

Sinners Welcome To Come To Jesus Christ Part II

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Alexander (1772-1851) was the founding professor of Princeton Theological Seminary.

Since awakened, convicted sinners are so prone to unbelief on this point, it will not be a superfluous labor to offer *some cogent reasons to convince such that Christ will not cast off any* who come to him, whatever may have been their former character or sins.

And I would first mention, that all who come are *drawn by the Father*. "No man," says Christ, "can come unto me except the Father which sent me draw him." Those who do truly come are such as were given to him by the Father. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." Now this drawing of the Father is the fruit of his everlasting love. "We love him, because he first loved us." And surely Christ will not cast out those whom the Father has loved and given to him, and effectually drawn by his grace.

But you may be ready to reply, "How shall I know that I am of the number given by the Father to the Son?" I answer, that you need no other or better evidence of it than your being willing to come. Surely you know that you did not make yourself willing. If you have come to Christ, or are willing to come, I am sure that you will ascribe it entirely to the grace of God. Others, as good by nature and practice as you, remain in love with the world and under the power of sin. Why is it? You must say with Paul, "By the grace of God I am what I am." The choice did not commence with you, but with him. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." And as Christ concurs with the Father in this drawing, for he says, "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me," he surely will not cast out the poor penitent whom he has drawn to his feet. No, no; never. "Him that cometh he will in no wise cast out."

Again, Christ *redeemed, by the shedding of his precious blood*, every soul that comes to him, and the impelling motive which induced him to die for sinners was love, unspeakable love: "who loved us, and gave himself for us." Can any one then think or suspect that when Christ sees the travail of his soul coming to him, he will cast them out? It would be like blasphemy to say that he would. No; he delights to see the fruit of his painful suffering even unto death. It was predicted, in connection with the impressive description of his sufferings and death, that he should "see the travail of his soul, and be satisfied."

Again, *the Holy Spirit* is the agent in convincing men of sin and bringing them to Christ; and this Holy Spirit is sent by the Son as well as the Father to accomplish this work; and when it is effected, when the soul is made willing to bow his neck to the easy yoke of Christ, will he cast him out? Impossible.

But *the honor and glory* of the Redeemer is concerned in this matter. God is not glorified in any transaction upon earth so much as in the conversion of a sinner. There is joy in heaven at the repentance of one sinner, more than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance. And every redeemed and renewed soul is a jewel in the mediatorial crown.

We may learn the willingness of Jesus Christ to receive sinners, not only by his frequent gracious declarations, but by *his conduct in regard to such as applied to him*. Christ's personal ministry was confined to people of Israel, and when he sent out the twelve, and afterwards the seventy, their commission was restricted within the same limits. Yet when a woman of Canaan came to implore his aid, he did not reject her, though she descended from an accursed race. At first, indeed, he seemed to give her repulse, but it was intended only to bring more clearly to view the strength of her faith. And his address to her in the end is truly remarkable: "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee as thou wilt." And when the centurion, another pagan, applied to him to come and heal his child, he did not reject his suit because he was a heathen, but said of him, "Verily, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

When the vilest sinners, as publicans and harlots, came penitently to his feet, he rejected none of them, although his gracious attention to such greatly injured his reputation in the view of the scribes and Pharisees. His condescending behavior towards that woman who was notorious as a sinner, is in the highest degree touching. He was dining in the house of a Pharisee, and this infamous but penitent woman, urged by the strength of her feelings, found her way into the house, and while he was reclining on a couch at dinner, she came up behind him and wept such a flood of tears on his feet, that she is said to have washed his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. This led the Pharisee to entertain a suspicion that Christ could not be a teacher sent from God, or he would have known the infamous character of this woman. Jesus knowing his thoughts, uttered the beautiful parable of the two debtors, and then making the application to the case of the penitent woman, said, "Wherefore I say unto you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven."

