

COME UNTO ME

by

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CHAPTER TEN

THE CLAIMS OF JESUS CHRIST

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise (Ephesians 1:1-13).

I do not know of any statement in the entire Bible that has in it more clearly, more carefully, more simply, the plan of salvation than do these verses which form our text.

Anyone who has ever taught in any sort of school knows that the best, the very best method of teaching, whether college graduates or kindergarten beginners, is by repetition. It makes no difference whether the teaching be done in the primary grades of some elementary school, or in the post-graduate work of some scientific course. It makes no difference whether one is teaching children their A.B.C.'s, or undertaking to explain to intellectual giants the Einstein Theory. The fact still remains that repetition is the best method of instruction. It is the fundamental principle upon which there has been no improvement. Line upon line, precept upon precept, is still the basic program for all category. The greatest Teacher this world ever has seen, or ever shall see, is the Holy Spirit. He knows the canon of education better than any and all of us together. In His superlative wisdom, He also has dwelt upon this procedure of reiteration.

The Holy Spirit is so very anxious for us to know the Word of God, the way of God, the walk of God, the will of God, that He Himself goes to the limit (I say it with greatest reverence), of His own transcendent profundity to state and restate the plan of our redemption.

In the verses you have just read, you will find three wondrous things which outline all that any one of us must know about the why, the how, the what of salvation.

Firstly, there is the Criminality of Sin.

Secondly, there is the Compassion of God.

Thirdly, there is the Claims of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I believe they are claims, because they include so many things.

There is the criminally of sin

Sin a terrible matter. The Bible is full of descriptions, of revelations, of declarations, of warnings, concerning the frightful certainty of the consequences of sin. I remember, in my seminary days that my professor in Hebrew told a rather large class that there were more than seventy different distinct words in the Hebrew language, covering, picturing, enlarging upon the tragedy of the universe—sin.

By the time we finished with that particular course, and it was not a long one, we had located more than fifty different words in the Hebrew for sin.

Our professor in Greek, a scholarly man of national and international repute, informed us that in the Greek language, there are more than one hundred and twenty distinct words for sin. In other words, in the Greek and in the Hebrew of the New and of the Old Testament, there are more than three hundred separate words for transgression. The Lord God knows only too well the evil of wickedness. He knows its bitter effects upon the nations and generations of men. He exhausts even His own mighty vocabulary to describe the presence, the power, the penalty of iniquity.

We cannot in a brief message consider this fearful theme in great detail. However, as the Holy Spirit leads me, I should like to show you, in these words, three fearful things that sin, any kind of sin, every kind of sin, does to us, to each of us, to all of us.

Firstly, sin distances God. May I read it to you again. **“That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”**

It puts an impossible, impassible barrier between us and God. Sin is the only thing that can bar us out of God’s life and God out of our lives. A man may be rich beyond the dreams of avarice and be a great Christian. Thus we have men today like R. G. LeTourneau, and J. L. Craft, gigantic in industry, in finances, in every other sphere of business activity, yet, withal, humble Christians, submitting themselves and their lives to the will of God.

A man may be so poor that he has not a copper coin with which to cross his palm, and yet be a prince with God, prevailing with heaven and with men, a mighty power for good, for righteousness, for holiness.

One may be as strong as Jack Dempsey or Joe Louis and be a great Christian. One may be so weak as to be bedridden all the time, and yet be powerful unto the pulling down of the strongholds of sin in intercessory prayer, even in witness-bearing.

A single, unconfessed, unforgiven sin allowed in the soul, is a Himalaya Mountain between God and us. Transgression distances God in this life, so that the sinner has no claim to the promises of God, to the provisions of God, to the powers of God. It certainly distances the sinner from God in the life to come.

Do you know what the worst thing about hell is? You say eternal punishment. I do not agree with you. You say, "The worst thing about hell is its never ending memories, remorse-fulness." Oh, the agony of that bitter regret that assails the sinner who knows not Christ and the pardon of sin, who is forever banished from God and heaven. However, I do not believe even that is the bitterest thing about Tophet. The most terrible thing about the penitentiary of the damned is that it entails perpetual banishment, perpetual separation, perpetual distancing from God and glory.

