

WHAT CHRIST ASKS

"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Acts 9:6.

"What shall I do Lord?" Acts 22:10.

That is the cry of an awakened soul; of a man who has come at last to the end of himself, and is prepared to give Jesus Christ a chance. Saul realized that he was up against forces that were too big for him. There were temptations he could not overcome. There were conflicts from which there seemed to be no escape. There were problems on which he could get no real light. There were lives, like Stephen's, so compelling in power and beauty that he could no longer escape their challenge. He had tried everything, and he had failed. So he was prepared to come to terms with Jesus, whom he had ridiculed and hated, and whose followers he had persecuted so cruelly. It was the great moment of his life.

I wonder if anyone here has come to the end of himself; up against things too big for him; is prepared to give Christ a chance? Our text is a question that man asks when he comes to grips with Christ. What does Christ want us to do? What does He ask of us?

I. Come To Me Just As You Are.

Don't wait until you understand things more clearly, feel things more deeply, till temptations are overcome, and problems are solved. Don't wait until your difficulties and doubts are cleared away. Bring them to Christ and let Him deal with them.

Come with all your hesitations and uncertainties; your obligations and commitments; your follies and failures; all your sin -- evil imaginings that haunt you, ugly passions that sweep you off your feet and fill you with shame, loathing and disgust. Come with all your mingled record of success and failure; memory of wasted hours and prostituted gifts; all the hopes, desires, longings, and ambitions you cherish; with all the promise of bigger and finer things in your life.

Christ is prepared to make a beginning with any person any time, anywhere. He is ready and willing to make a beginning with you now. He is willing to take the raw and waste material of your life and make something worth while out of it. He was ready to take Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, Peter, James, Andrew, John, Mary Magdalene, Zaccheus, etc. He will meet your every need.

II. Bring To Me What You Have.

You may think there is little or nothing that you can bring. But you are wrong about that -- you have a heart with which you can love Him, a life with which you can serve Him, gifts and talents you can dedicate to Him, an influence over others you can exert on His behalf, a share in molding and making public opinion for Him.

1. Bring Him your personality.

Bring all your powers of mind and memory, reason and will, imagination and feeling. Bring all your capacity for devotion and loyalty, and endurance and service. Your personality may be tarnished or undeveloped, but it is something Christ can use.

2. Bring Him your individuality.

No one in all the world is quite the same as you. No one represents the same aggregate of instincts and attributes, gifts, and experiences and possibilities. No one can give Christ just what you can, or do exactly what you can do. There is a place in His service which you alone can fill.

3. Bring Him your experience.

Bring all that life has meant to you and has taught you -- of bitter and sweet, of evil and good, of ways of man with man and with God; all of these Christ can use.

4. Bring Him your influence.

For better or worse your life is telling on lives of others. The town is better or worse because you live in it. Its atmosphere is cleaner, sweeter, brighter, more wholesome because of what you are and what you do -- or it is the reverse. Bring the influence of your life to Christ and He will make it count for things that are most worth while.

5. Bring Him what you still have.

That is, bring the years that live in front of you. They may be few or many, but if you give them to Him they will be the happiest, most fruitful, and most worth while years of your life.

What do you have to offer Christ? A life with which you can serve Him, and He wants that.

III. Give To Me Your All.

Nothing less than that will really satisfy Him. It is not some of our time that He wants, or some of our interest, or some of our money, but our very selves -- all we are, and all we have in us by the grace of God to become. Christianity is not giving Christ a place in your life -- somewhere out near the circumference -- it is putting Him right at the center of your life, and giving Him its control.

What you are going to be, where you are going to live, who your friends and associates will be, and what you are going to do with your money, time, talents, friendships -- all these things you must be prepared for Him to decide. All that you are and have, and all that you have it in you to become, He asks you to lay down in glad surrender at His feet tonight.

IV. Stand By Me Whatever The Cost.

What does it mean to stand by Christ? It means that we identify ourselves openly with Him, that we let it be known to all that we have taken Him to be the Saviour and Master of our lives. It means that whenever His name, His ideals, His honour, His work or His friends are impugned, we will speak out clearly and courageously. It means implicit obedience and absolute loyalty to Him to Whom we have given our allegiance.

This is no light obligation on which to enter. It is not an easy thing to be a Christian, and to be true to Christ is often a very costly thing indeed. It is a warfare to which He is inviting us, and not a picnic -- it is on the greatest and most hazardous of all adventures that He is asking us to launch out tonight.

He wants us to count on Him, and He wants to be sure He can count on us. He doesn't promise us an easy time; freedom from sorrow, loss, pain, disappointment, misrepresentation, desertion, betrayal, or even death; for He knows that any or all of these things may be our lot in the days that lie ahead; but He does promise to see us through, right to the very end. And He asks us to believe that whatever experiences we may be called on to pass through, He will never leave us to face them alone, and He will never let us down. That, after all, is what really matters.

In David Livingstone's Journal there is a great entry, near the very end of the record. Livingstone is ill, and dying. He is alone among strangers, among savages in the very heart of darkest Africa, with no white face to cheer him and no familiar voice to greet him. And this is what he writes in his diary, with shaking hand that will soon be unable longer to hold the pen, -- "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end" -- "It is the word of a perfect gentleman, and that is enough for me." He doesn't say that he is conscious of the presence of Christ in that hour of weakness, and loneliness and pain. He says that Christ has promised to be there, to stand by him, and to see him through; and that is all that he asks. My friend, that promise is for you and me as well.

What are you going to say to Him tonight, as He says, "Come just as you are -- all that I have to give -- pardon, peace, power -- the rarest of all joys, the most wonderful of all fellowships, is yours for the asking -- for the taking."

"Come and bring what you have. You have something I need for the work in which I am engaged -- something that no one else can bring."

"Come and give me your all -- for neither you nor I can ever be satisfied with anything less than a full and complete surrender."

"Come and give me your unswerving loyalty. Let me know that there is one heart and life at least on which I can always count."

That is what it means to be a Christian -- to look into the face of the great Saviour and Master of life, and say with all your heart and your will behind it -- Lord, Jesus, from now on I am going to count absolutely on you, and you can count absolutely on me; and then go out and live your life in the spirit of that decision.