

# LOOK to JESUS



WILLIAM REID (1814-1896)

# Look to Jesus

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# 1. Our Need of Jesus

*“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”—Luke 19:10*

## A. Are You a Sinner?

Dear Friend, Has God’s Holy Spirit shown you that you are a *sinner*?

“What!,” you may ask, “I cannot discover that I am a sinner except by the light of the Holy Spirit, can I?” I tell you frankly and at once that you *cannot*.

Without the Holy Spirit, you *can easily* learn that you are a sinner from the Word of God, or confess yourself a sinner in prayer. But to see yourself a sinner in the light of divine teaching, to feel it with a divinely enlightened conscience, and to realize the terrible *fact*, as in the very presence of the God of infinite holiness, and in reference to the solemn realities of a coming eternity—this is a matter of awful *experience*, not of mere learning or customary confession!

Oh, how dreadful it would be were you convinced by the Holy Spirit that you are “condemned already,” ruined, lost, and in danger of hell every breath you draw! I wish you were *so* convinced: I pray God you may be so, even this very moment; for were you to die an unpardoned sinner (and you *may* die any moment), you would lift up your eyes in hell being in torment, and find yourself a sinner forevermore where no Savior ever comes!

*“He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”  
—John 3:18*

Perhaps you say, as another once did, “I admit I am a sinner, I know that I have sinned; but I cannot understand what you mean by saying that I am a *lost* sinner—a ruined sinner. I am not lost; I am not ruined, as you say.”

“Well, I know you are not *finally* lost, or you would not be here. Bless God for that mercy. But if you are not lost, you can have nothing to do with the Savior, for He has come ‘to seek and to save that which was *lost*’” (Luk 19:10). Man, as soon as he fell, was lost, for God’s first question implies this—“Adam, where art thou?” (Gen 3:9). God, in grace, was seeking man at the Fall<sup>1</sup> *because* he was lost; and God in Christ is seeking sinners still, just because they are lost.

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<sup>1</sup> The *Fall* occurred in Genesis 3 when mankind through Adam rebelled against God’s authority.

It may be, however, that you have heard so much in the preaching of the sanctuary about sinners and lost sinners, that you will readily admit that the Bible teaches that, as sinners, we are all utterly ruined and lost. But do you feel that the Bible speaks true to you, when it comes to you personally, and says, *You* are a sinner: *you* are ruined and lost, for *you* are “condemned already,” and the wrath of God abides upon *you*? “God be merciful to *me a sinner!*” is quite a different thing from the easy-going acknowledgment, “we are all sinners.”

When D’Aubigne (1794-1872) was a student, he heard Robert Haldane<sup>2</sup> reading a chapter from the *Epistle to the Romans*, concerning all men being sinners by nature. He was astonished at it, but being clearly convinced by the passages read to him, he said to Mr. Haldane, “Now I do indeed see this doctrine in the Bible.” “Yes,” replied he, “but do you see it in *your heart?*” It was a simple question, but it proved the sword of the Spirit, and awakened his slumbering conscience to recognize the terrible fact, that *sin was in his heart*; and, by the grace of God, it led to his conversion to Christ, for he immediately felt his need of Jesus when he found himself a *lost sinner*.<sup>3</sup>

My friend, has this experience been yours? Have you seen sin in your heart? Have you seen and felt it to be a poison which has passed through every part of your moral nature?

## **B. False Security through “Religion”**

Thousands of persons in Ireland, as well as in other places, have had such a soul-harrowing sight and sense of sin in their hearts and lives, that it has so burdened their spirits that they have been well-nigh driven to despair, and some of them have been almost deprived of life. Perhaps you have never lost an hour’s quiet sleep, nor relish for a single meal, by a sight of your soul’s sinful and lost condition! And yet, if you only saw it by the grace of the Holy Ghost, your condition is quite as bad and hopeless as theirs!

How dreadful your case! A sinner not far from perdition, and yet happy, careless, and reckless of eternity! Notwithstanding all your outward correctness of deportment and periodical religiousness, your case is desperate! But, if you *will* go to hell, do not mock God by the way, pretending to serve Him when you know that all your praying, hearing, praising, and communicating is but a downright insult to the All-Seeing One!

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<sup>2</sup> **Robert Haldane** (1764-1842) – nobleman born in London, attended University of Edinburgh; served in the Royal Navy; devoted himself and his means wholly to the advancement of Christianity through preaching and missions. Known for his *Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans*.

<sup>3</sup> Each person is a “lost sinner” before God saves him. Once we have been saved (“born again”), then we still commit sin (though less and less over time), but we are no longer a “lost” sinner, because Jesus has saved us from the eternal penalty for our sins.

A dear friend, who has been used by God to awaken thousands, and turn many from sin to holiness, and from profession to reality, during a long stay in Scotland, was led to speak out with the utmost plainness about the mockery and folly of people going down to the everlasting burnings by the holy way of the communion table!<sup>4</sup>

He said one day something very like this, "I fear many of you are going to endless misery, and you are not doing so like many of my countrymen, who never go to church at all, but spend their time at home or in the public house. There might be said to be a Scotch way of going to hell, and this seems to be it: You have got the *Shorter Catechism* in your head,<sup>5</sup> your Bible in the one hand, and communion bread from your minister in the other, but the world is in your hearts, and hell fire will be the end of it 'except ye repent.'" This is very strongly expressed, but is there not too much truth in it?

While many an English rich man perishes through carelessness and apathy to the gospel, and many an Irish peasant is led into hell blindfolded by the superstitious rites of a cruel priesthood, multitudes of the church-going Scotch seem bent on entering eternity arrayed in all the holy garments of a religious profession, but it will be only to hear, with astonished ears, the withering words from a Savior's lips that will send them to their own place, "I never knew you; depart from me ye that work iniquity" (Mat 7:23).

At a meeting for inquirers, held after an open-air service in the town of Dundee, a minister's attention was drawn to an old man. When asked, whether thoughts of his soul and his Savior led him to appear among the inquirers, he sat for a while, Job-like, unable to speak.

At length he acknowledged that, although he had made a public profession of Christianity for many years, it had been a Christ-less profession. He had heard the preacher say in his discourse, that a person might receive fifty "tokens" to admit to the communion table, and yet, after all, be unconverted; and this pierced his heart, for he felt that it was an accurate representation of his own case. He was directed to the Lord Jesus Christ as the Savior of the chief of sinners. He listened, he believed; and the minister now writes of him that "he gives all the marks of having unreservedly yielded himself to Jesus, and of walking in the fear of God, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost."

Many are deceiving themselves by joining themselves to some one of the churches of Christ before *being joined* by the Holy Spirit to Christ Himself! The Holy Ghost,

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<sup>4</sup> Many Scottish people of the last century were considered to be devout church-goers. The key is: "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" - 1 Samuel 16:7.

<sup>5</sup> The *Shorter Catechism* is a summary of Bible truths, part of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* written in London in 1646.



when He comes in saving power, will make havoc of the Church, in so far as it is composed of such members. He has done so in the case of thousands in past revivals, and He is doing so still in many different places throughout the land.

### **C. Personal Responsibility for Your Sin**

An intelligent, amiable, honest, upright young man, a pattern of good conduct and religiousness, was suddenly arrested one night by the Spirit of God.

“Oh, my sin! My Sin!” he cried. “What sin?” asked a friend, wondering what sin could be lying upon *his* conscience. “Oh, it is my cold neglect of the loving Savior.” For four hours he writhed in torture under a dreadful sense of sin; and after the Lord revealed Himself to him, he vowed that his life should be one living sacrifice to his Redeemer’s praise. His conviction and conversion were the means of leading more than one flourishing professor in the town to inquire, “*Am I saved or lost?*”

It is greatly to be feared that many even of those who frequent our communion tables are *not saved*, and will be in hell forever, unless they repent of their dependence upon church membership and all their other sins, and, like this religious youth, be brought to Jesus for pardon and peace. Religion, you see, saves none! “The precious blood of Christ” alone (1Pe 1:19) can save us from sin and wrath. Are you, my dear friend, *saved or lost?* If you are saved, you remember a time when you were lost; and you can tell something of your conviction and conversion. Those who are saved, because they are not sanctified from their infancy, can tell how they were brought to a sense of sin and a knowledge of salvation.