Secondly, sin disinherits us from any claim that we may have on the Most High. It bemires, befouls, besmirches, our hearts, our souls, our lives. It makes us unacceptable in the presence of the Lord. It makes us enemies of Divinity. It makes us rebels against God's sovereignty, God's authority. It puts us in a position where we stand brazenly in the presence of heaven, clench our fists, shake them in the face of the Lord of lords, as if to say, "I know what you want me to do, but you are not big enough to make me do it." Oh, my dear friends, let the outlawry of sin, the animosity of sin, warn you, plead with you, urge you to flee from the wrath to come.

Listen! When a man commits a crime against the State of Indiana, all of the powers of that mighty commonwealth join to bring the criminal to justice. It is hard to get away. When a man commits a crime against the United States of America, if you will permit the parlance of the street, when the FBI men "put on the heat" it is almost impossible to find any refuge or sanctuary. They never know how to quit. The sinner, any kind of sinner, every kind of sinner, puts himself into the position where all of the majesty, the righteousness, the holiness, the authority, the power of God are leveled against him.

God must punish sin. The very fact of sovereignty requires the punishment of disobedience, or disregard of the lost.

- There is a government in every city, and if a man commits a crime against it, that government must punish the culprit, or else abdicate its power.
- There is a government in every state, and if a man commits a crime against it, that state authority must apprehend the felon to bring him to the bar of judgment, to punish him, or else it must give up every right and title to its leadership.
- There is a government in this nation, and if a man commits a crime against these United States, the federal authorities must punish the criminal.

If there is a God in heaven, and there is; if He is the Lord of creation, and He is; if He is the sovereign of the universe, and He is; then, by the very fact of His existence, by the very fact of His authority (you will notice, I am leaving out His righteousness, His holiness, simply speaking from the standpoint of practical authority); the very fact of His authority, I repeat, requires that He must punish sin or abdicate the Throne of Glory, turning His scepter, His crown-rights over to Satan. That is what some people would have Him do. That is what He will never do.

Thirdly—worst of all—sin destroys everything it touches.

- It destroys character.
- It destroys influence.
- It destroys homes.
- It destroys health.
- It destroys love.
- It destroys families.
- It destroys cities, nations, generations.

Finally, it destroys souls in the torments of a never-ending hell. Even in the short time that I have been a Christian, in the shorter time in which the Lord has privileged me to preach the Gospel, in the small experiences that I have had, there have come to my attention things I have seen, things I have heard about the destruction of sin, the inevitable, the inescapable, the universal destruction of sin.

When I was pastor of a church in Dallas County, Texas, the pastor of the First Methodist Church in that great city, a gracious, victorious Christian man, preaching to a crowded congregation Sunday mornings and Sunday nights, told us of an experience in his life. It was on a Monday morning. The entire pastor's association of every denomination, of all that great territory, met in the Presbyterian City Temple. It was a time of reports, a time of some prayer, a time of some study. Dr. Martin came in almost at the end of the service. The presiding pastor called on him for his report, and for anything else he might have to say.

He stood up to speak. "Brethren," he said, "I can't talk much. I have been through hell this week. I just came here because I knew of some of the important things you were going to discuss. I felt that I owed it to you to show my definite interest. I am sorry I am late. Brethren, I have literally gone through hell this week."

We watched him. We studied him. We could not understand, of course, what he meant. We thought that perhaps someone in his own family had been sick, or that some other personal tragedy had taken place. After some seconds of pause, he continued.

"I am sure you read the story of the death of George . . . (I am not going to give you his last name for it is nationally known). Some of you know that he and I have been friends ever since babyhood. As a matter-of-fact, his father and my father were close friends. He and I attended Southern Methodist University together. He was really the best chum I had in the world. The anguish of what has happened has almost made me lose my mind."

We kept on listening to him. No one said a word. We could not quite visualize a preacher so torn to pieces. He went on.

“George was driving Tuesday evening, just about gloaming time, from Garland home to Dallas. He was racing along the Northwest Highway. He turned his car a bit to avoid a car coming along too close to his side. He did not notice what was ahead. Perhaps his lights were not on. His automobile struck the back of a loaded, parked, sand truck. It caved his own car in crushing him with it. By the time he was rushed to the hospital, he was almost gone. He was dying. He was hemorrhaging on the inside. There was not a thing that could be done. Several doctors rushed to the case. George was very rich, as you well know.

