

Sinners Welcome To Come To Jesus Christ Part I

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

Our blessed Lord knew how prone convinced sinners are to unbelief as it regards the reception which he is disposed to give them if they come to him, and therefore he graciously uttered, and has left on record this precious encouragement, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." No, though your sins are very great, the kind Redeemer will not cast you out; even if that were true which you sometimes think, that you are the greatest sinner who ever lived upon earth, he will not cast you out. "His blood cleanseth from all sin." It is as easy for him to save a great as a small sinner. No one was ever saved because his sins were small; no one was ever rejected on account of the greatness of his sins. Where sin abounded, grace shall much more abound. If your guilt is very enormous, the greater honor will redound to that Deliverer who plucks such a brand from the burning. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

But is there not *one* sin which never has pardon, neither in this world nor in that which is to come? There is; but no one who committed that sin ever desires to come to Christ; and even that sin would not be unpardonable, if the sinner who is burdened with its guilt should come to him. It is not unpardonable because the blood of Christ has not adequate efficacy to remove it, but because the miserable blasphemer is abandoned by the Spirit of God to his own malignity, and therefore never does nor can desire to believe on Christ.

Christ will not cast you off because you have *long continued* to sin against God, though it be even to gray hairs and the decrepitude of old age. It is indeed a wicked thing to continue one day in rebellion against the King of heaven; and no one can calculate the debt of guilt incurred by spending a long life in continued acts of transgression. But however long you may have continued in rebellion, and how ever black and long the catalog of your sins, yet if you will now turn to God by a sincere repentance, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you shall not be cast out. He that cannot lie hath declared, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." I heard a preacher declare from the pulpit that there was no example in the Bible of anyone being converted in old age; but he was undoubtedly under a mistake. Was not Manasseh, one of the wickedest men who

ever lived, brought to repentance in old age? The ages of those converted on the day Pentecost and at other times are not given. It is enough for us to know that the aged no more than the young are excluded from the free invitations of the blessed Savior. He invites all the laboring and heavy-laden, and of course those who are burdened with the infirmities of declining years as well as of unnumbered sins.

Aged sinner, you are not excluded from mercy by any word of God in the whole book of divine revelation. God has set before you an open door which no man has a right or power to shut. If you should be shut out, it will be by your own unbelief, and not for want of a warrant to come. Enter, then, without delay or hesitation. None can less afford to delay than the aged sinner. Now is the time. Now or never. You have, as it were, one foot already in the grave. Your opportunities will soon be over. Strive, then, I entreat you, to enter in at the strait gate.

But do you ask whether a man may not *outlive his day of grace*, and be given over to judicial blindness before life is ended? Undoubtedly he may; but as I said before, such a one, I believe, is never found inquiring what he must do to be saved. The devil often tempts aged sinners, and others too, to believe that it is now too late for them to repent; that the time of their visitation is gone by, and that there is no hope for them. And many miserable souls are long held entangled in this snare. He may even quote Scripture to prove that there is a boundary which, when passed, all hope of salvation is to be relinquished. But as long as we are in the body we have the overtures of mercy made to us by the authority of God, and whether we be young or old, "he that cometh," Christ has declared, shall not be cast out. Take him at his word. Venture on him. If you stay away you must perish, and you can but perish if you go. But see, the golden scepter is held out. This affords full assurance that if you draw near and touch it you shall live.

Some are convinced that there is salvation in no other but Christ the Lord, yet they hesitate to come because *they feel themselves to be so vile and unworthy*. They cannot be persuaded that so great and holy a being as the Son of God will look with favor on creatures so abominably polluted and stained with iniquity. Such feelings as these very naturally arise in the minds of persons made sensible of the sinful defilement of their nature; but they are most unreasonable when we take into view the character of Jesus Christ, and the errand on which he came into the world. If he had become incarnate and had died on the cross only for the benefit of the pure and righteous, then this excuse for not coming to him would have some validity; but when we know that he bears the character of a Savior of sinners, and that his name was called Jesus by the angel who announced his birth, because he should save his people from their sins; when we consider his repeated declaration, that he came to seek and save the lost — not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, and that he exhibits himself as the Physician, not of the whole, but the sick, we must pronounce this objection

most unreasonable.

If you were not a sinful, polluted, helpless, and miserable creature, this Savior would not be suited to you, and you would not be comprehended in his gracious invitations to the children of men. But the deeper you are sunk in sin and misery, the greater reason you have for coming to one who is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. If you were covered with leprosy, and a fountain was opened for washing away every sort of uncleanness, would you stay away because you were so polluted? Or if deadly sick, would you refuse to apply to the physician? The awakened, convinced sinner is the very one to whom Jesus especially directs his attention. And it is a preposterous thing for such to delay coming, under the delusive hope of making themselves fit. This they never can do, and if they could they would not need a Savior. What, will you wash yourselves in a muddy pool to prepare for being cleansed in a pure fountain?

