

THE POWER TO BECOME

"He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."
John 1:11-12.

Human life has many limitations. Yet life itself might almost be defined as a surging desire to become. The highest forms of life are ever in the process of becoming. We do not take enough of the dignity with which Christianity crowns the life of the humblest believer. It enables him to become a child of the Highest, or a son of God. To be a child of God involves so much in the life that now is, and everything in the life which is to come. To be a child of God is the highest position to which one can aspire.

An examination of these two verses reveals four things.

1. The Greatest Tragedy.

"He came unto his own, and his own received him not." The verb "came," in the aorist tense, denotes a definite act -- the incarnation. "Unto his own," in the neuter plural, means "unto his own things." Everything was "His own," by creation, possession, and absolute dominion. Israel was the home of our Lord. Palestine was His land. He came to the world at large, but He came through a particular locality. He came to humanity in general, but He came through a particular nation.

"And his own received him not." "His own" in the masculine plural, means "his own people" -- the Jewish people, the chosen people to whom Christ was sent first. The Jews were "His own": --

(1) By Divine choice.

They were chosen from among the nations of the earth to be the recipients of God's special revelations of His will, the objects of His special care and protection, and the special medium of His great redemptive thoughts and purposes.

(2) By special covenant.

"And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be His peculiar people, as He hath promised thee, and that Thou shouldest keep his commandments." God entered into a covenant with them by which they were to obey and serve Him, and He was to save and bless them.

(3) By special promises.

His greatest promise was that of the Messiah and the blessing He would bring.

(4) By a special training.

They were trained by special revelations, discipline, privileges, and protection.

In what sense did Jesus come when His own refused to receive Him?

(1) He came as Immanuel.

"Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel."
"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." This long-expected Messiah exercised the authority of God.

- a. By forgiving sins.
- b. By healing the sick.
- c. By raising the dead.
- d. By calming the storm.

But so far were His own from receiving Him that they accounted Him a "sinner," and "deceiver," "and many of them said, He hath a demon, and is mad; why hear ye Him?"

- (2) He came as the Prophet like unto Moses.

"The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me." But they rejected Him because His doctrine contradicted their prejudices, censured their vices, and laid a restraint on their dominant lusts.

- (3) He came as Mediator between God and man.

But they received Him not because they were depending on being Abraham's seed, on circumcision, on the priesthood, and on their expiations of the Law.

- (4) He came as Redeemer and Saviour.

But they received Him not because they did not see their need of redemption and had no desire for real spiritual blessings.

- (5) He came as King.

As His kingdom was not of this world they rejected Him.

What was the manner of His coming?

- (1) He came voluntarily.

John the Baptist was sent. Christ Jesus came.

- (2) He came opportunely.

In the fulness of time, the time pre-appointed by Almighty God, Jesus came.

- (3) He came graciously.

He came to communicate the light and the life without which neither Israel nor humanity could be saved.

- (4) He came unostentatiously.

Many anticipated His coming in great power and glory, but instead of that He came in the form of a servant.

The greatest spiritual stupidity in the history of the human race is that moral blindness which led the Jews to reject their Saviour when He came to them. Though He walked in their

midst, performed miracles of mercy, taught them the love of the Father, and revealed in His own person the amazing glory of God, all the answer they made seemed to have been one of utter repudiation, culminating in the crucifixion on Calvary. Many never paid any attention to Him, to His discourses, to His mighty works, or to His holy character. Some simply indulged in idle curiosity in gazing upon His works or listening to His messages. Many were stupidly indifferent. There were some who were actively hostile to Him, and, like the citizens of Gadara, they were only concerned to have Him depart from their borders. The reasons for their rejection of Him were as follows: --

- (1) His humility was an offense to their worldliness and pride.
- (2) His holy character was a rebuke to their sins.
- (3) His spiritual teaching was a rebuke to their formality.
- (4) His life of benevolence was a rebuke of their selfishness.