Have you felt that you are a sinner, and, as such, have you sought salvation? While passing along the street one morning, a young man rushed out of his office and caught me in his arms, “O sir, I have found Christ.” “When and how?” were the questions I earnestly put to him. He then gave me the following account of himself: “You know, sir, I have been very anxious for some weeks past. That anxiety became dreadful on Friday night. I was engaged in prayer. While on my knees my burden became intolerable. I felt my sins pressing on my heart as if that warehouse were built on my body. I could not move. I could not rise from my knees. I cried with such agony that my next neighbor rose out of bed and rushed in to know what was wrong. He prayed with me. Before he left I found peace through believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.”

My dear friend, have you known nothing of an experience like that? Have you ever felt your sins pressing on your heart, as if the weight of “a warehouse” were lying upon your body; and do you know what it is to have peace “through believing on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Act 16:31)?

“If you do not *find out your sin*, and bring it to Calvary to get it pardoned and washed away through the blood of Jesus, be sure your sin will find you out, and bring

you to the judgment seat, to be condemned by Jesus, and sent away into everlasting punishment.”

A little girl, who had told her mother a lie before she left home, was greatly troubled when she heard a minister say these awful things in his sermon. “Oh, that *lie!*” she said within herself. “I must bring it to Calvary, or it will send me to hell!” She was led, step by step, to see herself a great sinner, although a little girl; and she walked miles to see the minister, to ask him how she was to be saved. By and by, she was enabled to lay her sins on Jesus, and when she was asked, afterwards, if she had laid her sins on Jesus, she replied, “Oh, yes, and I’ll never lie anymore.”

My dear friend, have you laid *your* sins on Jesus; and has it made you so averse to sin, and so full of desires after holiness, that you now feel anxious to “sin no more,” like this dear lamb of the Good Shepherd’s fold?

#### **D. Pardon and Blessings**

But there is not only pardon in Jesus, there is every spiritual blessing a ruined sinner needs. “It pleased the Father that in him should all *fullness* dwell” (Col 1:19).

A minister, who had been accustomed to consider the gospel extremely simple and intelligible, and having little in it, was struck one day with the expression “*The unsearchable riches of Christ*” (Eph 3:8). “The unsearchable riches of Christ,” he said within himself, “I never found, I never knew that there were unsearchable riches in *Him!*” He became deeply convinced of sin; and, while pacing his room some time afterwards, he was led to contemplate those two passages of Scripture, “*Without shedding of blood is no remission,*” and “*The blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth us from all sin.*” He believed in Jesus—washed in His blood, and was filled with a “*joy unspeakable.*” [Heb 9:22; 1Jo 1:7; 1Pe 1:8]

“I went upstairs and down again (said he), backwards and forwards in my room, clapping my hands for joy, and crying out, ‘I have found Him! I have found Him! I have found Him Whom my soul loveth!’ And for a little time, as the apostle said, whether ‘in the body or out of the body I can hardly tell’ (2Co 12:2).”

It should not be thought incredible that a minister should thus be preaching salvation to others while *lost* himself, for we read in the third chapter of the Gospel by John that even the excellent, moral Nicodemus, a master of Israel, had no idea that he required to be “born again.” It was to this ruler of the Jews that Jesus addressed the solemn language, “*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*” If any man might have been sent by the Lord Jesus to work out a righteousness for himself, this man would have been he; but even to him He says, “*Ye must be born again*” (Joh 3:3-7).



## E. Good Works

You may perhaps think, “If I do better, God will pardon me,” but that is a vain thought. He will by no means clear the guilty. No amount of reformation for the present can atone for the sins of the past. The God of inflexible justice has you in custody as a criminal, by law condemned to die, and all your fancied good works are now but prison-house services,<sup>6</sup> and can avail you nothing for justification before God. The sentence is passed; and were you, for the present, to give a perfect obedience to all God’s commandments, that would be but duty—and “duty discharges no debt.” If you cling to doing better, as the ground of your pardon and acceptance with God, your damnation is sure. For Scripture says,

*“All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” – Isaiah 64:6*

*“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.” – Titus 3:5*

But although you can do nothing to merit God’s favor, you need not perish. We declare unto you the “good tidings,” that you may be saved upon the ground of the finished and accepted work of One Who is mighty to save. The holy Jehovah, in sovereign mercy, sent His Son Jesus to be the Savior of the lost! He endured the cross, bore the curse of the Law, made atonement, and opened up a way of access to God’s favor, for the chief of sinners! He put away *sin*, not *sinner*s. They may be reconciled,

*“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.” – 2 Corinthians 5:21*

God will save sinners as an act of free grace, not otherwise; by grace, or not at all. There is a glorious way of “being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom 3:24). The old way of works<sup>7</sup> is closed, and guarded by the flaming sword; but the new and living way of free grace has been opened and consecrated for us by Christ, the only mediator between God and man. If you ask the question, “What must I do to be saved?” the answer is simple and satisfying, for it is that which God’s Holy Word supplies, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*” (Act 16:31).

Although it is utter folly to try to get up a righteousness in which to appear before God, many are doing it. A girl who, at one time, had been very frivolous, but who is

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<sup>6</sup> **prison-house services** – works questioned because one is under pressure and scrutiny, and is therefore tempted to act better only in order to gain relief.

<sup>7</sup> *Editor:* The “old way” spoken of (salvation through keeping the Law) was never God’s actual way of salvation, not even in Old Testament times. Salvation is and always has been by faith alone. But the Pharisees in Jesus’ time and many in our day think that doing good works will earn them favor with God. This is against the biblical gospel of justification by faith alone.

now, in her own sphere, first in every good work, and a devoted Christian, when asked by a minister, “What brought you first to think about your soul?” replied, “Amid all my folly I often thought seriously of my soul and of judgment, and often had partial changes toward good in my life; but just as often, in the time of temptation, I fell back, and my convictions were lost. When I recovered them I felt very uneasy, because I knew that with my vain heart I could not appear before God. I tried once very seriously to work out a righteousness of my own, but it was all in vain. I tried it a second time, with the same result, till at last my mind was fixed on the righteousness of Jesus Christ alone, and I saw a glory and a perfection in Him that I wondered I had never seen before. With my whole heart I trusted in the merits of Christ, and I feel my peace growing, and my love to God growing, and I think I could not only live for Christ but die for Christ.”

My dear friend, has this been your experience? Have you seen such an inexpressible glory and perfection in the righteousness of the Savior of the lost, that you have trusted in His merits with your whole heart, and now believe that you “*could not only live for Christ, but die for Christ?*” Have you had a spiritual conviction of sin, and an evangelical conversion to God? Are you living for self and the world, or for Christ and eternity? Ask yourself seriously, before you read anymore, this all important question, *Am I lost or saved?*

## 2. Look to Jesus

*“Look unto me, and be ye saved...for I am God,  
and there is none else.”—Isaiah 45:22*

### **A. Condemned to Die**

Dear Friend, My heart’s desire and prayer to God for you is that you may *be saved*. You regard yourself as a lost sinner; and well you may, for it is actually true. You were born in sin; you have lived in sin, and, on account of sin, you are condemned to die by God’s holy Law, “for the wages of sin is death!” But the grace of God is exceeding abundant; and He has given the most indisputable proof that He loves sinners, and would have them to obtain salvation “through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us.” [Rom 6:23; 1Th 5:9-10]