When our blessed Lord was hanging on the cross, he was applied to by one of the malefactors crucified with him. This man being one of the two selected from all the prisoners in Jerusalem for public execution on this occasion, was no doubt deeply stained with the guilt of enormous crimes; but was his suit denied? O no; the response was full of mercy: "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Who can fathom the freeness and riches of the grace of Christ? It is indeed "unsearchable riches."

Paul may with propriety be here introduced. According to his own acknowledgment, he was a murderer and a blasphemer, but he obtained mercy, and was made an apostle, a chief instrument in propagating that gospel which he once attempted to destroy, among the Gentiles. Many of the first converts from among the heathen were notorious for the foulest and vilest crimes, for the apostle in writing to the Corinthians, after giving a black list of crimes which exclude the persons guilty of them from the kingdom of heaven, says, "And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

But perhaps no example of the extent of divine mercy and its sovereign freedom can equal the pardon extended to the very persons who had imbrued their hands in Christ's own blood. The blood which they shed procured their salvation. And Christ seems to have had special compassion for the bloody city of Jerusalem. Before his death he wept over it and lamented its doom; and after his resurrection, when he met his disciples in a body, he gave direction that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, *beginning at Jerusalem*." Accordingly, on the day of Pentecost, Peter charges the sin of crucifying the Lord Jesus upon the consciences of those whom he addressed, saying, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Did Peter tell them that as they had committed this enormous crime, Christ would not pardon them? By no means. He calls upon them to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. And these greatest of sinners were that very day received into the church, and continued steadfast in their attachment to Christ and profession of his name.

Innumerable instances since that day have occurred of the repentance of the greatest sinners, and no true penitent has ever been rejected. If one instance could be produced of any sinner being rejected who ever came to Christ, this might create some doubt in the soul agonized with a sense of guilt. But as there is no such example, the trembling sinner, feeling that he is justly exposed to the wrath of God, need not hesitate nor delay to come at once to Christ, with the assurance that however vile and guilty he may be, he shall meet a welcome reception. O sinner, you are welcome to come to Jesus Christ.

All difficulty as to Christ's willingness to receive returning sinners being, as it is hoped, removed, the only thing which remains to be considered is, *what is to be understood by coming to Christ*, and what are the steps which the sinner must take to come. It is too obvious to need any remark, that a mere bodily approach is not the thing intended. Many of Christ's bitterest enemies were often near his person, as Judas when he betrayed him with a kiss, the soldiers that bound him, that smote him, that scourged him, that nailed him to the cross; but this kind of

approach to Christ did those who came near him no good. The coming to Christ of which we have been treating, is *the act of the anxious mind which seeks salvation from the burden of sin, and apprehending that Christ is the only Redeemer, trusts in him*. Christ is exhibited in the gospel as the only Mediator by whom we can be reconciled to God, and offers to do for the sinner whatever is requisite to save him from the curse of the law, and from the blindness and pollution of sin itself; and *coming to him* is the same as *receiving* him in that character, or as sustaining those offices which relate to salvation.

There is but one step to be taken, strictly speaking, in coming to Christ, and that is *believing in him with all the heart*. We are not required to repent and do good works before we come, but to come to him to give us repentance unto life, and to create us anew to good works. But though the act of coming is a single act, yet there are some things which are experienced before this act can be rationally performed. No unawakened, careless sinner, remaining in that state, will come; for the "whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." The sinner who knows nothing of Christ as he is revealed in the Scriptures, cannot come until he is instructed in regard to the character of Christ. Faith therefore comes by hearing the word. A soul perverted by erroneous opinions respecting the fundamental doctrines of religion, cannot come until he is delivered from these errors. That man who believes Christ to be the promised Messiah, but thinks that he is no more than a good man and a prophet, cannot come to Christ until this fundamental error be removed. The soul that truly comes to Christ must be persuaded that he is indeed the Son of God, and possessed of divine perfections.

