

# **YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN**

## **and Other Sermons**

by

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**SERMON TEN**

**WHY JESUS HAD TO DIE**

(John 3:14-15)

WE ARE living this side of the cross. We may therefore humbly, spiritually, Scripturally, properly change the reading of part of this text. We may truthfully say, “**And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so WAS the Son of Man lifted up that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life.**”

Christ was lifted up, on cruel Calvary, on the bitter tree. That was the greatest tragedy the heavens and the earth ever witnessed. The hellishness of sin, the bestiality of man, the dark power of Satan, plumbed their depths on that fearful hill. But, in spite of all that agonizing desolation, the cross is the mightiest work God ever performed for man.

The blood of that cross is, furthermore, the very supreme offer of the bounty, of the love, of the mercy of the Father. But why did Christ have to die? Why was the stainless, matchless Son of God lifted up on that instrument of torture? Understand that question, answer it properly, and you have the key to our religion, the essence of Christianity, the heart of God’s revelation. Study the cross. Read all that Scripture has to say about it. Analyze it from every angle you please. Sing of it, rejoice in it, accept it, preach about it. You will find three reasons for Calvary—the condemnation of our sins, the redemption of our souls, the inspiration of our service. Let us, then, consider these three mighty truths.

### **I. CHRIST WAS LIFTED UP TO EXPOSE AND CONDEMN OUR SINS**

The blood-stained cross reveals the true colors of our iniquities. It tears away the veil of the devil’s disguise.

- We too readily excuse our transgressions.
- We too eagerly minimize our sins.
- We too aptly compare ourselves with each other and take comfort in the thought that we are not as wicked as others we know.

The cross smashes all these arguments, destroys all these defenses, shatters all these excuses.

It plumbs the depths of our hearts, searches the innermost secrets of our souls, reveals the bleak blackness of ourselves to us. Let any sinner honestly, open-mindedly, with unbiased look, face the cross with all of its implications, and excuses fall away, alibis disappear, comparisons cheapen. We stand abashed, shamefaced, and beating our penitent breasts, we cry, **“I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”** The cross unmasks our sins and shows them to be the abominable things they really are.

*Sin is a presence.*

Some deny this. Some try to explain it away. It is a presence, a present fact nevertheless, universal, inescapable, unmistakable. You will find it in every heart, in every home, on the streets, in the marketplace, in the schoolroom, and, God be merciful to us, even in the church, aye, in the very pulpit. The rich are not immune from it, nor are the poor; the learned nor the ignorant; the young nor the old. Argue about it, philosophize over it, deny it, explain it all you please. It is still there. Like the old man of the sea, it has climbed on the shoulders of the world and is choking out its spiritual life. It has taken over our governments. It is running many of our schools. It has corrupted our homes and corroded our lives. Armies, navies, rifles, bayonets, police forces, prisons, reformatories, insane asylums, hospitals, courts, cemeteries, all these are a vast “Amen” to the presence of sin.

*Sin has power.*

It is power — evil, dark, death-dealing, unholy, abysmal, devilish. There is nothing sacred to it. It blots and blights and blasts. It is the fever of the mind, the tuberculosis of the heart, the cancer of the soul. It ensnares, estranges, enslaves.

- It is a Simon Legree, tormenting the poor sinner with the cruel scourge of insatiable appetite and desire.
- It is a Circe, tantalizing the sin-sick soul with its unkept promises of pleasure and profit.
- It is the Scylla and Charybdis of Satan, luring the unwary transgressor upon the jagged rocks of death and destruction.

It enslaves the appetites, enfeebles the will, entangles the mind. There is no man, no matter how enlightened, how strong, how lofty, who, in his own strength, can hope to combat and overcome the onslaughts of sin and Satan. Only Christ can break the entail of sin.

*Sin carries a penalty.*

The wages of sin is death in the unrepealed, unchanged, unbreakable decree of God. Sin kills everything it touches. It destroys character, influence, reputation, ambition, health, wealth, worldly prospects, love, friendship, neighborliness everything that is clean and good and worthwhile. It breaks up homes, hearts, lives. It is physical death, mental death, moral death, worst of all, spiritual death, eternal death, the second death in the everlasting torments of a bottomless hell.