## B. What God Did

Jesus is an all-sufficient Savior, and He is able and willing to save the very chief of sinners. His work of *redemption*<sup>8</sup> is finished, as the Scriptures show. He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities. He His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree. He died for the ungodly. He died the Just One for the unjust. He appeared in our nature, took our place, “was made under the law,” and endured its curse. He has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; and because, by His obedience and death, He hath magnified the Law, God is well pleased with all who believe in His name “for his righteousness’ sake.” [John 19:30, Isaiah 53:5, 1 Pet. 2:24, Rom. 5:6, Gal. 4:4, 2 Pet. 1:17, Isaiah 42:21]

God’s chief aim in the Bible is to make Himself known as a God of grace—a God in Christ reconciling sinners to Himself. He retains not His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. We have ample proof of this in the fact that He sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. What was it but His love to us sinners that moved Him to do this? God sent His Son to die for His enemies—to redeem from *merited wrath* the rebellious and ungodly.<sup>9</sup> [2Co 5:18; Mic 7:18; Joh 3:16]

And the great thing with you at present is to know the real foundation of a ruined, hell-deserving sinner’s *peace*. Jesus is our peace, Who hath made peace by the blood of His cross. We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. Eternal death is the *sad result* of sin, for the holy Jehovah says in His Word that every soul that sins must die. He will by no means clear the guilty. But, out of His great love, He made “Christ to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.” [Eph 2:14; Col 1:20; Rom 3:23; Eze 18:20; Exo 34:7; 2Co 5:21; 1Jo 4:9]

The thought of redeeming lost sinners from the curse of the Law, originated in the loving heart of God. And when Jesus appeared in our world it was as “God manifest in the flesh” (1Ti 3:16), and to “redeem us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us” (Gal 3:13). He gave Himself for our sins. *This exchange* was wonderful and full of love. Jesus satisfied the Law and justice of God. He bore the curse of the Law, and thus delivers us from that curse. We have broken the Law, and are guilty and under the curse, but if we are found in Christ, God reckons us as free from that guilt and curse as Jesus is—because He had the guilt *imputed* to Him, and bore the

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<sup>8</sup> **redemption** – the payment of a price that is due; i.e., Christ’s death as full payment for the penalty due for our sins.

<sup>9</sup> **merited wrath** – the just wrath of God toward our sin; it was deserved (merited) because we have broken His holy Law.

curse.<sup>10</sup> He died, but He was raised again for our *justification*, and is even at the right hand of God, where He makes intercession for us. [Ti 2:14; Rom 4:25; 8:34]

### C. If You Want Pardon

Now, then, if any poor sinner wants pardon, let him draw near to God in the name of Jesus and he will find redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of all his sins. Dear friend, are you thirsting for pardon? “He will abundantly pardon.” Were it not that God means to save lost sinners such as you, the fountain opened would soon be closed, and this sin-blighted world would be burned up. As long as you are preserved in life, and as long as this world is kept from the consuming fire, so long may you believe that there is forgiveness with God for you, and “plenteous redemption” in His well-beloved Son. [Heb 10:20; Eph 1:7; Isa 55:7; Psa 130:7]

But remember “Salvation is of the Lord.” He Himself must save you. He cannot bear any rival in this great work. His own arm will bring you salvation. Take care lest you fall into the error so common among anxious souls of making a savior of the “frames” of your own mind.<sup>11</sup> Your own experience is delightful, but it is a poor substitute for Christ. The most elevated state of mind cannot prove a savior. It is upon Jesus bleeding, dying, atoning for sin, and suffering under the dreadful stroke of the sword of God’s justice, that your eye must be fixed; and if so, you will feel that “peace that passeth all understanding” keeping your heart and mind, and “joy unspeakable and full of glory” will spring up within your soul. [Jon 2:9; Rom 5:11; Phi 4:7; 1Pe 1:8]

The same Jesus Who laid down His life for sinners, and who only knows the grace which is in the Father’s heart, calls in the gospel, upon all sinners to come to Him and be saved. He says, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” His own sweet word to you, a sinner, weary and heavy laden, is, “Come unto me, and I will give you rest.” What, do you need so much rest? Your guilt is a burden so heavy that you will soon sink under it; but come to Jesus, and He will lift it from off your soul, and give you immediate rest. Do you feel yourself to be lost? Well, “the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Is He not seeking to save you? “Look unto me and be ye saved,” is His own loving exhortation. [Mat 11:28; Isa 45:22]

Can you refuse to turn your dying eye towards the Pierced One? Can you reflect upon His dying love, and not believe that He is willing to save? Can you think of Him

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<sup>10</sup> ‘Imputed’ means to place to the account of another. ‘Justification’ is the judicial action of God’s making us right with Himself, through fulfilling in Christ the justice of His Law (1 Tim. 3:16, Tit. 2:14, Rom. 4:25, Rom. 8:34).

<sup>11</sup> By “frames of your own mind” the author is speaking of one’s own feelings and thoughts. You cannot be saved by simply wanting to be so, making a decision of your own, doing something, or having some “experience.” You must instead call upon the Lord to save you by faith. He has done all the work on the cross.

as Jehovah-Jesus (the God-man, fully divine and fully human), the everlasting Mediator, and not credit His ability to save? “He is able also to save them to the uttermost who come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” With the love of a brother, with the compassion and mercy of God, He beseeches you now to embrace Him as your Savior. Do you regard yourself as vile, guilty, worthless, and lost? Such He saves—“Not the righteous, but sinners Jesus came to call.” [Heb 7:25; Joh 15:15; Psa 145:8; Mat 9:13]

How overpowering must be that word of “a just God and a Savior” to your troubled soul—“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool.” “Come now!” notwithstanding all the transgressions, pollutions, ingratitude, formality, and indifference of your past life. Come with all these, and before attempting to make yourself acceptable in the least degree. Do not think your sins too many, too aggravated, or too great to be forgiven. The salvation which is in Jesus is so great and so full, that the great wonder of the universe is, that those who have it set before them can find a way to get past it into the world of woe! If you would avoid being saved, you must, by stifling your convictions, arise and flee, lest the river of grace should bear you onwards to a glorious eternity. Can you hesitate to embrace such a full, free, perfect, and eternal forgiveness of all your sins, as that which the gospel holds out to you, and presses upon your acceptance? Stand still, and see the salvation of God. “Behold the Lamb of God,” and be saved! [Isa 1:18; Joh 1:29]

#### **D. Your Situation**

I conceive of your case in this way: You appear to be like one who, by going too near the brink of a precipice, has slipped over it, and caught hold of the twigs of some shrub growing in the clefts of the rock, to prevent himself being dashed from crag to crag, and laid a mangled corpse in the abyss below. A friend is seen standing on the nearest ledge, and calls to him to let go his hold, and he will certainly preserve him from impending destruction. He believes, acts according to his friend’s direction, and is delivered.

You feel that you are in imminent danger—hanging over the brink of an eternal hell; and you are willing to hold by anything which seems to afford the slightest probability of deliverance. You may be holding firmly by the preaching of the Word, prayer, conviction of sin, reading of the Bible and religious books, by tears, repentings, resolutions, and anxieties, but all these are mere twigs by which you are catching, as you feel yourself hanging over the mouth of hell. You cannot be saved by them. If no one appear able to deliver you and bear you away to a place of safety, you will inevitably perish.

