

Coming to Christ

A Sermon

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Delivered by

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"To whom coming."—[1 Peter 2:4](#).

IN THESE three words you have, first of all, a *blessed person mentioned*, under the pronoun "whom"—"To whom coming." In the way of salvation we come alone to Jesus Christ. All comings to baptism, comings to confirmation, comings to sacrament are all null and void unless we come to Jesus Christ. That which saves the soul is not coming to a human priest, nor even attending the assemblies of God's saints; it is coming to Jesus Christ, the great exalted Saviour, once slain, but now enthroned in glory. You must get to him, or else you have virtually nothing upon which your soul can rely. "To whom coming." Peter speaks of all the saints as *coming to Jesus*, coming to him as unto a living stone, and being built upon him, and no other foundation can any man lay than that which is laid, and if any man say that coming anywhere but to Christ can bring salvation, he hath denied the faith and utterly departed from it. The coming mentioned in the text is a word which is sometimes explained in Scripture by hearing, at other times by trusting or believing, and quite as frequently by looking. "To whom coming." Coming to Christ does not mean coming with any natural motion of the body, for he is in heaven, and we cannot climb up to the place where he is; but it is a mental coming, a spiritual coming; it is, in one word, a trusting in and upon him. He who believes Jesus Christ to be God, and to be the appointed atonement for sin, and relies upon him as such, has come to him, and it is this coming which saves the soul. Whoever the wide world over has relied upon Jesus Christ, and is still relying upon him for the pardon of his iniquities, and for his complete salvation, is saved.

Notice one thing more in these three words, that *the participle is in the present*. "To whom coming," not "To whom having come," though I trust many of us have come, but the way of salvation is not to come to Christ and then forget it, but to continue coming, to be always coming. It is the very spirit of the believer to be always relying upon Christ, as much after a life of holiness as when he first commenced that life; as much when he has been blessed with much spiritual nearness of access to God, and a holy, heavenly frame of mind; as much then, I say, as when, a poor trembling penitent, he said, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." To Christ we are to be, always coming; upon him always relying, to his precious blood always looking.

So I shall take the text, then, this evening thus:—These three words describe *our first salvation*, describe *the life of the Christian*, and then describe *his departure*, for what even is that but to be still coming to Christ, to be in his embrace for ever? First, then, these three words describe, and very accurately too:—

I. THE FIRST SALVATION OF THE BELIEVER.

It is coming to Christ. I shall not try to speak the experience of many present; I know if it were necessary you could rise and give your "Yea, yes" to it. In describing the work of grace at the first, I may say that *it was indeed a very simple thing for us to come to Christ*, but simple as it was, some of us were very long in finding it out. The simplest thing in all the world is just to look to Jesus and live, to drink of the life-giving stream, and find our thirst for ever assuaged. But though it is so plain that he who runs may read, and a man needs scarce any wit to comprehend the gospel, yet we went hither and thither, and searched for years before we discovered the simplicity which is in Christ Jesus. Most of us were like Penelope, who spun by day, and then unwound her work at night. It was even so we did. We thought we were getting up a little. We had some evidence. We said, "Yes, we are in a better state; are shall yet be saved." But ere long the night of sorrow came in. We had a sight of our own sinfulness, and what we had spun, I say, by day, we unwound again quite as quickly by night. Well, there are some of you much in the same way now. You are like a foolish builder who should build a wall, and then should begin to knock down all the stones at once. You build, and then pull down. Or, like the gardener who, having put into the ground his seeds and planted his flowers, is not satisfied with them, and thinks he will have something else, and so tries again. Ah! the methods and the shifts we will be at to try and save ourselves, while, after all, Christ has done it all. We will do anything rather than be saved by Christ's charity. We do not like to bow our necks to take the mercy of God, as poor undeserving sinners. Some will attend their church or their chapel with wonderful regularity, and think that that will ease their conscience, and when they get no ease of conscience from that, then they will! try sacraments, and when no salvation comes from them, then there will be good works, Popish ceremonies, and I know not what besides. All sorts of doings, good, bad, and indifferent, men will take to, if they may but have a finger in their own salvation, while all the while the blessed Saviour stands by, ready to save them altogether if they will but be quiet and take the salvation he has wrought. All attempts to save ourselves by our own works are but a base bargaining with God for eternal life, but he will never give eternal life at a price, nor sell it, for all that man could bring, though in each hand he should hold a star; he will give it freely to those who want it. He will dispense it without money and without price to all who come and ask for it, and, hungering and thirsting, are ready to receive it as his free gift, but:—