The earth has traversed the spaces for thousands of years; the generations have come and gone; man has lifted himself out of ignorance, darkness, superstition, discomfort in every realm of achievement. The spiritual is the same and has remained the same. We are today, with all of our boasted achievements and accomplishments, in the same position, on the same level as were Adam and Eve when they were driven out of the Paradise of God. Education, reformation, legislation, cultivation, segregation, all have failed.

Man needs, as he has always needed, justification and regeneration.

## II. CHRIST WAS LIFTED UP TO REDEEM AND SAVE OUR SOULS

He Himself said, **“The Son of Man is come not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give his life a ransom [redemption] for many.”** The blood was needed to redeem us from our sins. The price of purchase from the debasing slavery of sin had to be paid in the priceless coin of Calvary. The tears and the blood of the Son of God were the silver and the gold that were poured out on the counter to meet the payment of the due-bill against us.

*It was redemption by love.*

Jesus said, **“Greater love than this has no man that he lay down his life for his friends.”** He then went and died, not for His friends, but for His enemies.

Paul said, **“God commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for our sins.”** Surely the agony of the tree commendeth the love of God beyond argument, beyond question, beyond dispute, beyond peradventure.

John said, **“Herein is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”**

Naught but love, matchless, mighty, limitless love, could have or would have led Jesus to stretch Himself on that rack for our sins. Where is a man to find the words to describe such love, the illustrations to bound such love, the similes with which to compare it? Human language is beggared, human minds estopped, human hearts limited when faced with the overpowering expression of the love of God in the dripping wounds of His Son.

We need that love. In these trying, troubled, distraught, disheartening, disappointing, dismaying days, we need the proof of that love which the cross offers. There it is, written in the giant letters of Christ's death, written in unmistakable terms across the pages of God's dealings with men, written in the blessed words of the gospel, **“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.”**

That redeeming love is offered freely to all the children of all the generations of men. It is offered on the simple condition of faith in Jesus Christ to every soul.

*It is redemption by sacrifice, by substitutionary sacrifice.*

Hear Isaiah: **“Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows . . . he was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities . . . with his stripes we are healed . . . the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”**

Hear Paul: **“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”**

Hear Peter: **“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.”**

He endured our pains, suffered our sorrows, died our deaths. Our sins nailed Him to the cross. Our transgressions drained Him of His blood. It was the burden of our iniquities that broke His great heart on the tree. We are all, every one of us, blood-guilty of Calvary’s assassination. Judas betrayed Him to Caiaphas. Caiaphas led Him into the hands of Pilate. Pilate weakly consigned Him to the cross. But, oh, hear me, in back of Judas, in back of Caiaphas, in back of Pilate, were your sins and my sins. We crucified Christ. He died for us according to Scripture.

*It is redemption by power.*

The price has been paid. The work has been completed. The last penny of the redemptive cost has been laid down. The bitter cup of the wrath of God, of the curse of the law, of the wages of sin, has been drunk to its bitter dregs. The thunders of Sinai have wreaked their fearsome vengeance on the bowed head and broken heart of Jesus.

We are free, forever free. **“For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.”**

**“But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself . . . and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation”** See Hebrews 9: 14.

There is life for a look at the Crucified One,  
There is life at this moment for thee;  
Then look, sinner, look unto Him and be saved,  
Unto Him Who was nailed to the tree.

His anguish of soul on the cross hast thou seen?  
His cry of distress hast thou heard?  
Then why, if the terrors of wrath He endured,  
Should pardon to thee be deferred?

We are healed by His stripes, would’st add to the word?  
And He is our righteousness made.  
The best robe of heaven He bidst thee put on,  
Oh, couldst thou be better arrayed?

Then doubt not thy welcome since God has declared,  
There remaineth no more to be done.  
Christ Jesus once in the end of the world hath appeared  
And completed the work He begun.

Then take with rejoicing from Jesus at once  
The life everlasting He gives,  
And know with assurance thou never canst die,  
Since Jesus thy Righteousness lives.