But the Lord Jesus—the sinner’s Friend—appears stretching out His merciful arms, and calling upon you to let go all human means of salvation, and He will certainly save you with an everlasting salvation. Hear His voice, listen to the “gracious words” which proceed out of His mouth (Luk 4:22), and let go your every hold. And if you do so in obedience to His call, and trust in His ability to save, you will find yourself leaning on the divine Redeemer, and feel that “the eternal God is your refuge,” and underneath you are “the everlasting arms” (Deu 33:27). This done with childlike simplicity, He, having sought and found His lost sheep, will lay you upon His shoulders rejoicing, carry you about all your life, and place you at last in the everlasting sheepfold on the banks of the “river of water of life,” in Emmanuel’s land.<sup>12</sup> [Psa 119:176; Mat 15:24; Rev 22:1; Isa 8:8]

I wish I could relate to you as it was once told to me, an account of a lady in Scotland, and of the way in which her doubts and anguish were removed. It was during a revival, in which several known to this lady had been brought to Christ. Among the rest, a particular friend of hers had been converted. Feeling some measure of concern herself, she went to a servant of Christ who was laboring in the place, and told him she was unhappy. He replied that he was glad to hear it. Astonished at this, and somewhat offended also, she told the minister what efforts she had made to obtain salvation, how she had read and prayed, but still seemed as far from peace as ever. He told her that it was not by anything that she could do, but by what Christ had long since done and finished on the cross that she was to be saved. All seemed dark and mysterious to her, and she left; resolving, however, to call on her friend, who had recently been converted. She did so, and asked her what she had done to obtain the peace of which she spoke. “Done! I have done nothing! It is by what Christ has done, that I have found peace with God.”

The lady replied that this was what the minister had just been telling her, but that she could not understand it. She went home with her distress greatly increased; and, shutting up herself in her own room, she fell on her knees, resolving that she would never rise till her soul found rest and peace.

How long her agony continued I cannot say; but nature became quite exhausted, and she sunk to slumber. While thus asleep, she dreamed that she was falling over a frightful precipice, but caught hold of a single twig, which overhung the abyss beneath. By this she hung, crying aloud for help, when a voice from below, which she knew to be the voice of Jesus, bade her let go the twig, and He would receive and save her. “Lord, save me!” she cried; but the voice again answered, “Let go the twig.” She felt as though she dare not leave hold, but continued crying, “Lord, save me!” At last, the One below, Whose voice she heard, but whom she did not see, said, in the most

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<sup>12</sup> ‘Emmanuel’ is a biblical name for Jesus in the Old Testament which means “God with us.”

tender, solemn tones, “I cannot save you, unless you let go the twig!” Self-desperate, she let it go, fell into the arms of Jesus, and the joy of finding herself there awoke her. The lesson taught her by her dream was not lost upon her. She perceived that Jesus was worthy of all her trust, and that not only did she need no twig of self-dependence, but that it was holding to the twig that kept her away from Christ. She let it go, and found Jesus all-sufficient.

The one point which we wish to illustrate by this example is this: that the awakened one must quit all *self-dependence*, and, discovering the Savior to be a Person independent of and external to self, to trust “Jesus only.” [Mar 8:34-36; Luk 14:33]

### **E. Salvation Is a Free Gift**

There is no object in the universe so free to you as Christ. He is willing to be your Savior. If you are willing to be saved, then all is well. Salvation is offered to you as a gift—“without money and without price.” The God of grace has made salvation so free to every sinner, that it would be utterly impossible for us to make it more free. The salvation of God is set before a world of lost sinners; and the gracious invitation of Jehovah is given to every poor thirsting one: “Ho! Everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters” (Isa 55:1). Could the Lord have invited you more specially had He written down your name in this soul-stirring invitation!

O dear soul, come to “the waters” of salvation. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” Only believe and your salvation from that moment will be as certain as if you were already in heaven. Salvation is no doubtful thing to the believer in Jesus—“Thou shalt be saved.” The man to whom this language was first addressed believed, was saved, and rejoiced in God the self-same hour. This is to you “the day of salvation.” If you will only look to Jesus, and trust your soul’s salvation to Him, you shall have pardon, peace, joy, and hope of glory, this very day. Put your trust in God that He will blot out all your sins for Jesus’ sake, and you will soon be led to cry out in wonder, “Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity!” for you will then know in your own experience the preciousness of pardon to a burdened soul. [Act 16:31; 2Co 6:2; Mic 7:18]

It is told of the great reformer, Martin Luther,<sup>13</sup> that he was under deep and protracted conviction of sin before he was brought to peace, and that an aged monk was instrumental in bringing peace to his troubled conscience. It happened in this way: he was under soul-crushing convictions of sin, and had such spiritual conflicts, that his health gave way. He was laid upon a sickbed, and was brought near the gates of death. In this condition, he was awfully distracted by a vivid apprehension of God’s

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<sup>13</sup> **Martin Luther** (1483-1546) – German Roman Catholic monk, theologian, university professor, and church reformer whose ideas inspired the Protestant Reformation and changed the course of Western civilization.



holiness and his own sinfulness. The aged man entered his cell, and repeated in his hearing this article of the creed, “I believe in the forgiveness of sins” (Act 26:18). These simple words which the pious brother pronounced with sincerity in this decisive moment, diffused great consolation in Luther’s heart, “I believe,” he repeated to himself while on his bed of sickness—“I believe in the forgiveness of sins.” “Ah!” said the monk, “you must not only believe in the forgiveness of David’s or Peter’s sins, for this even the devils believe: It is God’s command that we believe in the *forgiveness of our own sins*.” From this time light sprung up in his soul, and the peace of God, which passes all understanding, kept his heart and mind through Jesus Christ.

Pardon of sin realized as a personal blessing is, you see, the only thing which can give life, light, and peace. You will never have any true godliness unless you are “accepted in the beloved” (Eph 1:6); and you can never have a happy soul until you have a consciousness of pardon and acceptance. There is forgiveness with God; and being “with God,” and promised freely, it will be yours for the asking; therefore “seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near” (Isa 55:6). If you go to Him through Christ, confessing your sins, you will find Him faithful and just to forgive you your sins; and from personal experience you will be enabled to say,

*“O Lord, I will praise thee; though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away and thou comfortest me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song: He also is become my salvation.” – Isaiah 12:1-2*

Cast yourself at Emmanuel’s feet as a poor perishing sinner, crying, Lord, save me; and if you perish there, you will be the first who ever did so. “Him that cometh unto me,” says the loving Jesus, “I will in no wise cast out” (Joh 6:37).

*Nothing in my hand I bring, Simply to Thy Cross I cling;  
Naked, come to Thee for dress, Helpless, look to Thee for grace;  
Foul, I to the fountain fly, Wash me, Savior, or I die.*

### 3. The Nearness of Jesus

*“Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.”—Hebrews 10:22*

#### **A. Jesus Is Near!**

Dear Friend, three thousand years ago a man, who was as terribly perplexed as you or any person could be, said, after recounting all the sources of his perplexity, “It is good for me that I draw near to God” (Psa 73:28). How much more may an anxious

and perplexed sinner say, “It is good for me that *God has drawn near to me*,” for that is the great outstanding fact of the Christian revelation.

God has not maintained that distance from us sinners which He might have kept; but on the contrary, He has appeared among us in “the man Christ Jesus,” Who is Emmanuel—“*God with us*,” and He is Emmanuel as He is Jesus. He is “God with us” for the express purpose of saving us from our sins. “He was manifested to take away our sins;” and He was seen by men to be a real Jesus, so near, that when He had a helpless sinner placed down right before Him, He could say to him as he lay there on his couch of sickness, “Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.” [1Ti 2:5; Mat 1:23; 1Jo 3:5; Mat 9:2]

We should not think of “God our Savior” (Ti 3:4) as far removed from us, for He is indeed *very near*. He was very near to the men among whom He lived when He was on earth, for they saw Him with their eyes, heard Him with their ears, handled Him with their hands, sailed with Him in the same boat, walked with Him on the same road, sat with Him at the same board, and slept with Him under the same roof.

And He is really as near to you now as He was to the men of His own day. He is not so near to *physical sense*, but quite as near to *faith*. What He was then by His living person, He is now by His gospel, the written Word. He was a man, and went about among all sorts of men. In Him dwelt all fullness of blessing (Col 1:19), and He dispensed His good things freely as the needy applied to Him. He came on purpose to help all who felt their need of Him.

