

REFUSING LIFE

"And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." ("And ye are unwilling to come to me, that life ye may have.") -- John 5:40

Christ Jesus gave up the glories of heaven and came down to this earth to make it possible for every man to obtain eternal life. He went up and down His nativeland offering this life as a free gift to all who would come to Him. But the great majority would not come to Him, in order that they might obtain this life which He offered so freely to them. They would come in vast crowds to see His miracles, and even to listen to His teachings; but they would not come to Him and put their trust in Him as their Saviour and Lord. Naturally His heart was aching and well-nigh breaking over the folly and ingratitude of those whom He came to save.

One day He was surrounded by a great crowd of curiosity seekers and miracle-mongers. As He looked over the vast assembly and saw the sickness, the want, the misery, and the soul-destroying sin and unbelief that there were among them, His heart went out toward them in unutterable sympathy and longing. Plaintively He said, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."

Our Lord was addressing himself to a group of unbelieving Jews who devotedly believed that one day God would send a Messiah to the earth to save His people. Their prophets had proclaimed His coming so often and so clearly that they lived in daily expectation of His appearance among them. But when Christ came, He was not the kind of Messiah they had expected; hence they cast Him out.

Jesus told them that they had received abundant evidence of His being the one sent from God, but yet they had rejected Him, and He solemnly charged this home upon their consciences. There is, perhaps, no better evidence of the truth of our Saviour's mission than His character, life, and miracles. The truths which He revealed, the perfections which He displayed and the wonders which He wrought, all went to show that He was anointed of God, and sent to be the Saviour of men.

In substance Jesus said, "I offered you life and you would not have it." "You could have been saved, but you refused to be." "I called, but you refused to come." Thus He placed the responsibility for salvation and for damnation on the individual. The door to heaven was flung wide open, but some refused to enter it. There was a fountain opened for sin and transgression, but some refused to plunge into it. There was a call sent out from heaven for all men to repent and to be saved from their sins. Some heard it and accepted it, but others heard it and refused to accept it. With all His heart aching with disappointment, in tones of yearning pity Jesus said, "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."

Christ is a living person, full of the power to save. He has not placed His salvation in any other person or thing, but He has kept it in Himself; and if you want to have it, you must come to Him. He is still the one source of eternal mercy. There are other supposed ways of salvation, but Christ is the only real way. He is a sure way. None have ever tried Him and failed. He is also an open way.

I. Reasons Why Men Do Not Come To Christ.

How strange that when there is a Saviour who is adequate for the whole world, so few come to Him to be saved. If a life-boat went out to a wreck, and it was sufficient to bring back the entire crew, but it returned with less than half of them, you would inquire why the rest did not come back on it. Just so, after Christ has come to seek and to save that which was lost, and yet the majority are unsaved, it behooves us to inquire why so many are not saved by Him. Why are men lost? This is a serious question. It is a serious thing for a soul to be lost eternally. As surely as there is such a place as heaven, there is such a place as hell. As surely as there is such a thing as salvation, there is such a thing as condemnation. As certainly as there is such a thing as eternal happi-

ness, there must be such a thing as eternal unhappiness. For a man to lose his soul in a hell of eternal misery and woe is a terrible thing. Then, why are they lost?

1. Negatively.

(1) It is not the will of God for any to be lost.

Some teach that before the world was made God predetermined the eternal salvation of some and the eternal damnation of others. They place certain men under God's wrath and argue that nothing they can do will change that decree of God. This teaching is unscriptural. It makes God wholly responsible for the lost condition of men. Remember that God's calls are all conditional. If we call on Him, He will answer, but we must call on Him. If we repent, He will forgive, but we must repent. If we accept Him, He will save us, but we must accept Him. God's decrees include our part as well as His part. They depend on our complying with the conditions as well as with God's fulfilling the promises. God does not want men to be lost. He has voiced this by every prophet, every apostle, and every writer of the sacred scriptures. Ezekiel recorded the statement, "Say unto them, as I live saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil way, for why will ye die?" Peter said, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promises as some men count slackness, but is long suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all men should come to repentance." John wrote, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." His invitation, "Come to me" is found at least 952 times in the Bible, besides other expressions that convey the same meaning. Men are not lost because God wants them to be lost, for He has done all that could be done to keep men from being lost. His will is for "all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth."