“After a while, knowing that he had not long to spare, he called for his wife, for his two children, members of my church—Christians—saved—children of God, glorious in their assurance. The man himself had never made any profession of his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Of course I raced to the hospital, greeted the family, greeted George, then walked out of the room with the doctor. The family physician told me definitely that there was no hope for my friend. I walked back into the room. The dying man turned to his wife and children to say, ‘Please leave the room for a little while. I want to talk to the preachers.’ His wife and children went out sobbing. I came close to the bed saying, ‘George, is there anything I can do for you?’

“‘Yes,’ said the hurt man, ‘Martin, you and I have been friends all of our lives. I am leaving a great deal of money, of stocks, of bonds, or property. I guess I am worth more dead than I am alive. You know my wife does not know a thing about business. My children are much too little to be of any great help. Martin, I want you to promise me that you will be a husband to my wife and a father to my children.’

“‘You don’t have to ask me that,’ I told him. ‘You know I would have done it anyway. But, George, there is something infinitely more important than that.’

“‘What is it, Martin?’

“‘George, you are not a Christian, are you?’

“‘George smiled up at me sadly, saying, ‘No, I am not, but it certainly is not your fault. You certainly tried hard enough to win me.’

“‘Never mind, George, never mind whose fault it is. Man, you are dying. There is no chance for you. The doctor says you are through. He tells me you know it. There is no cure for you, no operation that can help you. In God’s name, man, won’t you give your heart to Jesus Christ right now? Your wife is a Christian. Your children are Christians. Your parents, your brothers, your sisters, they are all Christians. You do not want to go one way, while they go another.’

“‘I have been studying about it, Martin, ever since I was brought in here, but I just cannot seem to break through.’

“‘Nonsense, man, God loves you. Jesus died for you. All you need to do, as you very well know, is to accept Him as your personal Saviour.’

“‘Martin, I am not an infidel. I believe the Bible as definitely as you do. But I just do not seem to be able to break through the black blanket of mist between me and God.’

“‘George, do not talk that way. You are still in your right mind. You know John 3:16. You believe it, you say. Right this minute accept Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour. His blood will wash you from your sins.’

“In my agony, I dropped to my knees, began to pray aloud for my friend. The doctor came back. He said to me, ‘Stop man, you are exciting him. You are killing him. You are shortening his hours.’

“My lawyer friend raised his hand to say, ‘Never mind, Doctor, I’ve got to die anyway. What’s the difference—a few more minutes, or a few more hours.’

“I kept on praying, kept on weeping, kept on pleading, kept on begging, kept on beseeching. Finally, with the dark shadows of death beclouding his face, George raised his hand and whispered, ‘Ah, Martin, I am sorry, but it’s too late, it’s too late.’ I tried to speak again. George lifted his hand feebly to say once more, ‘Wait a minute. I want to tell you the tragedy of it, the irony of it. Martin, if somebody had come to me ten years ago, ten months ago, ten days ago, ten hours ago, to say, “George you are going to die and go to hell,”

“I would have said, “Man, you are crazy. I’m not an infidel. I believe in Christ. I expect to accept Him as my personal Saviour. Yet, here I am, dying a lost sinner, going to hell, because I just put it off, I guess.”

“The preacher stopped. Reaching for his handkerchief, wiping the wild tears that poured down his cheeks, while we cried with him, his voice choking with emotion, he said, ‘Brethren, the best friend I ever had in the world lived a Christless life. He died a Christless death. We put him in a Christless coffin. We had a Christless funeral. We buried him in a Christless grave. I preached a Christless sermon. He will rise in a resurrection. He will face a Christless judgment. He will sink into a Christless hell, because he put it off, because he put it off.’

I do not believe I ever shall forget the sob in Dr. Martin’s voice as, running his hands through his hair he wept out, “Because he put it off, because he put it off,” and walked out of the room.

Friends, I have told you nothing new. These things are revealed on every page of the Bible, in every life of every sinner. The criminality of sin is found in the facts that it defies God, that it denies Christ, that it destroys the soul forever in hell.

But, thank God, that is not all there is to this matchless text.

**The next thing we find in these wonderful verses is the
compassion of God, the grace of God**

Surely, in this connection, the compassion and the grace of God are interchangeable terms.

What is grace? Someone said it is unmerited favor. That is a pretty expression, but it is short-changing the term. It is small. It is too weak to measure the grace of God. Compassion, grace, mean a great deal more than that.

You say then to me, “Preacher, you mean to tell us that you are going to stand up there and try to give us a definition of ‘grace?’” “No I am not that big a fool. You tell me what God is. Then I’ll tell you what grace is.

