

# COMING TO CHRIST

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"Coming to Christ" is a very common phrase in Holy Scripture. It is used to express those acts of the soul wherein, leaving at once our self-righteousness and our sins, we fly to the Lord Jesus Christ and receive His righteousness to be our covering, and His blood to be our atonement. Coming to Christ, then, embraces in it repentance, self-negation, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and all those necessary attendants as the belief of the truth, earnest prayer to God, submission of the soul to the gospel, and all things which accompany the dawn of salvation in the soul. Coming to Christ is just the one essential thing for a sinner's salvation. He that does not come to Christ, do what he may, or think what he may, is yet in *"the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity."* Coming to Christ is the very first effect of regeneration. No sooner is the soul quickened than it at once discovers its lost estate, is horrified of it, looks for a refuge and, believing Christ to be a suitable one, flies to Him and reposes in Him. Where there is not this coming to Christ, it is certain that there is as yet no quickening. Where there is no quickening, the soul is dead in trespasses and sins, and being dead it cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. *"No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him. "Wherein does this inability lie?*

First, it does not lie in any *physical* defect. If in coming to Christ, moving the body or walking with the feet should be of any assistance, certainly man has all physical power to come to Christ in that sense, for as long as the man was alive and had legs, it was as easy for him to walk to the house of God as to the house of Satan. If coming to Christ includes the utterance of a prayer, man has no physical defect in that respect. If he is not dumb, he can say a prayer as easily as he can utter blasphemy. It is as easy for a man to sing one of the songs of Zion as to sing a profane and libidinous song. There is no lack of physical power in coming to Christ.

Again, this inability does not lie in any *mental* lack. I can believe the Bible to be true just as easily as I can believe any other book to be true. So far as believing on Christ is an act of the mind, I am just as able to believe on Christ as I am able to believe on anybody else. There is no deficiency of mental faculty. The mind is as capable of appreciating the guilt of sin as it is of appreciating the guilt of murder. It is just as possible for me to exercise the mental idea of seeking God, as it is to exercise the thought of ambition. There is not any man so ignorant that he can plead a lack of intellect as an excuse for rejecting the Gospel. The defect, then, does not lie either in the body or the mind itself, although it is in the corruption or the ruin of the mind that is the very essence of man's inability.

Through the fall and through our own sin, the nature of man has become so debased, depraved, and corrupt, that it is impossible for him to come to Christ without the assistance of God the Holy Spirit. Now, to show how the nature of man thus renders him unable to come to Christ, take this figure. How willingly a sheep feeds on the herbage! You never knew a sheep to sigh after meat. It could not live on lion's food. Now a wolf cannot eat grass, or be as docile and as domesticated as the sheep. It is contrary to nature. It has ears and legs. It can hear the shepherd's voice and follow him wherever he leads it, but its nature forbids it. It *cannot* do so. There will always be a marked distinction between *the wolf* and the sheep, a distinction in nature.

Let me give you a better illustration. You see a mother with her babe in her arms. You put a knife into her hand and tell her to stab that babe to the heart. She replies, and very truthfully, "I cannot." Now, so far as her bodily power is concerned, she can, if she pleases; there is the knife, and there is the child. The child cannot resist, and she has sufficient strength in her hand to stab it to its heart. But she is quite correct when she says she cannot do it.

It is quite possible that she might *think* of such a thing as killing the child, and yet she says she cannot think of such a thing and that not falsely, for her nature as a mother forbids her. She cannot kill it.

It is even so with a sinner. Coming to Christ is so obnoxious to human nature that, although, so far as physical and mental forces are concerned men could come if they would, but it is correct to say that they cannot and will not unless the Father who sent Christ draws them.

Man is by nature blind. The Cross of Christ, so laden with glories and glittering with attractions, never attracts him because he is blind and cannot see its beauties. Talk to him of the wonders of the creation. Let him behold the glories of a landscape. He is able to see all these things; but talk to him of the wonders of the covenant of grace, speak to him of the security of the believer in Christ, tell him of the beauties of the Person of the Redeemer, he is quite deaf to all your descriptions. You are as one that plays a goodly tune, but he regards not. He is deaf and has no comprehension.

I ask, do you find your power equal to your will. You could say, even at the bar of God Himself, that you are sure you are not mistaken in your willingness. You are willing to be wrapped up in devotion. It is your will that your soul should not wander from a pure contemplation of the Lord Jesus Christ, but you find that you cannot do that, even when you are willing, without the help of the Spirit. Now, if the quickened child of God finds a spiritual inability, how much more the sinner who is dead in trespasses and sin? If even the advanced Christian, after thirty or forty years, finds himself sometimes willing and yet powerless—if such be his experience—does it not seem more than likely that the poor sinner who has not yet believed, should find need for strength as well as will?