"Perish the virtue, as it ought, abhorred,
And the fool with it, who insults his Lord,"

by bringing in anything that he can do as a Around of dependence, and putting that in the place of the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I said, dear friends, that it was very simple, and indeed it is so, a very simple thing to trust Jesus and be saved, but it cost some of us many a day to find it out. Shall I just mention some of the ways in which persons are, long before they find it out. Some ask, "What is the best way to act faith? What is the best way to get this precious believing that I hear so much spoken of?" Now the question reminds me of a madman who, standing at a table which is well spread, says to a person standing there, "Tell me what is the best way to eat. What is the philosophy of eating?" "Why," the man replies, "I cannot be long about that; I need not write a long treatise on it: the best way I know of is to eat." And when people say, "What is the best way to get faith?" I say, "Believe." "But what is the best way to believe?" Why, believe. I can tell you nothing else. Some may say to you, "Pray for faith." Well, but how can you pray without faith? Or if they tell you to read, or do, or feel, in order to get faith, that is a roundabout way. I find not such exhortations as these put down as the gospel, but our Master, when he went to heaven, bade us go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; and what was that gospel to me? His own words are, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," and we cannot say anything clearer than that. "Believe"—that is, trust—"and be baptized," and these two things are put before you as Christ's ordained way of salvation. Now you want to philosophise, do you? Well, but why should a hungry man philosophies about the bread that it before him? Eat, sir, and philosophise afterwards. Believe in Jesus Christ, and when you get the joy and peace which faith in him will be sure to bring, then philosophize as you will.

But some are asking the question, "How shall I make myself fit to be saved?" That is similar to, a man who, being very black and filthy, coming home from a coal mine or from a forge, says, seeing the bath before him: "How shall I make myself fit to be?" You tell him at once that there cannot be any fitness for washing, except filthiness, which is the reverse of a fitness. So there can be no fitness for believing in Christ, except sinfulness, which is, indeed, the reverse of fitness. If you are hungry, you are fit to eat; if you are thirsty, you are fit to drink; if you are naked, you are fitted to receive the garments which charity is giving to those who need them; if you are a sinner, you are fitted for Christ, and Christ for you; if you are guilty, you are fitted to be pardoned; if you are lost, you are fitted to be saved. This, is all the fitness Christ requireth, and cast every other thought of fitness far hence; yea, cast it to the winds. If thou be needy, Christ is ready to enrich thee. If thou wilt come and confess thine offences before God, the gracious Saviour is willing to pardon thee just as thou art. There is no other fitness wanted.

But then, if you have answered that, some will begin to say, "Yes, but the way of salvation is coming to Christ and I am afraid I do not come in the right way." Dear, dear, how unwise we are in the matter of salvation! We are much more foolish than little children are in

common, everyday life. A mother says to her little child, "Come here, my dear, and I will give you this apple." Now I will tell you what the first thought of the child is about; it is about the apple; and the second thought of the child is about its mother; and the very last thought he has is about the way of coming. His mother told him to come, and he does not say, "Well, but I do not know whether I shall come right." He totters along as best he can, and that does not seem to occupy his thoughts at all. But when you say to a sinner, "Come to Christ, and you shall have eternal life," he thinks about nothing but his coming. He will not think about eternal life, nor yet about Jesus Christ, to whom he is bidden to come, but only about coming, when he need not think of that at all, but just do it—do what Jesus bids him—simply trust him." "What kind of coming is that," says John Bunyan, "which saves a soul?" and he answers, "Any coming in all the world if it does but come to Jesus." Some come running; at the very first sermon they hear they believe in him. Some come slowly; they are many years before they can trust him. Some come creeping; scarcely able to come, they have to be helped by others, but as long as they do but come, he has said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." You may have come in the most awkward way in all the world, as that man did who was let down by ropes through the ceiling into the place where Jesus was, but Christ rejects no coming sinner, and you need not be looking to your coming, but looking to Christ. Look to him as God—he can save you; as the bleeding, dying Son of Man—he is willing to save you, and flat before his cross, with all your guilt upon you, cast yourself, and believe that he will save you. Trust him to do it, and he must save you, for that is his own word, and from it he cannot depart. Oh! cease, then, that care about the calling, and look to the Saviour.

