

WHEN THE WORLD IS ON FIRE

And Other Evangelistic Messages

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CHAPTER SIX

CHRIST at the Door

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20).

The gracious, pleading words of JESUS CHRIST in the Gospels might well lead one to believe that divine condescension could go no further. In them the Son of GOD bids us come to Him, to pray for pardon, not to faint, to knock at the door of mercy, to strive for entrance at the strait gate. He promises full and free salvation if with sincere earnestness we seek it. Surely those who will not seek Him deserve to perish.

Here JESUS CHRIST takes the initiative in using the means to win from us the love which He requires that we might win His. He comes to us, knocks at our hearts, and asks us to admit Him so that He may have fellowship with us and we with Him. Every excuse is taken away, every doubt removed. Instead of our having to seek for Him, He has found us. Shall we hear His prayer? What a strange question to be sure. His readiness to come in, to save, to open the door to Heaven is assured. It is ours to decide whether or not we will keep our hearts closed, whether we will be saved or not.

The church of Laodicea, though so richly favored, had become lukewarm and self-righteous, as are so many churches in this our day and time. They knew the Gospel offer, understood the Gospel conditions, but turned aside to the vain hopes, the unsatisfactory foundations of their own theorizings. They were not Christians, just unregenerated church members. They needed to come to CHRIST for spiritual life. It was theirs to **"be zealous and repent,"** or perish.

The outline for this message I borrow from an old-time preacher. It is simple, yet it delves into the very depths of the truths in this matchless text. Here you have first CHRIST without and the door shut; second, the door open and CHRIST within.

CHRIST WITHOUT AND THE DOOR SHUT

The figure is clear. JESUS CHRIST wants our love, our trust, our communion. He finds the doors of our hearts closed. His knocking, His calling appeals to us to recognize He is waiting for us to withdraw the barrier which prevents His entrance, His admission into our hearts. Can there be any clearer representation of His affectionate zeal of His earnest concern for our salvation? Why is it that so many all about us here in Gospel-saturated America have not opened to Him? It is because we are saturated with the world, the contents of it, the clamor of it, the compulsion of

it.

CHRIST comes to us before we come to Him. He saw us last in guilt and sin, neither able to expiate our offenses against GOD, nor willing to repent of them. He came all the way from Heaven to earth, assumed our nature, made atonement for our sins, opened for us the way of reconciliation. Now He stands at our hearts' doors to plead with us to return to GOD, and eternal life.

Here is the ultimate sign of His inexhaustible sympathy.

Here He stands, He whose body felt our pains, whose heart bled with our sorrows, whose mind endured our trials. Here He knocks at our hearts' doors, He who resisted Satan in the wilderness, who sat way-worn and weary at Jacob's well, who wept at Lazarus' tomb, who sweated blood in Gethsemane, who felt the Bloody bite of Rome's scourge at Gabbatha, who staggered under the Cross through the streets of Jerusalem, who gave up His spirit in the cry of Calvary's agony.

Here He stands, every pulsation of His human breast appealing to us, pleading for us at the right hand of the Majesty on high as He shows the scars of His crucifixion, seeking to exert His almighty power for our good, embellishing the mansions of Heaven for our eternal home.

In the Gospels, He makes known to us the way of life which He opened. By inviting all who hear to partake of His grace, He reiterates His merciful warnings against eternal death, and brings assurance of eternal bliss to all who believe. His very nearness prohibits the thought of any of us being ignorant either of our danger or of the mode of escape.

He knocks by His inspired Word, by the ministers who proclaim the truth in the pulpits of the land, by baptism, by the Lord's Supper, by the faithfulness of Christians testifying by their lives and lips, by the avowed repentance and conversion of the worst of sinners giving abundant proof of His active power. These, added to a thousand and one other impressions upon our souls, declare His compassion for us, His right, His readiness, His desire to save every soul that will accept His salvation.

Just before the Lord finished His work on earth, He told His disciples: **"It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment."**

The mighty promise was fulfilled. After ascending up into glory, the Son of GOD sent down the HOLY SPIRIT at Pentecost. This Holy Agent has been present on earth to breathe His mighty energy into and through the lives of Christians and the proclamation of the Gospel.

It is the HOLY SPIRIT who enlightens our minds, stirs up our consciences, pierces our sensibilities. It is the HOLY SPIRIT that unfaithful Christians are said to "**grieve**" and "**wound**," while stubborn unbelievers "**resist**" and "**quench**" Him.

CHRIST stands before us:

- in every page of His Gospels,
- in every Christian sermon,
- in every Christian testimony,
- in every Christian sacrament,
- in every striking providence
- in everything, in short, that ought to make us consider His claims.

The glamour of the world, its alluring engrossments, its busy occupations may cause us to overlook or forget His nearness. Still, there are times when the sinner is compelled to feel the truth concerning this text. The sinner's heart is often stirred by the knocking of the Saviour sounding through his being. It is insane hardihood to brace yourself against, to resist this holy summons.

The reason then why any of us are not saved is obvious. It is because we refuse to yield to the pleadings of divine mercy. CHRIST is mighty to save; His perfect, accepted atonement guarantees that. He shows Himself willing to save all who believe in His Name. The offers of the Gospel are free to all. He is ready to save each of us, every one of us; His Spirit is knocking at the doors of our hearts.

