faith lets Him mean.

The eternal CHRIST is with us today, and wherever men yield to Him He works as of old.

Men ask, Is the day of miracles past yet? There is no "day" of miracles. Miracles are simply the supernatural operation of GOD, and He is timeless - there is no "day" with Him. He has seen fit to perform different types of miracles to suit His purpose in different periods of earthly time, but His supernatural power is always the same, and wherever He regenerates and directs a human heart there you have a miracle. There is abundant evidence all over the world to a wonder-working GOD and to a CHRIST Who is the same today.

There are thousands of lives that can be accounted for in no other way. The experiences of certain well-known faith-missions, for instance, testify daily to a living CHRIST and a prayer-answering GOD.

But, after all, the proof of JESUS CHRIST the same today is to know Him. For those who do not know Him no mere argument is enough. For those who do know Him no argument is necessary. It is possible to know Him historically, as a fact of history, or to know Him theologically and assent intellectually to the doctrines about Him, and yet not know JESUS CHRIST the same today.

And it is possible to know Him experimentally as Saviour and yet walk with eyes holden while He travels with us the Emmaus road a veiled figure. May He open the Scriptures, open your eyes, open your understanding, as He did for these long ago!

Finally, He is JESUS CHRIST the same forever.

It would not be enough that He is the same yesterday and today if somewhere down the road He should cease to be. But the best is yet to come. He has promised to be with us always, even unto the end of the age. And He has promised to return for those who know Him. Later He will come again to reign over a redeemed earth, and finally He shall triumph over the last foe and reign forever over a new Heaven and a new earth.

It is true that "**now we see not yet all things put under Him.**" Sorrow removed, sickness vanquished, sin finally conquered, death destroyed - in our actual experiences we see these things not yet. But amid all that we do not see we do see Him, the Eternal Positive amid earth's negatives. And He is the pledge of all these things, for what with Him is possible He is soon to make actual, when the last enemy is destroyed and He reigns unhindered. Let us not allow the things we see not yet put under Him hinder us from seeing Him!

So, in this changing day, believers rejoice in a changeless CHRIST. He is the same yesterday, and because of Who He was yesterday, the Son of GOD dying for the sins of the world, He meets the problem of our yesterdays, our guilt before a holy GOD. He is the same today, and because of Who He is today, our Lord and our Advocate, He meets the problem of our todays, He directs our lives and pleads our cases before the Father. He is the same forever, and because He is, He meets the problem of our tomorrows, He assures us of life eternal and a home with Him.

We must be careful to remember that at the heart of our faith stands a Person. It is possible to exalt some doctrine above Him in Whom all the doctrines about Him consist. It is possible to fall into thinking of Him as the centerpiece of a program, a philosophy, a set of principles, with ourselves His lawyers, instead of thinking of Him as a Living Person, with ourselves His witnesses.

It is possible to lose the reality of His Presence in abstract theorizing about Him.

It is only as we know Him in forgiveness and fellowship, as we share with Him in sacrifice and suffering and service, that we become like Him and can lead others to Him.

Back of the Bible and the church and the creeds and the programs and the activities of Christians stands the Eternal CHRIST, and we must in our thinking and living and witnessing give Him the pre-eminence even over those things which are of His very life. Our business is to know Him and to make Him known: anything less is useless, anything more is superfluous.

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