The soul convinced of its sins first seeks Christ as he is an atoning Priest. That which it wants is the pardon of sin, and reconciliation with an offended God. Christ, as the great High-priest, has offered up himself as an atoning sacrifice for sin; and as a priest he has entered into the holy place made without hands, there to sprinkle, as it were, his life-giving blood, and to intercede for all who come unto him. When in this character he is apprehended by the seeking sinner, confidence in him is produced. It is seen now how God can be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly who believes in Christ. It is seen that God having accepted Christ's atoning sacrifice, can receive the guilty sinner into favor and adopt the rebel as a child. These views, accompanied by this trust in the Lord Jesus as having made a complete atonement for our sins, is the act of coming to Christ. But as the soul that is regenerated feels sin itself to be a burden, it looks to Christ for a deliverance from all the disorders of the depraved mind. He is therefore received and trusted, to deliver the soul from the deep stains of iniquity, and by the light of his truth to guide it in the right way.

Let it be remembered that this coming to Christ is not a solitary act of believing soul; it is one which must continually repeated. The justified sinner is every moment dependent on his Savior, without whom he can do nothing. As he is at first justified by faith, so he lives by faith, walks by faith, and by faith overcomes

all his enemies, and brings forth the fruits of holiness and peace.

But some will be ready to say, "There is no coming to Christ unless we are drawn, and why then are we blamed for not coming?"

This is not the language of the truly convinced sinner, for he sees and feels that he is guilty of the damning sin of unbelief, and that he deserves to be punished for this sin above all others; for it is this which seals the guilt of all others upon his soul. Dead in sin, it is certain that he will perform no holy action, but he is still a rational and accountable being. The law of God does not lose its authority to command because we have become sinful. It will never do to plead sin as an excuse for sin, or to attempt to justify sinful acts by pleading that we have an evil heart. This instead of being a valid apology, is the very ground of our condemnation. If you feel that your heart is thus blinded and depraved, this conviction of your miserable, sinful state should humble you deeply in the dust, and induce you to cry more earnestly to God for his life-giving Spirit. Often, however, when Christ sends forth his gracious invitation to believe, he enables the soul by the energy of his Spirit accompanying the call to come and receive his grace. He accompanies his word with a quickening efficacy, and "the dead hear the voice of the Son of God and live." Our whole dependence is on the influence of the Holy Spirit. "Paul may plant and Apollos water, but God giveth the increase."

Let us now review the truths which have been inculcated.

1. Christ is an able and willing Savior, who will in no wise cast out any soul that comes to him.
2. The grace of God, through Christ, is perfectly free; that is, he requires no qualification or merit in those who come. They are invited to apply to him in all their guilt and pollution, that they may from his gracious hands receive pardon and renovation.
3. There is no obstacle in the way of any sinner's coming but what exists in himself. The door of mercy cannot be set wider open than it is; the invitations of Christ could not be more kind and full.
4. The whole blame of the sinner's ruin who refuses to come to Christ, will lie at his own door. The only obstacle is his own perverseness and unwillingness. Christ was willing to give life to his greatest enemies if they would come to him; for he complains, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life."
5. The conversion of a single soul is the work of God only. The same power which caused light to shine out of darkness, must shine into our hearts. Creation is a work proper to God only, but conversion is a "new creation," and requires power as really divine as that by which the worlds were formed.

6. God has directed the gospel to be preached to every creature without discrimination; and every one who hears it has a divine warrant to receive it; and if he does, he has the faithfulness of God pledged for his everlasting salvation.

7. As the efficacy of the word depends on the energy of the Holy Spirit, all Christians should be incessant and fervent in their supplications for this Spirit of grace to be poured out, that sinners may be converted.

8. We have encouragement to hope that the time is coming, and perhaps drawing near, when conversions will be multiplied far beyond the experience of former ages; when the Jews shall, as a nation, obtain mercy of the Lord, and when all the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Amen.

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