No one can say, "I am too great a sinner to be saved"; or, "I may go to CHRIST and He may not receive me"; or, "I must wait until the HOLY SPIRIT draws me to Him." GOD Himself has provided and declared sufficient the infinite merits of His Son's atonement. CHRIST is ever coming to us, ever knocking, ever pleading. The HOLY SPIRIT is calling upon us to admit Him. The question now is not, "Will the Saviour accept us?" but "Shall we reject Him?"

I say REJECT Him, for since He has offered Himself to us, we reject Him if we do not acknowledge Him and trust Him as our personal Saviour.

He is not already in our hearts because we will not open the door to Him, but keep it shut in guilty indifference or stubborn unbelief. He commands us to open the door, to put forth the hand of faith and unbar the bolt, to repent and welcome Him. The HOLY SPIRIT is urging Himself upon you. Yield, just yield; open the door; all needed grace shall be yours.

How utterly inexcusable then is the present state of any sinner - you, my unsaved friend, for instance. You alone stand in the way of your own salvation. Think of all that CHRIST has done for you; think of His kind warnings and His kinder promises; think of His knocking, and calls, of His strivings with your conscience. Will you not open your heart to GOD as He comes to you, not as a judge, nor as an avenger, but as a Saviour and Friend?

To defy His sufferings, though they burn fiercely to the lowest hell, is evil, but to despise His mercy, to treat His love with contempt, to resist His HOLY SPIRIT is worse. How long have you kept GOD waiting at the door of your heart? Worldly pleasure, petty business, perhaps only sluggish indisposition to an effort at repentance, have been your unreasonable motives to turn from the biddings of divine mercy, whose price was the Blood of CHRIST and whose Advocate is the HOLY GHOST.

The tragedy goes beyond what I have said. The Saviour has waited long, but even He will not wait forever.

In the next moment that knocking may cease, that pleading voice may be heard no more, the disappointed Herald of heavenly compassion may pass on, never to return. Should that happen, you will be at Spirit-abandoned ease, given over to unchecked sin, the Cross of Christ losing its appeal for you, entered into a course of reckless delirium that precedes the eternal death of an immortal suicide.

What follows?

In awful anguish you will knock at the door of Heaven, but the Voice, which you would not hear as it pleaded with you, answers, "**Depart from me; I never knew you!**" and the pierced hand that knocked in vain at your heart thrusts you away to everlasting despair. But, it need not be so! It is not too late! At least, I trust it is not!

Fling open the door! Call in the entreating Saviour! Beg the insulted Spirit to come in! Unspeakable blessings will be yours forever.

THE DOOR OPEN AND CHRIST WITHIN

"If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me."

Here is divine indwelling, divine fellowship, divine satisfaction. We are told of the apostle Paul that the believer is a "**temple of the Holy Ghost**," that CHRIST is "**formed within him, the hope of glory**," that "**he lives, yet not he, but Christ liveth in him**."

Yes, "**the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity**" claims for Himself two dwelling places; for He says, "**I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite heart and humble spirit**."

CHRIST's entering in sheds abroad His glorious light through the soul, dissipating its doubts, healing its errors, confirming its hopes. CHRIST by His Spirit dwells within the believer, beating in the love of his heart, speaking with his lips, seeing with his eyes, hearing with his ears, thinking with his thoughts, working with his hands, walking with his feet in the narrow way that leads unto life and acceptable service. Here is our comfort and trust when struggling with sin and doubt and temptation.

Here is the earnest of eternal life.

Think, then, of the divine fellowship. "**I will come in, and sup with him and he with me**." In the supping with us, He makes the covenant of love He will surely keep, as it would be a breach of the most sacred hospitality even in us to violate. He sits down with us as friend with friend, as brother with brother, at a sacrament of a familiar table. He talks with us and invites us to talk with Him. We tell Him of our sorrows and our joys, our perplexities and our hopes, our difficulties and our desires. "**He takes of the things of the Father and shows them unto us**" until our hearts glow within us, filled with light, and peace, and joy.

Follow on to divine satisfactions. The Master brings His own provisions - the bread of His holy truth, the wine of His holy joy. The bread gives us strength; the wine cheers our hearts. That same divine Word, that same divine Bread was His meat when a Pilgrim, a Stranger, a Laborer upon the earth. The anticipations of that joy animated Him to endure the Cross, despising its shame. Now He shares with His disciples His own comforts. Daily is the bread renewed. Daily is the water of life turned into cheering wine. Then will come the feast perpetual, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

To whom then does the Lord make this astonishing offer?

Where is the soul thus distinguished by divine condescension? My fellow sinner, hearer of this humble message, it is at your heart the Spirit is knocking. **"If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me."**

"If any man" - surely, that means you, me, anyone to whom the Gospel is preached, and with whom the Spirit witnesses. Here, then, is the choice set before you! Will you keep the door of your heart shut and the Saviour out, or will you open it and receive the Saviour in as your GOD, your Friend, your divine Entertainer? It is yours to decide. Oh, the blessedness of the Lord's coming in! Oh, the awfulness of the misery of the obstinate sinner who rejects CHRIST the Saviour now, to be rejected at the great day by CHRIST the Judge!

Oh, let each cry to GOD, "Oh, save us, Thou compassionate JESUS, from such a doom! Break, break the door away! Fill us with Thy power, O most mighty Holy Ghost!"

~ end of chapter 6 ~