We have met with others who have said, "I Well, I understand that, that if I trust in Christ, I shall be saved, but—but—but—I do not understand that passage in the Revelation: I cannot make out that great difficulty in Ezekiel; I am a great deal troubled about predestination and free will, and I cannot believe that I shall be saved until I comprehend all this." Now, my dear friend, you are altogether on the wrong tack. When I was going from Cook's Haven to Heligoland to the North of Germany, I noticed when we were out at sea, far away from the sight of land, innumerable swarms of butterflies. I wondered whatever they could do there, and when I was at Heligoland I noticed that almost every wave that came up washed ashore large quantities of poor dead, drowned butterflies. Now do you know those butterflies were just like you? You want to go out on to the great sea of predestination, free will, and I do not know what. Now there is nothing for you there, and you have no more business there than the butterfly has out at sea. It will drown you. How much better for you just to come and fly to this Rose of Sharon—that is the thing for you. This Lily of the Valley—come and light here. There is something here for you, but out in that dread-sounding deep, without a bottom or a shore, you will be lost, seeking after the knowledge of difficulties, which God has hidden from man, and trying to pry into the thick darkness where God conceals truth which it were better not to reveal. Come you to Jesus. If you must have the knots untied,

try to untie them after you get saved, but now your first business is with Jesus; your first business is coming unto him; for if you do not, your ruin is certain, and your destruction will be irretrievable. But I must not enlarge. Coming to Christ is very simple, yet how long it takes men to find it out!

Again, we, bear our witness to-night, that nothing but coming to Christ ever did give us any peace. In my own case I was distracted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted for some years, and I never could believe my sin forgiven or have any peace by day or night until I simply trusted Jesus, and from that time my peace has been like a river. I have rejoiced in the certainty of pardon, and sung with triumph in the Lord my God, and many of you are constantly doing the same, but until you looked to Christ, you had not any peace. You searched, and searched, and searched, but your search was fruitless until you looked into the five wounds of the expiring Saviour, and there you found life from the dead.

And once more, *when we did come to Christ, we came very tremblingly, but he did not cast us out.* We thought he never died for us, that he could not wash our sins away. We conceived that we were not of his elect; we dreamed that our prayers could only echo upon a brazen sky, and never bring us an answer. But still we came to Christ, because we dared not stop away. We were like a timid dove that is hunted by a hawk, and is afraid. We feared we should be destroyed, but he did not say to us, "You came to me tremblingly, and I will reject you." Nay, but into the bosom of his love he received us, and blotted out our sins. When we came to Jesus, we did not come bringing anything, but we came to him for everything. We came strictly empty-handed, and we got all we wanted in Christ. There is a piece of iron, and if it were to say, "Where am I to get the power from to cling to the loadstone?" the loadstone would say, "Let me get near you, and I will supply you with that." So we sometimes think, "How can I believe? How can I hope? How can I follow Christ?" Ay, but let Christ get near us, and he finds us with all that. We do not come to Christ to bring our repentance, but to get repentance. We do not come to him with a broken heart, but for a broken heart. We do not so much even come to him with faith, as come to him for faith.

"True belief and true repentance,
Every grace that brings us nigh;
Without money,
Come to Jesus Christ, and buy."

This is the first way of salvation—simply trusting and looking up to Christ for everything. But, then, we did trust. There is a difference between knowing about trust and trusting. By God's Holy Spirit, we were not left merely to talk about faith, nor to think about it, but we did believe. If the Government were to announce that there would be ten thousand acres of land in New Zealand given to a settler, I can imagine two men believing it. One believes it and forgets it; the other believes it and takes his passage to go out and get the land. Now the first kind of faith saves nobody; but the second faith, the practical faith, is that which, for

the sake of seeking Christ, gives up the sins of this life, the pleasures of it—I mean the wicked pleasures of it—gives up all confidence in everything else, and casts itself into the arms of the Saviour. There is the sea of divine love; he shall be saved who plunges boldly into it, and casts himself upon its waves, hoping to be upborne. Oh! my hearer, hast thou done this? If so, thou art certainly a saved one. If thou hast not, oh! may grace enable thee to do it ere yet that setting sun has hidden himself beneath the horizon. Hast thou known this before, that a simple trust in Christ will save thee? This is the one message of this inspired Volume. This is the gospel according to Paul, the one gospel which we preach continually. Try it, and if it save thee not, we will be bondsmen for God for thee. But it must save thee, for God is true, and cannot fail, and he has declared, "He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God."