And what He was then He is now by the word of His grace. He is as near to anyone as is the passage of His Holy Word which a man lets into his mind by his eyes or his ears. Wherever the revelation that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” gets into a man’s mind, there is He. And when Jesus is thus shining in upon the heart through the medium of the Word, if “the spirit of faith” is acting so as to render it sensitive, there will be an indelible impression of Him produced. [1Ti 1:15; 2Co 4:13]

## **B. What the Scriptures Say**

*“Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above), or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what saith it? The word is near thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach, that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” – Romans 10:6-9*

*“The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.” – John 1:14*

*“...the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus....”  
– 1 Peter 5:10*

*“Unto you is born a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” – Luke 2:11*

“The God of all grace” assumed our nature and “dwelt among us” as one “full of grace and truth.” The Savior has come so near to those He means to save, that there is a *birth-relationship* between them; for, as they “are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself took part of the same.” The leading idea of redemption is the doing away with that which has created the moral distance between us and God. Atonement by the blood-shedding of Jesus is received by us as that by which God and we are made at one. “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.” And “now, in Christ Jesus,” those who were by nature and by transgression “far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace.” His gracious doings and sufferings have removed all cause for remaining at a distance from God, as if He were not gracious; and the manner of His doing all He did when on earth is calculated to annihilate at once the moral distance which is felt to exist between poor, needy sinners and Himself. [Heb 2:14; Rom 5:11; 1Pe 3:18; Eph 2:13]

The God Whom we have given just cause for being offended with us, is still in Christ reconciling sinners unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. And when we take into our consideration all that He has done, and all the manifestations of His grace and good will to men which He has shown, and the striking manner of His acting towards the needy ones who came to Him when on earth, we cannot avoid coming to this conclusion: the grand underlying thought of His mission to our world was to *reveal the Father*, so as to inspire the alienated children of men with the *fullest confidence in Him*.

When we read the four narratives of the life of Jesus (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) and hear the conclusion of the whole matter, as given by the Holy Ghost in the memorable words “These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name,” surely we cannot help saying, “All things are ready,” the way of life is open, Christ is *drawing near*, “let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.” [Joh 20:31; Mat 22:4; Heb 10:22]

All this is very precious, and full of consolation to the awakened and inquiring sinner. The Savior is *ever near* to you; “for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.” “Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.” [1Jo 1:2, 4:2]

He is “the Lord our righteousness,” and by faith you may claim Him as yours, to meet all your needs, and say with confidence as you embrace Him, “in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.” [Jer 23:6; Psa 71:16]

He has “power on earth to *forgive sins*,” for not only is He the God of grace, but He has once for all “appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” As another

has truthfully said, “Forgiveness is brought *near* and sure to the soul—the word of faith to the heart and to the mouth—this annihilates distance, and makes pardon a present blessing. [Mat 9:6; Heb 9:26]

### C. Jesus Still Speaks to Us

“Jesus has come down to act in grace among men, without the intervention of a medium. The sinner and the Savior are brought face to face; God is not, therefore, to be sought for as at a distance, under the hiding of ceremonies, or within the cloisters of temples. The blessed Savior is walking abroad among our necessities in marvelous condescending grace;” so *near* that any sinner has but to lift his eye, and, lo! “a lamb as it had been slain” is before him (Rev 5:6), and he may hear the voice of Jesus saying, “thy sins be forgiven thee” (Mat 9:2).

Let us think of Jesus as the gospel history exhibits Him to our view. He is the same in grace now as when He said to the man sick of the palsy, “Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee”; the same as when the “woman, who was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, touched the hem of His garment,” and heard Him say to her, “Daughter, be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole”; the same as when the two blind men cried as He passed, “Thou son of David, have mercy on us,” and He touched their eyes, saying, “According to your faith be it unto you,” and their eyes were opened; the same as when He put His hand on the leper, saying, “I will, be thou clean, and immediately his leprosy was cleansed”; the same as when “all the publicans and sinners *drew near* to hear him”; the same in grace is Jesus still as He was when He “went about doing good,” and “died for our sins according to the scriptures.” [Mat 9:2-6; Luk 8:44-48; Mat 9:27-28, 8:3; Act 10:38; 1Co 15:3]

“He is still the same Lord, and purposes to be so. He has not retired within the veil again, nor bound up that which was rent from top to bottom. He has not built again that which He destroyed. It is not ‘a worldly sanctuary’ that He fills and furnishes again, nor ceremonies and observances and rites and practices, under which He is again concealing Himself. He has descended from heaven to earth, He is abroad among men, in the ministry of His precious gospel and by His Spirit, beseeching sinners to be reconciled.” This is the Christ of God, the Friend of sinners, the Savior of the lost. This is the Jesus Who says to you, O anxious one, “*Come unto me and I will give you rest.*” The gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, when rightly understood and truly believed, supplants and utterly sets aside all the elements of a fleshly religion, in which man is so prone to trust. [Mat 27:51; Heb 10:20; Mat 11:28]

### D. Fleshly Religions

**Superstition** is the religion of many. Millions have a superstitious dread of God, and they use various quick methods to remove the object of their terror. To keep Him at a distance, that He may not pour out the vials of His wrath upon them, is their on-

ly desire. God has sent His Son in grace, but most men have not yet heard of it. They live and die in dread and darkness. But most of those who have heard of Jesus Christ have such mistaken notions regarding Him and His loving mission and work, so far are they from recognizing Him as “full of grace and truth,” or as one “who can have compassion on the ignorant and them that are out of the way,” that they foolishly erect a creature like themselves into a mediator to come between them and Him. When we realize the precious truth that Jesus, the Son of Man, has power on earth to forgive sins, and is the same still in His grace that He was when He said to the poor sinful woman who washed His feet with tears, “Thy sins are forgiven; thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace,” there is a period put to all such pagan sentiments and idolatrous practices. [Joh 1:14; Heb 5:2; Luk 7:50]

**Sacerdotalism** (the religion of using a priest to represent you to God) is also set aside by true faith which apprehends Jesus as a Savior ever near. Many have no other religion than that of priests. But that is not the religion of the New Testament. There was, indeed, a divinely appointed priesthood, those by whom the worshippers under the Old Testament economy approached God. They had to come by the consecrated path, and have their affairs transacted by a consecrated priesthood, or else they could not be accepted. But this served only as a shadow of good things to come, and was entirely set aside when the great Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus, entered into heaven itself with His own blood, there to appear in the presence of God for us. [Col 2:17; Heb 9:11-24]

Christ having come, there can be no priests needed now, and there are none but man-made ones, who are acting directly in the face of the gospel and the genius of the present dispensation.<sup>14</sup> God appoints no priests now, and all who know Jesus as that blessed Priest Who has power on earth to forgive sins, trust to no human priesthood—because, having Jesus, they feel their need of no other priest, and are convinced by Scripture that the age of priests is past. The terrible power of human priests has its origin in the superstitious dread of God that haunts those who employ them; but wherever Jesus *draws near* and says, “Be of good cheer; it is I, be not afraid,” “Peace be unto you,” priest-craft is supplanted by faith, and its power comes to a sudden end. [Mar 6:50; Joh 20:19-21]

**Religiousness** is also set aside by faith in Jesus ever near. It is sad to think that many are the victims of religiousness as well as of worldliness. There are millions whose ideas of Christianity are so low and erroneous, that they believe the Church, with all its various appointments, to be an institution equipped with machinery for making people *religious*, just as a factory is equipped with machinery for turning out the goods made by it. Most people seem to have no realization of the great leading

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<sup>14</sup> **present dispensation** – the new covenant of God’s grace.

truth of Christianity, that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;” their conduct seems to indicate that they have imbibed the notion that Christ came not “to seek and to save that which was lost,” but to put the stamp of His approval upon such as were using their best endeavors to improve themselves; for *religiousness*, which is the only gospel known to the generality of professors, evidently proceeds upon this understanding. [1Ti 1:15; Luk 19:10]

The *religious* “man thinks that the worship makes the worshipper, and therefore we must set diligently about worship, in order to get ourselves accepted. The main idea that man has in connection with worship (such as prayer and praise and service) is, that it is the means of securing acceptance, and effecting reconciliation with God. He brings his gifts as the bribes or payments of the criminal, not as the thank-offerings of the forgiven. He worships in order to pacify God, and persuade Him to extend His favor towards him. But God cannot own a religion whose aim is to buy His love, to persuade Him to be gracious, and to accept the person of the worshipper on account of the multitude or excellence of his services.”

