

THE LAST CALL

"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." Revelation 22:17.

This text pictures man as a traveler in a desert suffering with thirst. Therefore, he is in a perishing condition. Thus it is implied that man by nature is in a lost condition. He is not in danger of being lost, but is lost already because Jesus said: "He that believeth not is condemned already because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." To this teaching of Jesus the conscience of man universally testifies. There remains an unrest in man's being, an instinct of guilt, and a fever-thirst for something more and better. No traveler has ever reached a land whose inhabitants were not laboring under a sense of sin and thirsting for the waters of salvation. Even the heathen religions are practical expressions of an earnest desire for deliverance from the pangs of a guilty and accusing conscience, and from the terrible agonies of eternal death. So the text implies that all men are by nature condemned sinners, pilgrims in a desert perishing with thirst.

Also the text assumes that for sinful men there is a way of salvation. Jesus Christ is the source of salvation. From Him issue all the streams making glad the sin sick--the stream of cleansing blood, of justifying grace, of adopting love, of holy peace, of sanctifying power, of divine fellowship and of heavenly consolation. The gospel of Christ meets the soul of man and leads him at once to the fountain of living waters. He drinks, and is refreshed; he drinks and is saved; he drinks, and is purified; he drinks, and is comforted. With his sins forgiven, his heart renewed and his conscience at peace, he walks in Christ's righteousness a conqueror, and more than a conqueror.

When John was writing the book of Revelation, he wrote as though he were writing the last gospel invitation, and knew that it was to be the last, so once for all he put it as simply and clearly as possible. He rang the changes on it, knowing that it was the last ring of the gospel bell, "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." Revelation 22:17. This is the last call of the gospel and is a call for all men to come to Christ and be saved. The real purpose of all gospel preaching and teaching is just to lift up the voice, and to say to those who have never yet done so, "Come to Jesus"; and to say to those who have come to Him, "Come still closer."

This last call to the unsaved to come to Jesus can neither be described nor comprehended in its vastness. It emphasizes what Jesus had stressed all during His ministry: His interest in lost humanity. There has never been another call so broad in its circumference, so intense in its earnestness, so inclusive in its scope, so earnest in its appeal, nor so unrelenting in its purpose. This gracious invitation comes from the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

I. What Is This Call?

The call is to come and "take the water of life." The Lord was not willing to close the Book without another invitation to all lost sinners. The blessing offered in the call is "the water of life." It is not that water of which if a man drink he shall thirst again, but that living water, of which if a man drink he shall never thirst. To take of the water of life means that you enter into the life of God, are born into His family, and become a partaker of His divine nature. This figurative language is

designed to express all that is included in the term salvation: pardon, adoption, peace of conscience, sanctification, joy in this life, and glory immortal in the next life. This invitation includes: --

1. Salvation.

"Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Salvation is invaluable. It means that you are on God's side. It means joy. It means that your name is recorded in heaven. Man without salvation is utterly ruined and undone. Salvation means grace to live by and grace to die by.

2. Satisfaction.

Having taken the water of life freely, you are thoroughly cleansed, refreshed, and given a satisfaction that heaven alone can give. That water is living and life-giving. There is peace and satisfaction in salvation.

During the Civil War Dwight L. Moody was on a battlefield. After a battle, while ministering to the wounded and the dying, he came to a soldier and passed him by because he was motionless. Then, he saw his hand move slightly. He turned back to him, lifted his head, wet his lips, and asked if there was anything he could do for him. In faint tones the soldier said, "Get the Book out of my pocket and read to me." Moody took the New Testament out of his pocket, opened it, and asked, "What shall I read to you?" The boy said, "John 14." As Moody began to read the soldier closed his eyes. When he came to the verse, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you," the lad said, "That will do Chaplain. I have that peace."

3. Safety.

Christ said, "No man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and My Father are one." No wonder we can sing with hope and confidence:

"Our God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home!"

Ours is not a sandy foundation; our foundation is more secure than the Rock of Gibraltar.

"How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!
What more can He say than to you He hath said,
To you, who for refuge to Jesus have fled?"