But, there is another argument. If the sinner has strength to come to Christ, how we are to understand those descriptions of the sinner's state which we find in God's holy Word? A sinner is said to be dead in trespasses and sins. Will you affirm that death implies nothing more than the absence of a will?

"Surely a corpse is quite as unable as unwilling?" says one. "Well then, if I cannot save myself and cannot come to Christ, I must sit still and do nothing." If men do say so, on their own heads shall be their doom. There are many things you can do. It is in your power to be found continually in the house of God, to study the Word of God. It is within your power to renounce your outward sin and to forsake the vices in which you indulge. It is in your power to make your life honest, sober, and righteous. For this you need no help from the Holy Spirit; all this you can do yourself; but to come to Christ truly is not in your power, until you are renewed by the Holy Ghost. But mark you, your lack of power is no excuse, seeing that you have no desire to come, and are living in willful rebellion against God.

Your lack of power lies mainly in the obstinacy of nature. Suppose a liar says that it is not in his power to speak the truth. He has been a liar so long that he cannot stop. Is that an excuse for him? Suppose a man who has long indulged in lust should tell you that he finds

his lusts have so girt about him like a great iron net that he cannot get rid of them, would you take that as an excuse? No, because his inability to reform lies in his nature, which he has no desire to restrain or conquer. The thing that is done, and the thing that causes the thing that is done are both from the root of sin. They are two evils which cannot excuse each other. Let me put a thunderbolt beneath the seat of your sloth so that you may be startled and aroused. To sit still is to be damned to all eternity.

And now we gather up our ends and conclude by making a practical and, we trust, comfortable application of this doctrine. "Well," says one, "if what this man teaches be true, what is to become of my religion? I have been a long while trying and I do not like to hear that a man cannot save himself. I believe that he can and I mean to persevere, but if I am to believe what you say, I must give it all up and begin again." It will be a good thing if you do. Remember that what you are doing is building your house on the sand. Let me assure you, in God's name, if your religion has no better foundation than your own strength, it will not support you at the bar of God. Nothing will last to eternity, but that which came from eternity. Unless the everlasting God has done a good work in your heart, all you may have done must be unraveled at the last day of account. It is all in vain for you to be a church-goer and keep the Sabbath and observe your prayers. It is all in vain for you to be honest to your neighbors and reputable in your conversation. If you hope to be saved by these, it is all in vain for you to trust in them. Go on; be as honest as you like. Keep the Sabbath perpetually. Be as holy as you can. I would not dissuade you from these things. God forbid! Grow in them, but oh, do not trust in them. It is a foul delusion to rely upon anything that flesh can do. A spiritual heaven must be inhabited by spiritual men and preparation for it must be wrought by the Spirit of God.

"Well," cries another, "I have been sitting under a ministry where I have been told that I could at my own option repent and believe. I thought I could come one day as well as another. I had only to say, 'Lord, have mercy upon me,' and believe, and then I should be saved. Now you have taken all this hope away for me and I feel amazement and horror taking hold on me." I am very glad of it. This was the effect which I hoped to produce. I pray that you may feel this a great deal more. When you have no hope of saving yourself, I shall have hope that God has begun to save you. As soon as you say "Oh, I cannot come to Christ. Lord, draw me, help me," I shall rejoice over you. He who has a will although he has no power, shows that grace has begun in his heart and God will not leave him until the work is finished. But learn, careless sinner, that your salvation hangs in God's hand. Oh, remember that you are entirely in the hand of God! You have sinned against Him, and if He wills to damn you, condemned you are. You cannot resist His will nor thwart His purpose. You have deserved His wrath, and if He chooses to pour the full shower upon your head, you canst do nothing to avert it.

If, on the other hand, He chooses to save you, He is able to save you to the very uttermost. But you lie in His hand as much as the summer's moth lies beneath your own finger. He is the God whom you are grieving every day. Does it not make you tremble to think that your eternal destiny now hangs on the will of Him whom you have angered and incensed? Does this not make your knees knock and your blood curdle? If it does, I rejoice, inasmuch as this may be the first effect of the Spirit's drawing in thy soul. Oh, tremble to think that the God, whom you have angered, is the God upon whom your salvation or your condemnation entirely depends! Tremble, and "*kiss the Son lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way while His wrath is kindled but a little.*"