Thus I have tried to explain as clearly as I can that coming to Jesus is the first business of salvation. Now, secondly, and with brevity. This is:—

II. A GOOD DESCRIPTION OF THE ENTIRE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

The Christian is always coming to Christ. He does not look upon faith as a matter of twenty years ago, and done with, but he comes today and he will come to-morrow. He will come to Jesus Christ afresh to-night before he goes to bed. We come to Jesus daily, for Christ is like the well outside the cottager's house. The man lets down the bucket and gets the cooling draught, but he goes again to-morrow, and he will have to go again at night if he is to leave a fresh supply. He must constantly go to the same place. Fishes do not live in the water they were in yesterday; they must be in it to-day. Men do not breathe the air which they breathed a week ago; they must have fresh air into the lungs moment by moment. Nobody thinks that he can be fed upon the fact that he did have a good meal six weeks ago; he has to eat continually. So "the just shall live by faith." We come to Jesus just as we came at first, and we say to him:—

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling;
Naked come to thee for dress,
Helpless, look to thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Saviour, or I die."

This is the daily and hourly life of the Christian.

But while we thus *come daily, we come more boldly than we used to do*. At first we came like cringing slaves; now we came as emancipated men. At first we came as strangers. Now we come as brethren. We still come to the cross, but it is not so much to find pardon for past sins, for these are forgiven, as to find fresh comfort from looking up to him who wrought out perfect righteousness for us.

We come, also, to Jesus Christ, *more closely than we used to do*. I hope, brethren and sisters, you can say that you are not at such a distance from Christ now as you once were. We ought to be always getting nearer to him. The old preachers used to illustrate nearness to Christ by the planets. They said there were Jupiter and Saturn far away, with very little light and very little heat from the sun, and then they have their satellites, their rings, their moons, and their belts to make for that. Just so they said, with some Christians. They get worldly comforts—their moons, and their belts—but they have not got much of their Master; they have got enough to save them, but oh! such little light. But, said they, when you get to Mercury, there is a planet without moons. Why, the sun is its moon, and, therefore, what does it want with moons when it has the full blaze of the sun's light and heat continually pouring upon it? And what a nimble planet it is; how it spins along in its orbit, because it is near the sun! Oh! to be like that—not to be far away from Jesus Christ, even with all the comforts of this life, but to be near him, filled with life and sacred activity through the abundance of fellowship and communion with him. It is still coming, but it is coming after a nearer sort.

And I may say, too, that it is *coming of a dearer sort*, for there is more love in our coming now than there used to be. We did come at first, not so much loving Christ, as venturing to trust him, thinking him, perhaps, to be a hard Master; but now we know him to be the best of friends, the dearest of husbands. We come to his bosom, and we lean our heads upon it. We come in our private devotion; we tell him all our troubles; we unburden our hearts, and get his love shed abroad in our hearts in return, and we go away with a joy that makes our heart to leap within us and to bound like a young roe over the mountain-tops. Oh! happy is that man who gets right into the wounds of Jesus, and, with Thomas, cries, "My Lord and my God!" This is no, fanaticism, but a thing of sober, sound experience with some of us. We can rejoice in him, having no confidence in the flesh. It is still coming but it is coming after a dearer fashion.

Yet, mark you, it is *coming still to the same person*, coming still as poor humble ones to Christ. I have often told you, my dear brethren and sisters, that when you get a little above the ground, if it is only an inch, you get too high. When you begin to think that surely you are a saint, and that you have some good thing to trust to, that rotten stuff must all be pulled to pieces. Believe me, God will not let his people wear a rag of their own spinning; they must be clothed with Christ's righteousness from head to foot. The old heathen said he wrapped himself up in his integrity, but I should think he did not know what holes there were in it, or else he would have looked for something better. But we wrap ourselves in the righteousness of Christ, and there is not a cherub before the throne that wears a vestment so right royal as the poor sinner does when he wears the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Oh! child of God, always live upon your Lord. Hang upon him, as the pitcher hangs upon the nail. Lean on your Beloved; his arm will never weary of you. Stay yourselves upon him; wash in the precious

fountain always; wear his righteousness continually; and be glad in the Lord, and your gladness need never fail while you simply and wholly lean upon him. And now, not to detain you longer, I come to the last point, upon which we will only say a word or two. The text is:—

III. A VERY CORRECT DESCRIPTION OF OUR DEPARTURE.

"To whom coming." We shall soon, very soon, quit this mortal frame. I hope you have learned to think of that without any kind of shudder. Can you not sing:—

"Ah! I shall soon be dying,
Time swiftly glides away;
But on my Lord relying
I hail the happy day."