II. From Whom Is This Call?

1. It Comes from the Holy Spirit.

"The Spirit" says "Come." The Holy Spirit convicts, invites, woos, and draws men and women to God. He talks to men everywhere and invites them to come to Christ and be saved. He is continually pressing home this invitation. He is constantly showing people their danger and revealing to them an adequate refuge.

2. It comes from the Church.

The church joins the Holy Spirit in the call to all who are lost everywhere. This is the first task of the church; its major responsibility. When the church is at her best she is trying most earnestly to win the lost to Christ. It is tragic for any church to settle in a state of apathy and become self-satisfied. When the church grows lax in her concern for the world, the world will creep into the church. When

the church is deeply moved the lost will be deeply impressed. When the church says "come" and means it, sinners will come to Christ and be saved.

What a blessing the church is! What a mission of light, of life, of glory, of invitation it is! Think of the founder of this institution—Christ. He said, "Upon this rock I will build my church." Think of the inviting message of the church—the Bible. Come to Christ and join with Timothy Dwight in saying:

"I love Thy kingdom, Lord,
The house of Thine abode,
The Church our blest Redeemer saved
With His own precious blood."

3. It comes from the individual Christian.

"Let him that heareth say, Come." If we have tasted of the heavenly gift, it is not only our privilege but our mission and duty to say to the lost, "Come." When Andrew was saved, he at once went after his brother and "brought him to Jesus." The highest privilege we have is to say "come". Many would come if we would only say "come" and mean it.

4. It comes from Christ.

He backs His call with an unmatched record of interest in and for humanity. He saved the maniac, stilled the tempest, opened the eyes of Bartimaeus, and raised Lazarus from the dead. He will give salvation to your soul, light to your eyes, firm footing for your feet, an upward look in the darkest hour, hope in death, and glorious expectancy for the resurrection morning. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." John 6:37.

III. To Whom Is The Call?

1. It is the most extensive call ever made.

"Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." This call is not for any one time; it is for all time. It is not for any one class; it is for all classes. It is not for any one nation; it is for all nations. It is not for any one color; it is for all colors. "And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

2. It is the most inclusive call ever made.

(1) The thirsty.

"And let him that is athirst come." The soul that hungers and thirsts for God is invited to come. How a thirsty man craves water! So a thirsty soul craves God. Just as the cooling springs of water will slake the wants of a thirsty man, God will satisfy the thirsty soul when it comes to Christ. The most sinful are also invited to come. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." The negligent, hesitating and wandering are invited to come. If you are hesitating:

"Why do you wait, dear brother,
Oh, why do you tarry so long?
Your Saviour is waiting to give you
A place in His sanctified throng."

"Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness." Who is invited? "He that thirsteth." Who does not thirst? Your heart is parched for love; your mind is athirst for truth that you can cleave to in all circumstances; your conscience is calling out for cleansing, purifying and pacifying; your

will long for a loving authority to control it; and your whole being long for that which you are not.

(2) The willing.

"And whosoever will." For fear somebody might feel left out, He added: "And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." This call includes everybody. There is no reason, and not even an excuse, why anybody should be lost. There is every reason why everybody should be saved. "Whosoever will;" not whosoever feels like coming, or whosoever is worthy; but whosoever will. That "whosoever" takes in everybody. If you continue thirsty, it is not for want of a call, but because you are not willing to drink of the water of life. None are shut out except those who keep out.

3. It is the most intensive call ever given.

Turn through the Word and you will find the intensity of God in man's behalf. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," He cried. "But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them." A mother had searched for her poor, dissipated, bedraggled son. From city to city she had gone into the dens of thieves and the cesspools of iniquity. Finally, worn out and exhausted, disease laid hold on the very vitals of her life. She was found and carried to a hospital. With her last breath she said to the nurse: "Tell my boy that there were two who never gave him up." "Who is the other one?" asked the nurse. "God," was the reply.

4. It is the most expensive call ever given.

It cost God His Son to make it possible; it cost Christ His life to perfect it.

"Christ the Saviour came from heaven's glory,
To redeem the lost from sin and shame;
On His brow He wore the thorn-crown gory,
And upon Calvary He took my blame."

Think of what it costs the sinner to reject it! It means that he will meet God unprepared; it means that he will be shut out beyond the limits of God's help. Just think of the cost of it, and accept this gracious invitation now.