### **III. CHRIST WAS LIFTED UP TO ENLIST AND INSPIRE OUR SERVICE**

Next to our salvation, the very greatest gift God has conferred upon us is the privilege of serving and being coworkers with the Lord Jesus Christ. The thought that poor, weak, sinful, unworthy though we may be, the Lord has a place in His plan for us, should call out the very best that is in us of heart and mind and soul. To think that shoulder to shoulder, heart to heart, knee to knee, prayer to prayer, effort to effort, we may help the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Sovereign of the Universe in the purposes of His heart and hands, is the most heroic appeal that can come to the mortal life. To know that together with God we may invest our lives in the framing of the eternities should, like the clarion call of a bugle, lead us into the field of absolute surrender to the will and work of the kingdom.

*There is the inspiration of example.*

**“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who . . . made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant . . . he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”**

**“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners lest ye be wearied and faint in your not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.”**

Christ has set a mark for us, has lifted up a standard, has established a goal.

- His heroic example is a perpetual challenging inspiration to the noblest and the best that is in us.
- His spotless purity enlists us in the warfare against sin in our lives and in the lives of all whom we can help or influence.
- His sacrificial devotion leads us to a selfless abandonment of all that we are and have for the cause for which He suffered and bled and died.

Let the example of Jesus be the aim, the ambition, the aspiration of every soul. That is the appeal of Calvary.

*There is the inspiration of gratitude.*

Cries Paul, **“The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.”**

**“And ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”**

We are bought and paid for by the travail of Gethsemane, by the agony of Calvary, by the blood of Christ. Redeemed from the curse of the law, rescued from the fearful wages of sin, received into the family of God, rejoicing in the hope of glory, we owe a debt to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us; who has done much for each of us.

We owe a debt of gratitude, of appreciation, of love, of loyalty, of thanksgiving that nothing can pay save the absolute, unqualified surrender of all that we are and have to Him who gave all that He was and had to us.

In a thousand and one ways, here below, we strive to show our good will to those who love us, who befriend us, who help us, who are of any service to us. Favor for favor, we try hard not to be outdone or out-sacrificed by those who care for us. Translate that same feeling into the spiritual sphere. Consider what Christ has done for us on the cross. Let our souls be moved, our hearts be melted, our minds be molded to the sacrificial life, for Christ’s sake.

When I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of Glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That there a present far too small,  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

*There is the inspiration of reward.*

Hear Paul once more, **“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”**

Christ is a superb paymaster. No work for Him will go unrewarded. He pays higher wages than any other Master. His wages are more enduring. He runs a profit-sharing business.

When we grow too old to be as active as in the days of our youth; when our vitality ebbs low; when our limbs lose their vigor and our eyes their glitter; when we get tired more quickly and have to rest longer, He will not, like some selfish earthly master who has squeezed the last drops of our usefulness out of us, cast us on the dunghheap of discarded, worn out things, but will carefully keep us, lovingly sustain us, bountifully provide for us. Then, when this life of affliction is ended, when we have finished the last task He has for us, He will reach down from heaven and welcome us to Himself in glory.

So, beloved, I have said my say. As the Holy Spirit has given me utterance, I have striven to tell you why the Son of God had to pour out His matchless life in the shame of Calvary's cross. Have you followed me?

- Have you seen your sins mirrored in all their damning, killing blackness of the tree?
- Have you seen the blood of your redemption spilled out as water to pay the bill of your transgressions?
- Have you heard the appeal of that loving, dying, buried, resurrected, interceding Christ as He pleads with you to give Him your lives?

- Will you come to Christ now?
- Will you tear loose from your sins?
- Will you step over the line to the Saviour?
- Will you accept Him as your redeemer?
- Will you confess Him right now before men, so that He may confess you before His Father which is in heaven?
- Will you come now and enlist in His service?

He is waiting. He is pleading. His pierced hands are stretched out to you. Gentle as the summer breeze, as the lullaby of a mother, His voice is tugging at your heart. Come to Him now. Answer His invitation. Follow His bidding. Heed His appeal. Come now. Will you, right now, from the very depths of your hearts, say to Jesus, "Lord, you loved me enough to die for me. I love you enough to live for you. Here is my life at your feet to prove it." Will you come right now, put your hand in Christ's, and say, "I do accept Christ as my Saviour. I do give my life into His service." Will you come?

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