### **E. True Christianity Is Christ**

How different from all this are the doings of Jesus! He says, “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee” (Mar 2:5-9), and never breathes a whisper about any service the man had rendered to earn it, nor did He lay him under any obligation to serve Him for the future. He left him free, and sent him to his house, well knowing that, from gratitude, he would consider himself “free to serve, but not to sin.” Jesus drawing near, and freely dispensing His grace to sinners of every sort, cuts up *religiousness* by the roots.

It is sad, indeed, when men are taught to regard God with a merely natural veneration as “the great and dreadful God,” Who dwells “in the thick darkness,” far removed from the perishing and needy sinner. This is not the God of the gospel; for Jesus, Who is God-man, is really as near to poor sinners—as condescending and as ready to supply all their need—as He was when “manifest in the flesh” as “the Son of man” Who came “to seek and to save that which was lost.” [Dan 9:4; 1Ki 8:12; 1Ti 3:16; Luk 19:10]

*“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” – Hebrews 10:19-22*

[Please note: once the Lord saves us, we will certainly desire to walk in His ways and serve Him, out of a motive of love for Him (and not to earn His favor). Those who “take Christ’s free salvation,” but who still love their sin, show themselves to be with-

out a new heart, and are subject to the Lord's rebuke: "I never knew you!" (Matthew 7:23). Please see also Romans 8:12-13; Matthew 10:38, 11:28-30; John 14:15, 21, 23.]

## 4. Rest for the Weary

*"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden,  
and I will give you rest."—Matthew 11:28*

### A. Do You Need Rest?

This world contains many laboring and heavy-laden ones. In fact, there are few who are not such. This is a place of sorrow and sighing, a vale of tears and woe. "Man that is born of a woman is of few days and *full* of trouble" (Job 14:1). As wave follows wave upon the seashore, and as season succeeds to season, so trouble follows trouble in the life of man. This is the general experience. Sin has entered, and brought guilt upon the world's children, and the curse upon its soil. Suffering and sorrow, misery and death, have followed in the terrible train of Adam's sin, and there can be no *real* rest enjoyed until sin be put away from the guilty, and no *everlasting* rest until they be finally removed from sin itself. Earth's children have all along had a general consciousness that there was something wrong with them, and they have made repeated attempts at changing their condition and obtaining rest to their souls; but all these have proved unsuccessful: evil has not ceased and paradise has not been restored. The world does not afford materials for real and uninterrupted blessedness.

Each heart also knows its own bitterness, and each individual feels his particular sorrow. All do not feel burdened with the same kind of evils. To one, the burden may be a personal affliction; to another, a family trouble; and to a third, a depression in worldly circumstances. But all do feel, at one time or another, so much of that which is evil as to make them conclude that this is an evil and unsatisfying world. And when we look around and take an intelligent view of the condition of society, we shall find it such as to force upon us the sad conclusion that this must be a sinful, sorrow-stricken, laboring, and heavy-laden world. Such words as, "*Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,*" must surely convey to a world such as ours a peculiarly appropriate and welcome invitation.

### B. Who Gives This Invitation?

Who gives this invitation? It is the voice of Emmanuel which falls upon the ear. These are the words of the compassionate Redeemer that meet the weary eye. It was the Word made flesh Who spoke these precious words. Let your mind rest on that striking fact. He "spake as never man spake." But no man could ever be expected to



speak like Him; for though He was in the form of a servant, and in the likeness of man, He was, nevertheless, the Son of God, and as such perfectly knew the Father. This is what He said regarding Himself: “No man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.” [Joh 7:46; Mat 11:27]

What a discovery is here made of the work of Jesus! He reveals *God as a Father* to poor outcast sinners. This is surpassingly gracious. He not only makes known the mind of God, but He reveals *His heart*; for He makes Him known as His Father and our Father. He comes to show us that, though we have ceased to feel towards Him as loving and dutiful children, He has not ceased to feel towards us as a Father. It is He, then, Who came from the Father to declare and testify His love, Who here speaks. That very One Who came to unfold the grace and love of our Father in heaven, invites weary sinners to come to Him. Being partaker of the Father’s nature, there can be no mistake on His part in speaking of the Father. “God hath, in these last days, spoken unto us by his Son” (Heb 1:2). He hath spoken to us by Him in words and deeds which admit of no parallel—and He still speaks to us by Him in words of infinite tenderness and love.

But there is something more in the person of Jesus which is fitted to arrest our attention. He is not only “the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of His person,” He is also a partaker of our nature. And, moreover, He did not appear on earth as un-fallen Adam did: He appeared “in the *likeness of sinful flesh*.” If you had seen Him, you would have pronounced Him the “brother born for adversity;” for He was “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” He was weary, hungry, thirsty: He knew the depths of poverty, and felt the burden of daily toil. If, from having the nature of God, He is able to reveal all that the Father is, and has in His heart toward us; from being a partaker of the nature of man, He is able to sympathize with us, suffer for us, and make our case His own. This, then, is He—the God-man—Who stood by the waters of the mountain lake of Galilee and addressed to the multitude that surrounded Him this gracious invitation. [Heb 1:3; Rom 8:3; Pro 17:17; Isa 53:3]

But we now know, or *may* know, more of Him than they knew to Whom these words were spoken. We know Him as the First and the Last, and the Living One Who was dead, and is alive forevermore. We hear the invitation from Gethsemane; we hear it from Calvary; we hear it from the celestial throne. He was delivered for our offenses; He was wounded for our transgressions; He was raised for our justification; He is exalted for our sanctification;<sup>15</sup> He will come again for our eternal salvation. His words reveal the Father still—as does His finished redemption work, and as does His Holy Spirit when He illuminates the darkened soul.

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<sup>15</sup> **sanctification** – the process by which God conforms believers to His character.

### C. Who Is Invited by Jesus?

Who is it that is invited by Jesus to come to Him? “*All ye that labor and are heavy laden,*” is His own reply. The Jews before Him were laboring and heavy laden in two ways. They were living under a system of burdensome rites and ceremonies, made still more grievous by the manifold additions of men. But Jesus saw them groaning under the more intolerable burden of sin and suffering, and He longed to set them free. He presented them with a yoke that was easy, and a burden that was light (Mat 11:28-30).

This is, no doubt, a general invitation; but we believe none will avail themselves of it until they begin to feel sin to be a burden. Are you pricked in your heart, and ready to cry out, with Jerusalem sinners, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” The Savior speaks specially to you. Are you feeling that your sins are going over your head as a heavy burden; and that, on account of transgression, you are “brought down to the sides of the pit”? The Savior’s words are spoken to you. [Act 2:37; Isa 14:15]

Let us look at the words, “labor” and “heavy laden,” and see how expressive they are. The word “*labor*” here signifies more than mere working. The expression, “Ye that labor,” means, “Ye who have engaged in labor till you are quite spent, toil-worn, and weary.” Men sin against God with as much energy as if they were working for their daily bread. They weary themselves to commit iniquity. They toil in the service of sin as if they thought its wages would be life—not death. Are you a toil-worn sinner? Are you feeling exhausted and burdened under the load of your transgressions? Then you will also know what it is to be “heavy laden.”

The original reference of “*heavy laden*” is to the lading of a ship—the more it takes in, the deeper it sinks. This represents the condition of an awakened sinner. He has been *lading* himself with sin, and he has gone on so long, that he feels he dare not take in anymore. His case may be more truly represented by Peter, when, walking on the water to come to Christ, he began to sink, and cried out, “Lord, save me, I perish” (Mat 14:30). If you are sensible of your sins, you will feel yourself to be sinking down to deserved perdition by your own weight. How alarming such a position!