Listen! I will give you an exercise. Solve it for me. Then, perhaps I shall be able to tell you what grace is. You say grace is love. Yes, and yet there is room. You say compassion is kindness. Yes, and yet there is room. You say grace and compassion are longsuffering, are pity, are tenderness. Yes, and yet there is room. Take love, pity, compassion, tenderness, kindness, longsuffering, every other attribute of God, put them in that one word “grace,” put them in that one word compassion, and still there will be room, and to spare.

What then is grace? Listen! Climb up to the seventh heaven. Sit down on the knees of God. Place your ear against the beating heart of God. Climb down, come down, down, down, still further down, until you stand on Golgotha in the shadow of the middle cross. Count the drops of blood which flowed from Immanuel’s veins, measure the agony, the torment, the anguish, the heartache, the heart break, of those bitter endless hours.

Don’t stop there. Climb down again, down, down, still further down, still deeper down. Stand on the very brink of hell. See the terrible waves of fire and brimstone. See the rising torments, hear the moaning, the weeping, the wailing, the gnashing of the teeth of the doomed and the damned in hell. Tell me the difference between the heart of God on His throne in glory, by way of Calvary’s bloodstained cross, and the bottomless pit of a devil’s hell, then I may be able to tell you the meaning of the grace of God. There are however certain things about grace and compassion that we must think about in this hour.

First of all God’s compassion is sovereign. There is nothing in us that could have possibly induced that grace. There was nothing about us; there is nothing about us; there never shall be anything about us, either before we became Christians, or after we accepted Christ as our personal Saviour, that could have possibly caused God to have fallen in love with us.

People have come to me from one end of this continent to the other, Gentiles, Jews, saved, unsaved, men, women, to ask all sorts of questions. They ask me to explain the miracles of the Bible. Listen to me, my dear friends. People tell me they cannot understand how the Lord could have created the world in six days. They say they cannot understand how God could have destroyed the world with the flood of Noah’s time. That is no mystery to me. They question my interpretation of how the walls of Jericho fell. That is no mystery to me.

They stand amazed as to how fire came down from heaven on Elijah's sacrifice on Mt. Carmel. That is no mystery to me. They question that even God could have slain one hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrian soldiers at the prayers of Hezekiah. That is no mystery to me. They stand aghast at the thought of the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is no mystery to me. The raising of Lazarus from the dead leaves them, so they say, intellectually doubting. That is no mystery to me. They question the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. That is no mystery to me.

The mystery to me, the deepest secret in all of God's Word, beyond my comprehension, beyond my understanding, is how God even could have found it in His great heart to have loved anybody like me. There is the mystery. There is a mystery for you to solve.

Sometime ago a quibbling man came to a preacher to prod him with this proposition:

"Preacher, you have been orating to us as hard as you can concerning a gentle, compassionate, loving God. I will show you a passage in the Bible where God is a tyrant, where God is a respecter of persons."

"Where?" the preacher asked.

The infidel, the unbeliever, the critic, whatever he was, quoted that passage, "**'Esau have I hated and Jacob have I loved.'**" Preacher," he said, "how can God hate Esau while He loves Jacob?"

The preacher, rising to his feet, said, "Brother, that is not the thing that bothers me. That is not the thing that is perplexing me. The question that I am concerned about is how God could have loved Jacob, or for that matter, anybody else—yourself and myself included."

Look into your hearts, dear people. Most of you are Christians, are you not? You know Christ in the pardon of your sins. So do I, thank God. Even now, on this side of the cross, with our assurance of salvation, even now, I say, the best of us, the choicest of us, have to bow our heads, smite our breasts, crying from the depths of our souls, "**Lord, have mercy on us sinners.**" Oh, the comforting thought of the love of God! Oh, the assurance it gives us to know that before we were created in the wombs of our mothers, God had foreknown,

God had foreordained in His own infinite grace that His matchless compassion would rescue us from the pit of perdition. The sovereign grace of God is the basis of our salvation. It is not an accident. It is not an afterthought. It is not something that depends on us or ours. It is not even based on our faith. The Bible specifically says, "**If ye believe not, yet He abideth faithful.**" The foundation of our salvation is the sovereign compassion of the Most High.

But, we must hasten on. God's compassion—His grace—is also substitutionary. I have grace towards you, too. My heart is literally burning up with compassion for you, for your souls. As God is my witness, I should die gladly for any soul in the world, for the worst enemy that I may have, whoever he may be, for the worst character on the earth.