II. The Greatest Transaction.

"But as many as received Him." He was received by a small but noble minority. Although the majority, which included the best educated and most influential, rejected Him, the independent and courageous minority received Him. Their conduct in doing so was an evidence of the courage of their convictions and the decisiveness of their character. It is one thing to swim with the tide, but it is altogether a different thing to swim against it. It is easy to go with the popular current, but it is difficult to go against it.

What is it to receive Christ? To receive Christ and to believe on Christ are one and the same thing. The receiving of the Lord Jesus Christ is the vital and saving act of faith. You may believe that He is divine, that He is the Son of God, that He is the Saviour, but unless you receive Him you do not have faith. To believe on Christ is to receive Him.

III. The Greatest Transmission.

"To them gave He power." The word which is translated "power" means "authority," and it includes ability as well. It is more than the notion of privilege or right. In other words, the Lord gives the right and the ability. He gives us the power to become what we were not -- the children of God. Even a distaste for the sinful life and a desire for God are not produced by man, but they are the work of the Holy Spirit drawing him to God. The very first impulse to become a child of God comes to one from the outside, for it is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do. Power to repent of sins, power to believe with the heart, power to make a full and unreserved dedication of self to Christ come to those who receive Him.

To as many as receive Him, no matter how many or whom, He gives the power. Regardless of their position, education, or character, this power is given to those who receive Him. Jesus is prepared to confer the title, "Child of God," upon all those who receive Him, and with the title, to give all the rights and privileges appertaining thereto.

IV. The Greatest Transformation.

"To become the sons of God." Have you ever tried to think out the meaning of that expression, "the sons of God?" It means to have the great God as our Father, to have the Saviour Jesus Christ as our elder brother, to have the saved of all ages as our brethren, and to have the angels as our friends. To be a "son of God" implies a length and breadth and height and depth of meaning which the tongue of man cannot fully utter.

Various things are involved in this sonship: --

1. True kinship with God.

We become partakers of the divine nature. The sire and the son are linked together. Their natures are alike. Our text makes it quite clear as to how we become partakers of the divine nature. This salvation is a gift, but the responsibility falls on the individual to receive the gift. You can either reject or receive the gift.

2. Access to Him at all times.

What a privilege! We can come to Him day or night in the name of Jesus.

3. Assurance of His protection.

We shall always need protection, for this world is full of dangers. The sense of absolute security in this present life is an invaluable blessing.

4. Assurance of His provision.

"For your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him." He is limitless in His resources, and therefore promises His children to supply all their needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. It is truly wonderful to know that we believers have a Father who is able to provide for us at all times and under all circumstances.

5. Fellowship with God.

All who have this sonship conferred upon them are admitted into divine fellowship. Sonship implies love, for fatherhood means love. Love accompanies the son at all times, following him wherever he goes. The father stoops to the child, and the child rises to the father.

6. Guarantee of an inheritance.

Sonship implies heirship. "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together."

7. Companionship in death.

He not only glorifies life for us in this workaday world, but He is with us in the hour of death. O. Henry, the famous story-writer, was dying. The nurse thought the end had come, and began lowering the shades of the windows. Opening his eyes, and seeming to understand, he said, "Lef up the shades! I don't want to go home in the dark." Ah, my friends, if we have received Jesus Christ into our hearts, we shall not have to go home in the dark.

Christ the Saviour gives the power to become the children of God to all who receive Him, even to them that believe on His name. Man's reception of this power depends entirely on His willingness to receive Christ, who so freely offers this power. To reject Christ is to reject the power to become a child of God or to be saved. To accept Him is to be saved, to become a member of God's family, to enjoy the Divine favor, and to live an immortal life in heaven.

Unsaved friend, you should open the door of your heart and let the Lord Jesus Christ come in. Your very salvation depends upon it. Then, His presence will mean so much to you in the way of peace, joy, comfort, and reenforcement in all the circumstances of life here. You need Him for what He can do for you as you face the baffling mysteries, problems, and battles with which life is so constantly beset.

May God help you to make room in your hearts for Christ Jesus tonight by accpeting Him right now as your Saviour. Won't you receive Him penitently and affectionately while we sing, "Only Trust Him?"