Sinners, in their natural condition, are working at a dreadful task. With hard and impenitent hearts they are daily treasuring up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, Who will render to every man according to his deeds. How awful the occupation! How dangerous the treasure! How miserable the doom! Many toil hard in treasuring up wrath, but never reflect that in the day of wrath they must receive their own fearful accumulation. But some become alarmed at their terrible employment, and tremble. The Holy Spirit takes up the accumulated mass, and for a season lays it upon them, and under its crushing

weight they feel as if sinking in a sea of wrath, and are ready to cry out, “Lord, save us, we perish!”

Dear friend, has the Holy Spirit taken up the burden of your guilt and laid it upon you? Ah, then, you will know truly what it is to be “heavy laden!” Thank God for the most awful convictions He may send you of your guilty and lost condition. It is better to bear the torment of a burdened conscience for a little season in time, than in the world to come eternally. If you are in anxiety about your salvation, if you are truly brought low by the Spirit of God, and made to cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner!” (Luk 18:13), then will you enter into the spirit of such passages as these:

*“Mine iniquities are gone over mine head as an heavy burden: they are too heavy for me. I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up. They are more than the hairs of my head: therefore, my heart fails me” – Psalm 38:4, 6; 40:12*

How distressing is such a state! But it is very hopeful. Christ was anointed and sent forth to preach the gospel to the poor, and heal the brokenhearted. Is your conscience burdened and disquieted? Then consider, for your relief and comfort, the invitation here given: “*Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*”

## **D. The Invitation**

### ***1. The invitation is gracious***

And the first thing I wish you to notice about this invitation of Jesus is its *graciousness*. It is out of love and mercy that He thus invites lost sinners. Grace brought Him into our world, and out of grace He went about doing good. How His heart must have been moved with compassion when He looked upon the multitude and saw that they were as sheep that have no shepherd! It was out of real mercy that He went about their towns and villages teaching and preaching the gospel of salvation. It was in the hearing of the unbelieving and impenitent from Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, that He uttered this invitation! His grace would embrace the very men who had often despised and rejected Him, although among them He had done most of His mighty works! And how gracious this invitation as now given to us! He is “*full of grace and truth.*” He has the same compassion now that He had then; and His grace is flowing as fully in the channel of His Word as when He was made flesh and dwelt among us. Is it not a most gracious call the Savior gives you? You are unworthy of His regard—you are yourself thoroughly worthless—and yet He calls you! And He is first in this. You were not seeking Him, but He is seeking you. “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” How gracious! “Come unto me, and I will give you rest.” [Mat 11:21-23; Joh 1:14; Luk 19:10]

## **2. The invitation is unselfish**

The second thing I wish you to notice here is the *unselfishness* of this invitation. He has no sordid end in calling you. He means your good alone by it. You have only to consider what Jesus has done, to see how self-sacrificing is His love. When He makes proposals to receive and bless you, a lost sinner, you may rest assured that it is from the purest love. Think of Gethsemane and Calvary, and you will perceive how unselfish He is in saving sinners. A selfish character is generally disliked, and shunned, while an unselfish one is all but universally approved of and respected. What man could hear, without approval, of the self-sacrificing labors of the philanthropist Howard, who did so much for the improvement of the condition of prison inmates and the reformation of prisons? And what woman, acquainted with the circumstances, does not feel as if her sex were ennobled by the labors of Mrs. Fry among the wretched women confined as inmates in Newgate? But that man and that woman were but imitators of the Divine Philanthropist, Jesus Christ. They followed Him at an infinite distance.

“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (Phi 2:5-11). To save enemies, He took upon Him the form of a servant, humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross! Think of the unselfish love of Emmanuel, when He calls you to come to Him for salvation, and remain unmoved if you can!

## **3. The invitation is sincere**

The third thing I would wish you to notice in this invitation is its *sincerity*. There is very much insincerity among men. Many give invitations they never mean to be taken—they would even feel annoyed if they were embraced. But this can never be the case with Christ Jesus, for He is called “Faithful and True.” He asserted His own truthfulness when on earth, and even called Himself “the truth.” He is “the true one,” and in inviting sinners He is sincere. When He says “Come,” He means just what He says. When He came to His own and was rejected, He showed His sincerity in seeking their salvation; for He did not give them up at once, but continued with them teaching, and preaching, and working miracles of love. And His agonies in the garden and on the cross powerfully showed the sincerity of His heart. He is not, then, indifferent whether you come to Him or not; but He is sincere in inviting you to come. He says, “Come,” from the very depths of His loving heart. His is not mere professed desire for your welfare, it is real; and you will be your own enemy if you embrace not His sincere invitation “*with a true heart.*” [Rev 19:11; Joh 14:6; Jer 10:10; Heb 10:22]

## **4. The invitation is suitable**

The fourth thing I would have you notice about this invitation is, that it is *suitable*. It is accompanied with the promise of that which you most urgently require:

“Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.” If you are fainting and burdened, what do you need so much as rest? “And I will give you rest,” is the promise. Rest is just what is needed by the toil-worn, weary man; and nothing else can prove a substitute for it. So *spiritual rest* is what the laboring, heavy-laden sinner needs; and nothing else can compensate for the want of it. When the storm of conviction is beating upon him, and the waves of guilt are like to overwhelm him, there is nothing coveted so earnestly as rest. The gift of Jesus—rest for the troubled soul—is the most precious boon presented to the children of men. And it is well always to bear in mind that it is a gift: “I will *give* you rest” (Heb 4:1-11). The literal meaning is, “I will cause you to rest.”

This shows you not only that in some way or other you may have rest by Jesus, but it shows how completely you must be indebted to Himself for it. He must be the cause, and source, and giver of your rest, if you ever have that inestimable blessing. Christ stands before you and invites, not as an abstract truth, but as a living person. Christ was going about on our earth when He first uttered this language, and although we do not now see His form and hear His voice, we are to believe, for it is really true, that He lives and speaks to us by His Word as a living One. Salvation cannot be disjoined from the personal Savior. You must come to Him, if you would have Him to give you rest; and if you do indeed come to Him, you will find that He is faithful who has promised.

#### *The rest is threefold*

The rest you need is threefold: rest from your un-quietness with regard to your guilt, rest from the enslaving tyranny of your corruption; and rest from the weariness caused by battling with sin and evil. The *penalty*, *power*, and *presence of sin* are the chief sources of disquietude—and from them all Jesus delivers us.

##### *1. Penalty for sin*

If you come to the Lord Jesus, He will cause you to cease from your trouble regarding the *punishment of your sins*, by showing you how His once dying becomes an atonement for sin. If He plant your foot upon the rock of His finished work, then your soul will feel secure. If He clothe you in His own righteousness, you will be able to lay down your weary head upon His blessed bosom and enjoy refreshing rest, for you will feel that the Lord sustains you. Christ is our peace. He is the peacemaker with God; and therefore He is able to give peace to man. He has made peace by the blood of His cross, and now He comes and preaches peace; and whosoever comes to Him comes to peace. The unquietness of the soul is dissipated by the sprinkling of that blood which cleanses us from all sin. “When He gives quietness, who then can” (hold us guilty, and thus) “make trouble”? “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” [Job 34:29; Rom 5:1]

## 2. *Power of sin*

He will also give you rest from the *slavery of sin*. You have been the willing slave of sin. You loved it and ran greedily in its service before you became alarmed about your soul. Sin was wont to go with the bent of your carnal nature. You could no more cease from sin than a stone let out of the hand could, while unobstructed, cease descending towards the earth. If unconverted, you are upon the inclined plane which lets sinners down from earth to the bottomless pit, and you must inevitably slide down and perish unless rescued from your dangerous position. You may desire to deliver yourself, but all your unaided efforts will prove fruitless. You may even pray against your besetting sins, but, apart from divine interference, they will remain besetting sins still. You may resolve and endeavor a hundred times to cease from sin, but you will find that Satan cannot cast out Satan. Christ alone can do it. He says, "Without Me ye can do nothing;" but He also says, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." [Joh 15:5; Mat 11:28]