I should consider it a privilege to mingle my blood with the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of any man, any woman, any child, anywhere, to the ends of the earth. But, what can I do? I am just a poor, miserable sinner. I do not have enough within myself, I stand constantly in the need of God's mercy.

But it is not so with God. He sent His virgin-born, pure, crystal-clear, spotless, stainless Son into the world. He took upon Himself, in His Son, this God, this sovereign God, this gracious God, this compassionate God, He took upon Himself your sins and my sins.

He gave His life for each of us on Calvary's cross. That is the basis for our salvation. This substitutionary grace, this crucified grace, this blood-written, blood-guaranteed, blood-proffered compassion.

I know that my sins are forgiven. I know that even my iniquities are blotted out. I know I'm saved.

- I know these things not because I believe them. That is not enough.
- I know these things not because I have repented. That is not enough.
- I know these things not because I have been immersed and have joined the church. That is not enough.
- I know these things not because I hate sin, and Satan, and self stained with sin, and trapped by Satan. That is not enough.
- I know these things not because I pray, not because I preach, not because I weep, not because I give, not because I strive to win souls. All these things are not enough.

My sins are forgiven; your sins may be forgiven, because **"Him who knew no sin, God made to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."**

When the devil comes along, beginning to question my salvation, striving to make me doubt it; when I read books of modernistic theology, of vaporizing philosophy, of so-called psychology; when these literati begin to question my confidence in the Lord, I just close my eyes, remember Calvary's cross, receive assurance that I am a child of God, that my sins are blotted out, that my name is written in the Book of Life. The basis of my certainty is that the Substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ, died in my place.

Thirdly, God's compassion is satisfying

The longest day I live, so long as I retain my memory, I will be thrilled and inspired with the story that Dr. Glaggett Skinner of Leesport, Virginia, told us in seminary chapel. There was that giant of God, now in glory, that tall, stately, handsome man, that gracious southern gentleman, speaking to us theologians, not on books, not on how to be good, not on how to build great churches, but on the grace of God. How we needed that message which came from Dr. Skinner's lips that day.

When he finished he told us this story:

One Monday morning, after an unusually fine Lord's Day, he saddled his horse and rode out into the woods. Dropping the reins on the pommel of the saddle, and bowing his head, he rode along in a brown study, praying a little, weeping a little, studying a little.

The minutes wore on into the hours. It got on towards midday. He was not going anywhere in particular. Suddenly the horse stopped. The preacher looked up. There was a clearing, some stumps pulled out—some stumps still standing. Facing him was a weather-beaten shack, old, decrepit, tumbled-down, hardly weather-worthy. To the right of the shack, there was a little stand of garden—some vegetables, some corn. In front of that shack, on an old cracker box, sat an indescribably aged, wrinkled, Negro mammy sucking on a corncob pipe.

Dismounting from his horse, letting the reins drag, the preacher walked over towards the old woman. She did not even look up until his shadow fell across her. Lifting her head towards him, squinting her eyes against the sun, she kept on munching on her dead cold pipe.

Looking down at her, the great preacher spoke, "Are you here alone, Mammy?"

Either the woman did not bear him or did not want to hear him, but she did not answer.

Bending over closer he spoke loudly, "Are you here alone, Mammy?"

Lifting her eyes once more to his face, the Negress, taking the pipe out of her mouth said softly, "Just me and Jesus, just me and Jesus."

As he spoke to us, standing on that seminary platform, the preacher, stepped back, raised his great hands crossed-fashioned on high, and cried out, "Young men and young women, and you professors, all of a sudden that forest glade was peopled with the hosts of heaven. God was there. Christ was there. The Spirit was there. The angels were there. They were all there keeping vigil over, holding sweet communion with that dear old, black saint of God."

Yes, my beloved friends, it is satisfying grace.

"He walks with us and He talks with us
And He calls us His very own;
And the joys we share as we tarry there
None other has ever known."

I remember when I first became a Christian— away from home, a bit blue, uncertain as to what was going to happen. The way was quite hard, I did not know much Scripture. I knew little about the church. I had very few friends. I had no one to turn to.