But some one may be ready to say, "All admit that none ever come to Christ until they experience conviction of sin, but *I have no conviction*, or none worth mentioning. My mind is so blind that I can perceive nothing clearly, and my heart is so hard that what I do see to be true I cannot feel. O if I could experience some tender relenting — if I could get this adamant heart broken into contrition — if I could even feel pungent pain or alarm on account of my sins, my case would not appear so hopeless. But how can I come to Christ with this blind and stupid heart?"

Now, my friend, I beg you to consider that this blindness and unyielding hardness is the very core of your iniquity, and to be convinced that you are thus blind and stupid is true conviction of sin. If you had those feelings which you so much covet, they would not answer the end of conviction, which is, to show you how sinful and helpless your condition is. But if you felt as you wish to feel, you would not think your heart so wicked as you now see it to be. And the truth is, that you are now in a better situation to come to Christ than you would be if you had less conviction of the hardness and stubbornness of your heart. The use of conviction is to show your need of a Savior, and to set clearly before your mind your utterly helpless and hopeless condition in yourself, and that a holy God would be perfectly just in leaving you to your own fruitless efforts, and in punishing you for ever for your sins.

Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness he requireth
Is to feel your need of him.

Take words, therefore, and go immediately and fall down before him, and say, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight, that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." Confess the righteousness of the sentence which condemns you, and accept the

punishment of your sins as just. Cry with Peter, when sinking in the sea, "Lord save; I perish." Or with the blind man, "O thou Son of David, have mercy upon me!" Or with the Syrophenician woman, "Lord, help me." Or with the penitent publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Say, like the royal penitent,

My lips with shame my sins confess
Against thy law, against thy grace.
Lord, should thy judgment grow severe,
I am condemned, but thou art clear.

Yet save a trembling sinner, Lord,
Whose hope, still hovering round thy word,
Would light on some sweet promise there,
Some sure support against despair.

But here is another poor soul, more bowed down than any which have considered. It is an *awakened backslider*. This man verily thought that he was a true Christian, and under that impression applied for admittance into the church, and was received, and for a season seemed to run well; but by the snares and baits of the world, and the deceitfulness of the riches, and insidious lusts of the flesh, and the pride of life, was by the degrees seduced from the paths of piety. After a while the profession of religion was laid aside as an inconvenient thing; since which time, until lately, he has been sinking deeper and deeper into the spirit of the world which lies in wickedness. But recently, by a sore visitation of affliction, his conscience has been awakened to a consideration of his woeful state, and he inquires with most earnest solicitude whether there is any ground of hope for such a backslider, who has sinned much more egregiously since he made a profession of religion than he ever did before. Now to such a one I feel authorized to say, Christ invites even backsliders like you to come and be saved. I find no clause excluding the returning backslider, guilty as he is in the sight of God. He says in regards to this man as others, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

There is indeed mention made in Scripture of some backsliders who turned back unto perdition, and never can be renewed again unto repentance; these never come to Christ, and never truly desire to come. For them nothing remains "but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation to devour the adversaries."

But we read in Jeremiah of the Lord calling upon his backsliding Israel to return, Jeremiah 3:12; and in Hosea, God says, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely." Hosea 14:4. This is a most gracious and encouraging promise, and we find in fact that God has received great backsliders upon their repentance, and freely pardoned their enormous sins. I believe that the deplorable backslidings of David, and his subsequent pardon and restoration, were left on record that convinced backsliders might not despair of mercy. And our Lord intimates that Peter, when recovered from his shameful fall, should make it his

business "to strengthen his brethren." Some of this class may perhaps allege that they are afraid that they never were truly of the number of the Israel of God. That perhaps is a question which you will never be able to solve in this life. But as to the point in hand it matters not; if you will now come to Christ, you will be received. Come, and he will in no wise cast you out.

It is commonly said that men are forward to believe whatever is connected with their own interest. This in common cases is true; but it is also true, that when some very great and unexpected good news is brought to us, we find it very difficult to credit it. It seems *too good to be true*. When Jacob's sons returned to their father after Joseph had made himself known to them, and informed him that his son Joseph was alive and governor of all Egypt, the old man could not believe the report until he lifted up his eyes and saw the wagons which had been sent to convey him to Egypt. So the convinced sinner finds it very hard to believe that a free and full salvation is offered to him, and that Christ stands ready to receive him, and not only to pardon all his sins, but give him a sure title to heavenly inheritance. It seems a thing almost impossible that he should be thus highly favored, and therefore, when he should with humble confidence lay hold on eternal life, he stands parleying, hesitating, and demurring. He is prone to think that there must be some mistake in the business, and that this good news cannot be true, at least in relation to himself. But when the truth stands out clearly revealed, he begins to understand what he never did before, the absolute and perfect freeness of salvation, and how it is that Christ receives the coming sinner just as he is, in all his guilt and vileness. Then, indeed, he cannot but rejoice and wonder at the suitableness of the plan of salvation to his character and necessities; that it comes down to his wretched and helpless circumstances, and takes him out of the horrible pit and miry clay, and sets his feet on a rock, establishes his goings, and puts a new song into his mouth, even praise unto God.

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