What is there that we should wait here for? Those who have the most of this world's goods have found it paltry stuff. It perishes in the using. There is a satiety about it; it cannot satisfy the great heart of an immortal man. It is well for us that there is to be an end of this life, and especially for us to whom that end is glowing with immortality. Well, the hour of death will be to us a coming to Christ, *a coming to sit upon his throne*. Did you ever think of that? "To him that overcometh will I give to sit upon my throne." Lord, Lord, we would be well content to, sit at thy feet. 'Twere all the heaven we would ask if we might but creep behind the door, or stand and be manual servants, or sit, like Mordecai, in the king's court.' No; but it must not be. We must sit on his throne, and reign with him for ever and ever. This is what death will bring you—a glorious participation in the royalties of your ascended Lord.

What is the next thing? "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." So that we, are to be going to Christ ere long *to behold his glory*, and what a sight that will be! Have you ever thought of that too? What must it be to behold his glory? Some of my brethren think that when they get to heaven they shall like to behold some of the works of God in nature and so on. I must confess myself more satisfied with the idea that I shall behold *his glory*, the glory of the Crucified, for it seems to me that no kind of heaven but that comes up to the description of the Apostle when he saith, "Eye hath not seen, nor hath ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." But to see the stars, has entered into the heart of man, and to behold the works of God in nature, has been conceived of; but the joys we speak of are so spiritual that the Apostle says, "He has revealed them unto us by his Spirit," and this is what he has revealed, "That they may behold my glory." St. Augustine used to say there were two sights he would like to have seen—Rome in her splendour, and Paul preaching—the last the better sight of the two. But there is a third sight for which one might give up all, give up seeing Naples, or seeing anything, if we might but see the King his beauty. Why, even the distant glimpse which we catch of him

through a glass or a telescope darkly ravishes the soul. Dr. Hawker was once waited upon by a friend, who asked him to go and see a naval review. He said, "No, thank you; I do not want to go." "You are a loyal man, doctor, and you would like to see the defences of your country." "Thank you, I do not wish to go." "But I have got a ticket for you, and you must go." "No," he said, "thank you," and after he had been pressed hard he said, "You have pressed me till I am ashamed, and now I must tell you—mine eyes have seen the King in his beauty, and the land which is very far off, and I have not any taste now for all the pomps that this world could possibly show." And if such a distant sight of Jesus can do this, what must it be to behold his glory with what the old Scotch divines used to call "a face-to-face view"; when the veil is taken down, when the clouds are blown away, and you see him face to face? Oh! long-expected day begin, when we shall be to him coming to dwell with him.

Once more only. Recollect we shall come to Christ not only to behold his glory, *but to share in it*. We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Whatever Christ shall be, his people shall be, in happiness, riches, and honour, and together they shall take their full share. The Church, his bride, shall sit on the same throne with him, and of all the splendours of that eternal triumph she will have her half, for Christ is no niggard to his imperial spouse, but she whom he chose before the world began, and bought with blood, and wrapped in his righteousness, and espoused to himself for ever, shall be a full partaker of all the gifts that he poses world without end. And this shall be, and this shall be, and this shall be for ever; for ever you shall be with Christ, for ever coming to him. When the miser's wealth has melted; when the honours of the conqueror have been blown away or consumed like chaff in the furnace; when sun and moon grow dim with age, and the hoary pillars of this earth begin to rock and reel with stern decay; when the angel shall have put one foot on the sea and the other on the land, and shall have sworn by him that liveth that time shall be no more; when the ocean shall be licked up with tongues of fire, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up—then, then shall you be for ever with the Lord, eternally resting, eternally feasting, eternally magnifying him; being filled with all his fulness to the utmost capacity of your enlarged being, world without end.

So God grant it to us, that we may come to Christ now, that we may continue to come to Christ, that we may come to Christ then, lest rejecting him to-night we should be rejecting him for ever; lest refusing to trust him, we should be driven from his presence to abide in misery for ever! May we come now, for Christ's sake.