I did a lot of weeping in those days, but God gave me a song. It is the dearest song in all hymnology as far as I am concerned. It is sweeter to me than Handel's Messiah. It is more inspiring than the Hallelujah Chorus. The song is:

I walk with the King, Hallelujah
I talk with the King, Praise His Name.
No longer I roam, My soul faces home,
For I walk and I talk with the King.

It has been my song for more than twenty years. I expect to keep on singing it, to keep on walking, to keep on talking with the King, until He says to me, “You have walked far enough. Come over into the promised land.”

Finally, may we go on into the last word—the claims of the Lord Jesus Christ

First, there are His claims by creation, our hands, our feet, our eyes, our ears, the hearts that beat within our breasts, the lifeblood racing in our veins.

These are all the gifts of God through the Lord Jesus Christ. We might never have been born. We might have been born deaf, blind, dumb, crippled.

Do you know what it means to be born in the United States of America? Do you know what it means to live here, in this land of the free and the home of the brave. Do you know what it means to be born and to spend your life in tyrannical Germany, in overwhelmed France, in crushed Poland, in red Russia? Do you know what it means to be a citizen of any of those other ravaged countries that we read about, whose horrors have at times almost caused our hearts to stand still? It seems to me that if there were nothing else in the world for us to be grateful for, and there are ten thousand and one other things, we ought to thank God, here, now, for the life that beats within our hearts, the privilege of being here in this glorious God-blessed nation of ours. Yes, undoubtedly, the Lord Jesus has a claim against us by creation.

The Son of God has a claim against us by redemption. He bought us. He paid for us. We are living on borrowed time.

They tell us the story of that matchless preacher of a generation ago, Russell Conwell; during a war, when he was a soldier— a comrade by his side, a buddy, racing into battle with him, one who was like a brother—was killed in action, causing Dr. Conwell, the longest day he lived, to feel that he had to do two men’s work in order to make up for the death of that young soldier-friend of his.

There is not a man of us, there is not a woman among us, there is not a child among us (for that matter, to the ends of the earth), who is living on his or her own time.

- The minute we sin, God has a right to kill us.
- The minute we transgress, God has a perfect right to send us into hell.

Jesus redeemed us by His own precious blood. Surely it must have been the intercessory supplication of the Son of God who is at the right hand of the Father, which kept God from destroying us a long time ago.

Throughout the years in which we lived in sin, the Lord kept the Holy Spirit on our trails. The Holy Spirit broke our hearts, melted our souls, finally won us to God thru the Redeemer. Every one of us should know by personal experience, as did the Apostle Paul, the truth of the contention, **“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”**

Aye, the minutes, the hours, the days, the weeks, the months, the years, in which we live here upon this earth most of them in joy, in happiness, in satisfaction, in the comforts of God, are bought and paid for by the agony of Calvary.

Thirdly, the Saviour has a claim against us by ordination. **“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”**

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself said, **“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.”**

We are ordained to do the will of God. We are ordained to exemplify, to illustrate, to live out the life of the indwelling Son of God. It is God’s will that we should bring forth fruit to the discomfort of Satan, to our own education, to the salvation of perishing sinners, to the coronation of the Lord Jesus Christ. But how are we going to meet these claims?

First, my friends we are called upon to repent of our sins. It is written **“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”**

The only life that is acceptable to the Father on high, the only life that is the grateful due of everyone of us, is the life of ceaseless penitential confession.

It was William Jennings Bryan who said, “I cannot keep the vultures from flying over my head, but I can keep them from building nests in my hair.” That is exactly what I am talking about.

We are so constituted that Satan will not leave us alone. Temptations beset us in every direction, but, by the mercy of God, by the substitutionary sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, by the empowering of the Holy Spirit, we may repent of our sins, we may confess them to God, we may know that the cleansing blood washes us again and anew whiter than snow.

The Lord Jesus Christ has a second claim against us. It is not only to the matter of repentance, but also it is the spirit not only of repentance, but also of faith. The Son of Man has an eternal claim to our faith. Has He not said, **“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”**

In the long ago, men came to our Redeemer with the question, **“What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?”** Jesus answered and said unto them, **“This is the work of God that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.”** You see very readily what great stress the Lord Jesus Christ puts upon faith. It is the fundamental virtue of all of them.

- Without faith it is impossible to please God.
- Without faith it is impossible to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Without faith it is impossible to avail oneself of the power of the Holy Spirit.

The third claim the Lord Jesus Christ has upon us is the claim to our confession. He Himself said, **“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.”**

Beloved, there are only two things that will keep you, that can keep you, from confessing Jesus Christ as your Saviour.