(2) It is not because of anything in Christ.

a. He is able to save all.

Christ is quite sufficient to save all. "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." If He is sufficient for one sinner, He is sufficient for all.

b. He is willing to save all.

There is no unwillingness in the heart of Christ. When one is willing and anxious about something, he will do everything in his power to bring it to pass. Doubtless when our Saviour spoke the words of this text, His face wore the look of sadness. He felt the human wrong against Himself. When Christ was rejected He expressed sorrow for the people who rejected Him. When you reject Him, He mourns over you because He wants you to come to Him and be saved. Our text not only expresses sadness, but longing. He wants you to come to Him just as you are. The sinner must come to Christ with his sins and let Christ save him from his sins. He wants you to come to Him now that you may have everlasting life. If you fail to come it is not the Saviour's fault.

2. Positively.

(1) Ignorance about Christ.

Many have lived under the preached word for years and yet Jesus is an utter stranger to them.

(2) Self-righteousness.

Many have no real sense of need. They feel no danger. They flatter themselves with the hope that they will do well enough without troubling themselves about coming to Christ. If your ship was sinking, but you did not perceive it, you would not get into the life-boat. If you were sick and dying, but were not conscious of it, you would not send for the physician. Just so, if you have no consciousness of being under the wrath of God, and exposed to hell, you will not come to Christ

that you may have life. If you look around, you will see that most men have no feeling of anxiety about their souls. You will find them anxious about their families, about their money, about their business, about their character, and reputation, but seldom do you find one anxious about his soul. No one ever came to Christ without being conscious of sin.

(3) Love of sin.

Many know they are sinners and should come to Christ and be saved. They also know that they must leave their sins behind; give them up. If they could continue in sin and give Jesus the second place, they would be willing to come. They are still unsaved because they will not part with sin, which is what keeps them a distance from Christ.

(4) Fear of man.

Some are afraid of what someone might think, say or do if they should accept and confess Christ. "The fear of man bringeth a snare." Some are afraid of ridicule. I would rather have a few fools to laugh at me here for doing the right thing than to have all the demons of hell to laugh at me throughout eternity for doing the wrong thing.

(5) Love of friends.

Some fear they will lose some friend if they should come. The best friend to have is Jesus. The time is coming when no earthly friend can help you. The time will never come when Jesus cannot help you if you come to Him now. Give Jesus the first place in your life no matter what earthly love you may lose by doing it.

(6) Unwillingness.

If you are not a Christian it is plainly and simply because you will not be. You can be saved whenever you come to Christ. God will not hinder you and man cannot. Christ offers life and man will not take it. It is as if a starving man would refuse to eat the food spread before him. Christ shows that the world will not accept the very thing it most needs. Some time ago a man took his own life by jumping into the bay. A man on the wharf threw a rope within a few inches of his hands. Instead of seizing the rope he deliberately pushed it away and went down to a watery grave. Today Christ throws out the life-line that every sinking soul may be saved with an everlasting salvation. The only difficulty in the way of man's salvation is his own rebellious will.

II. Reasons Why Men Should Come To Christ.

1. They need to be saved.

They are under the guilt and curse of sin, the power of Satan, and the wrath of God. This is the only way they will ever get saved.

2. They are invited to come to Christ.

He says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The church and the Holy Spirit invite you. It is right and best for us or He would not have invited us.

3. Their happiness depends on it.

One who fails to come cannot be happy.

4. The blessings derived from coming to Him.

- (1) Forgiveness of sins.
- (2) Peace of conscience.
- (3) Perfect security.
- (4) Intimate fellowship.
- (5) Eternal life.
- (6) Hope of immortality.

Come to Him and trust Him for these blessings. The moment you come to Him you will receive them. John 6:37. Come with a consciousness of sin, with a desire to be saved, with faith in Christ's power to save, and with a determination to be obedient to Him. Yield yourself to Him now. It will be the best moment thus far in your life. Think of the Person whom you reject, and the life you spurn if you will not come to Christ.