Dear fellow sinner, do you desire your corruptions to be weakened, and the body of sin so destroyed that henceforth you will not serve sin? Then come to Christ for a new heart, for, by bestowing it, He will give you deliverance from this dreadful bondage. Sin shall not have dominion over you if you are in Christ Jesus. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." When the Lord Jesus subdues sin by His almighty Spirit, then will "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding," keep your heart and mind. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" will set you "free from the law of sin and death." [2Co 5:17; Eze 36:27; Rom 8:2]

## 3. *Presence of sin*

He will also give you rest from all your *weary struggles* with sin and evil. It is not an easy thing to be a Christian. There must be a constant warfare waged with sin. The experience of the apostle Paul in Romans 7:22-25 is that of all believers: "I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." And under the feeling of this struggle—the flesh lusting against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh—he is found crying out, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He knows that there is One able to save, and therefore, he adds, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." There is a time coming when we shall enjoy unbroken rest. No sin shall ever vex us, and no evil shall ever distress us. With Jesus, in His kingdom, we shall enjoy the rest that remains to the people of God.

Now is the time for weary, heavy-laden sinners coming to Christ to get their guilt removed, and obtain renewing and refreshment for their souls. How well adapted to our condition is this precious invitation!

### **5. *The invitation is for all***

Further, it is a *general* invitation to sinners laboring and heavy laden: “Come unto me, *all* ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” There is no want of compassion in our Lord Jesus. He is calling lost sinners with a general invitation to come to Him that they may be saved. But, as we have said, none will embrace the offered mercy but those who are conscious of their miserable and burdened condition. The exhausted are the persons who value rest; and the whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. It is a great matter to know that all the spiritually weary and heavy laden may come to Christ. All the sick who chose might come, or be brought to Him, when He was on earth, and get all their diseases healed; so all the spiritually diseased may come now with the assurance of being made whole. All may come; all are invited; and he that comes will be in no wise cast out.

Poor sin-tortured, heavy-laden one, here is good news! The Master is come and calls for you. Be of good cheer; arise and go to Him. He is moved with compassion for you. Ah! Tarry not; linger not. You are called, and called by Christ Himself, as truly as if you had stood among those who surrounded Him in the days of His flesh, when, with His living voice, He gave this divine invitation near the sea of Gennesaret.<sup>16</sup> You are disquieted greatly, and sore troubled. He has a loving word of invitation for you: “Come unto me, and I will give you rest.” He will give peace and refreshing rest. He will bestow upon you rest, and joy, and comfort, of which you could have no conception.

As He is drawing near and *speaking to* you, so draw near to Him and *speak*. Let out the whole cause of your sorrow and trouble—tell Him all. Call upon the name of the Lord, and tell Him in your own words that you are come for His freely offered rest. Keep not silence. Confess your sins (1Jo 1:9). Seek pardoning mercy. Lie at His footstool in your deep sorrow and implore Him to heal and bless your soul, and you will not be sent empty away. *Come all*, is the God-like invitation!

### **6. *The invitation is unconditional***

We would desire also to impress it upon your mind that this invitation is entirely *unconditional*. It is given freely: it is not burdened with conditions. The gospel of the grace of God comes to you with an unutterable freeness. It requires you to do nothing either to merit it, or to qualify yourself for receiving it. There is a desire on the part of awakened sinners to get mercy upon certain terms; but God’s mercy is given to all who will, “without money and without price.” “Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye

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<sup>16</sup> **sea of Gennesaret** – Sea of Galilee in Israel (Luk 5:1), about 12 x 6 miles in size.



to the waters!” (Isa 55:1). One would think that nothing could be more unconditional than such an invitation; and yet men have tried to turn even this into something meritorious. Repeating the large-hearted call of God, we would encourage sinners to come to the waters and drink freely, for the refreshing of their souls. “Ho, everyone that thirsteth!” is the word of *unconditional grace*; but the legal heart, from misapprehension or perverseness, or both, fixes on the *thirsting*, and complains of want of thirst, or thirst of the proper kind, as if this were to form a price by which the priceless waters could be purchased. The call does not run thus, “Ho! Everyone who has genuine spiritual thirst, come ye to the waters.” No, the persons called are such as are expostulated<sup>17</sup> with for spending money for that which is not bread, and their labor for that which satisfies not.

If you have been fixing your thoughts upon the “Come” of the Savior’s invitation, and asking—“How am I to come?” remember this proceeds from a legal state<sup>18</sup> of the heart. Resist the devil: he would have you to look at your coming, and neglect the glorious Emmanuel Who invites you. “The Holy Ghost,” as has been well said, “has used a variety of expressions in order to prevent this error; and yet men will fall into it. For example, it is said in this place “come”; in another place it is said “look”; in another “believe”; in another “hear”; all to prevent your fixing on the act of your own mind, and instead to fix all your attention upon the object, which is Jesus Christ. It is Christ Who saves you.

It is Christ Who gives you rest—*not your coming to Christ*. Faith is not a condition of salvation, or else “grace is no more grace.” It is true that we are to come to Christ for salvation, but our coming is not to form the reason why we should be saved: we are to come because, in the very nature of things, it cannot be otherwise. It is of faith that it may be by grace. Faith is one of God’s gifts, and surely it cannot be that the possession of one of His gifts should merit the bestowal of others: “For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” [Rom 11:6; Eph 2:8]

### ***7. The invitation is to be accepted now***

The last thing to notice about this invitation is that it may be accepted *now*. Any burdened one might have pressed through the crowd and come to Jesus as soon as the words were pronounced, and asked for himself the promised blessing. There was no time specified; and no doubt He meant it, and they understood it, that they should come to Him that very day. This is the case still. “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” It is not tomorrow, or at some future time, you

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<sup>17</sup> **expostulated** – argued against with strong disagreement.

<sup>18</sup> **legal state of the heart** – the condition of all men apart from true faith in Christ. All relations to God in that lost condition are based on trying to keep God’s Law, in order to avoid offending Him. But such efforts are doomed to failure apart from God’s grace in salvation.

are exhorted to come to Christ. It is “today, if ye will hear His voice.” Are you sinking under your burden? Are you weary and in need of immediate rest? It is good news, surely, to be told that Christ will ease you of your burden today! You cannot be so insensible to your own soul’s advantage as to wish Christ had been giving His invitation for tomorrow or some future day. “Ye know not what shall be on the morrow.” “Thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.” You are called *now*. You are exhorted to believe in Jesus now, to the saving of your soul. Christ calls you to give you *present* blessedness. He will lift off your crushing burden today, and give you immediate pardon and peace. O weary sinner! Press through the multitude with your load of sin, suffering, care, sorrow, and pollution, and you will find Him graciously inclined to “give you rest.” [2Co 6:2; Jam 4:14; Pro 27:1]



## Questions

### for personal reflection and group discussion

*A separate study guide with complete questions covering all aspects of the text also is available, for correspondent, independent, or group study. Contact Mount Zion Bible Institute at the same address or [school@mountzion.org](mailto:school@mountzion.org).*

1. What results from sin?
2. Why will God not simply clear the guilty without the just penalty being paid?
3. What did Jesus do for sinners?
4. Compare Jesus’ nearness now with that during His earthly ministry.
5. How is the work of God through Christ different from “fleshly religions”?
6. Describe the person who professes Christ but still loves his sin.
7. Compare the rest that Jesus gives with the rest that the world gives.
8. Describe the invitation that Jesus extends to lost sinners.
9. The rest Jesus gives is said to be “threefold.” Describe each aspect.
10. How might it be a blessing to feel heavy laden with sin?
11. What is your personal response to Christ’s invitation?