- First, there is something in your life that you refuse to give up, some sin that you are hugging to your heart, some sin that thus far has meant more to you than your soul, your salvation, your Saviour.
- The second thing that might keep you from taking a public stand for your Redeemer, is that you are ashamed of Him, of His cause, of His people, of His Book, of His church.

You may argue. You may alibi. You may strive to excuse yourself, but these two are the only things that will keep you, any of you, from surrendering to the Son of God, from openly taking His side against the world.

Finally, He who died for us, who now lives to intercede for us, has a claim not only to our repentance, not only to our faith, not only to our confession, but also to our obedient, sacrificial service. Again I quote the words of the Son of God.

“If a man love me, he will keep my words and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me.”

When, in the guidance and leadership of the Holy Spirit, we keep ourselves unspotted from the world by constantly repenting, by constant confession of our sins, when we put our faith absolutely in God, crying, **“Lord, increase our faith,”** when we confess and keep on confessing Jesus Christ as our Redeemer, when we serve Him, keeping our lives in an abandonment of obedience to him, the assurance of our salvation, the joy of our security, like a bubbling fountain in our souls, will constrain others to come and share that joy of all joys, that peace which passeth all understanding, that pardon which cost God so much, yet which He so freely bestows upon everyone who believes.

Listen, again, and I will finish.

I remember reading in history, long years ago, when I was a boy going to preparatory school an incident that happened in my own Russia. You remember how Napoleon brought his grand army into my fatherland. You remember how the Russian generals played with that archangel of war as a cat dallies with a mouse, sometimes fighting, most times retreating. The terrible Russian winter closed in. The snows came. The frost, killing in its intensity, descended in devastating destruction upon the very heart of the mighty French Army.

Moscow was burned to the ground. Napoleon realized that his cause was lost. He ordered a retreat out of Russia. His mighty military machine started back, first in perfect order, but later it became a straggling, struggling mass, under the guerrilla onslaughts of the Russian soldiers and peasants.

The invading army came to a certain river that had to be crossed. The river was not solidly frozen over. A thaw had come. The ice was broken. They had no boats. The bridge had been torn up. There was Napoleon, his officers, his grenadiers, the chiefest, choicest, of his brilliant army, strong men, stalwart men, who had been given the very best of everything, because they were the bodyguards of Napoleon. There was no way to cross. The Russians were behind them, all around them, lashing at them, chopping them down. They had to cross.

After some hours, while Napoleon was still studying, still looking around, still trying to figure a way out of the trap, one of his officers dashed up to him to say, "Your majesty, you may cross now."

Napoleon mounted his charger, started across the bridge, when he noticed that instead of piles, instead of posts, instead of stumps of trees, instead of boats on which to lash the timbers and the boards of the bridge, some of the grenadiers, a great number of the French grenadiers, had gotten down side by side, shoulder to shoulder, in that terribly icy water, to hold up the bridge until Napoleon and his staff crossed over.

Not many of those grenadiers lived through the night. Napoleon certainly had the devotion of those men.

I tell you, the Lord Jesus Christ has to expect more than that from us—much more than that from us.

Napoleon was not worth the loss of a drop of blood, let alone the lives that were sacrificed that night. He was the demon of death. He was the archangel of war. He was the destroyer of men, of homes, of nations.

The Christ of God loved us, gave Himself for us, thus earning the right to claim all that we are, all that we have, that He might do with it, as He did with the loaves and the fishes of the Galilean lad in the long ago.

He calls upon us to give Him our lives that He might break them, that He might bless them, that He might give them back to us, that they might be made by His tender powerful bands things of beauty and joys forever, that they might indwelt, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Oh, beloved, in view of all I have told you, considering the criminality of sin that would have destroyed us forever in hell, computing the mightiness of the compassion of God that reached down from heaven while we were yet in the depths of our transgressions, recognizing the worth, the weight, the value of the substitutionary blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, will you answer the claims of Jesus? Will you respond to the call of the Christ of God? Will you say to him, “Lord, You died for me. Have mercy on me, a sinner. Here is my life at Your feet to prove my devotion?”

God gives us all the grace to start paying a little of the tremendous debt that we owe to Jesus Christ. God bless us all in this mighty venture and adventure for the kingdom of God. God give us the moment Jesus will have us—all there is of us. God bless you all.

~ end of book ~

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