

## THE MAGNETISM OF THE UPLIFTED CHRIST

John 12:32

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." John 12:32.

Certain Greeks appeared out of the mists of obscurity, stood for a few minutes in the light of the gospel stage, and then disappeared into the mists again. That is all we know about them. But all the tides of time cannot drown the memory of them, for they are immortalized by the words: "We would see Jesus." They were not moved simply by curiosity to see the One with whose name the Jewish world was ringing, and about Whom such strange stories were flying. With a reverent interest in Him about Whom they had heard so much, they wanted to have a personal interview with Him. So they sought out Philip and Andrew, expressed their desire to see Christ, and requested them to introduce them to Him. They gave utterance to the longing in every human breast then and now and always: "Sir, we would see Jesus." After Philip and Andrew had consulted, they approached Christ and told Him that certain Greeks were desirous of seeing Him, meaning that they wanted a personal interview with Him.

The personality of Jesus Christ was already attractive. The magnet was beginning to draw, and the sons and daughters of men were coming from afar. But why were these Greeks drawn to Him? Perhaps it was only curiosity, which nevertheless is often the mother of wonder and awe, and the minister of deathless devotion. Or, perhaps it was heart-hunger, the pangs of an unsatisfied craving, an unrest which philosophy was unable to soothe, a vastness of desire for which eloquence, music and art did not have any satisfaction.

In the heart-cry of these Greeks, "We would see Jesus", our Lord recognized the universal longing of the human heart for a satisfying Saviour. The Greeks had their philosophers and sages, their would-be satisfiers and saviours. They were some of the greatest men the world has ever known:

Socrates, Aristotle, and many others. But they did not save, and they did not satisfy. In their eager coming Christ foresaw millions from the various nations who would come to Him and receive Him as their Saviour through the centuries following His crucifixion, and so He said: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

The Person Who made this statement was not the Christ of men's imaginings, but the Christ of reality and actual historic fact. He was the Christ of actuality, Who lived here among men, Who was seen, heard and touched by men, and Who was soon to die a real death to save real sinners from a real hell to a real heaven.

What is the meaning of the words "be lifted up." They refer to our Lord's being lifted up on the cross. All doubt on that point is removed by the language in the very next verse: "This he said, signifying what death he should die." Christ referred to His being lifted up on the cross at Calvary as a spectacle to men and angels, to die as an atoning sacrifice and Saviour. When His enemies lifted Him up on the cross, they exposed Him to an awful shame and to an agonizing death. They supposed that when they had lifted Him from the earth on the cross that they had destroyed forever His power as their foe and His influence as the Redeemer of men. But Christ's cross was in a real sense His throne of power.

Roman soldiers nailed Christ to the cross and erected it on Golgotha. The sufferings of the Son of God and the Saviour of men were three-fold in nature. They were physical. To be sure, He suffered as His body was tortured. They were mental. The enemy added to the physical inflictions by sneering at Christ. They scoffed at His prophetic power. "They struck him on the face, saying, Prophecy unto us, who is he that smote thee?" They also sneered at His priestly power by saying: "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. He saved others; himself he cannot save." They also scoffed at His kingly power.

When they put a crown upon His head, they knelt before Him in mockery, crying, "Hail king of the Jews!" His sufferings were also spiritual, as well as physical and mental.

Having been lifted up from the earth on the cross, Christ has been drawing men unto Himself. Not all men then, and not all today, have been drawn unto Him. But all who have come to know Him as their Saviour have been drawn unto Him by the power of His death on the cross. There is no doubt or mystery about the fact of the magnetism or drawing power of the uplifted Christ, or about the peace and strength which He bestows upon those who anchor their souls in the deep sea of God's eternal love.

Why is it that the cross makes this eternal appeal? Partly because it presents to us a suffering and a sorrowing Saviour. Even in the field of human relationships and influence, suffering and sorrow are more powerful than pleasure and joy. Crowns of roses wither, but crowns of thorns endure. Calvaries and crucifixions speak to the souls of men as nothing else can. Benjamin Franklin was by no means an evangelical believer in Christ, and yet in his last illness he had a picture of Christ on the cross hung in his room so that he could look, as he said, upon the "Silent Sufferer." Many a suffering soul has looked upon the Silent Sufferer of Calvary and found strength and hope in his personal battle.

In the second place, the cross makes an eternal appeal because it tells us that on it something was done for man which needed to be done and which man himself could never do. Christ nailed to the cross our own condemnation.

"We may not know, we can not tell,  
What pains He had to bear;  
We only know it was for us  
He suffered and died there.

There was none other good enough  
To pay the price of sin,  
He only could unlock the Gate of Heaven  
And let us in."

Thirdly, Christ's death on the cross proclaimed the inestimable worth of man's soul. Christ asked two great questions about your soul. First, What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Second, What shall a man give in exchange for his soul? When Christ died on the cross, He answered the question about the worth of man's soul. What is your soul worth to God? The cross gives you the answer. It is worth the suffering and death of the Son of God.

It is Christ crucified Who draws and meets the deepest needs of the human heart. Preach any Christ but a crucified One and men will not be drawn for long. It is an atoning Saviour Who meets the needs of men. Christianity is the only religion which offers an atonement for sin, and yet some people are trying to eliminate from it the real point of difference from all other religions. But an emasculated Christianity will not reach the needs of men and will not draw them. It never has and it never will. Men know their need, even though some of them may try to deny it, or to drown their sense of it by drink, dissipation, pleasure-seeking, money-getting, or listening to fake preachers.

Christ crucified meets the greatest need of man, which is that of a Saviour. A Saviour from what? A Saviour from the guilt of sin is what man needs. There is no difference at this point for "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Man needs a Saviour to make an atonement for his sins, reconcile him to God, and bring him into the glorious sunlight of His favor. In all the universe there is no other religion except Christianity that offers an atoning Saviour. Mohammedanism offers Mohammed, "The Prophet,"

a teacher, but not a Saviour; Buddhism offers Buddha, supposedly a wonderful teacher, but not an atoning Saviour; Confucianism offers Confucius, a marvelous teacher, but not an atoning Saviour. The strongest appeal God has ever made to man is the appeal of His Son giving Himself on the cross. Even while He was hanging on the cross, Christ drew a penitent malefactor to Himself. Ever since, His death on the cross has been a magnet to sinful but penitent souls. Multitudes of them have discovered that there is life for look at the crucified One.

Christ's drawing of men unto Him is a gentle rather than a forceful one. Christ draws, but He does not drag. He wins, but He does not coerce. This is a personal drawing. Does "all men" mean all individuals or men of all races and nations? If it does not mean "all men" without exception, at least it means "all men" without distinction. He did not say that He would draw every individual, but He did mean that He would draw men of all classes and climes, of all interests and types. Christ does not appeal exclusively to the educated or to the uneducated, to orientals or to occidentals, but to all men alike --the rich and the poor, the high and the low, men of every nation, kindred, tribe and tongue. The Christ Who was uplifted on the cross draws people unto Him because in Him there is satisfaction for sin to every one who believes. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed".