

THE WAY TO GOD

NO. 245

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*“No man comes unto the Father, but by Me.”
John 14:6.*

THERE are many men in this world who so far from coming *to* God are going as far as they can *from* Him. Nothing would delight such men so much as to be clean rid of His presence and to be entirely escaped from the bounds of His dominions. They would be content to make their bed in Hell, if they could thus find a satisfactory answer to the question, “Where shall I go from Your Spirit, or where shall I flee from Your presence?” Their hearts are at enmity with God. They hate His Words and His ways. They know that God is angry with them. And they in return are angry with God.

There is another class who are but very little in advance of these. It cannot be said of them, with the same emphatic meaning, that they actually hate God, but nevertheless they run from Him. Perhaps they would indignantly repel a charge of abhorring God, but nevertheless, it is true of them, that they live in utter disregard of Him. They say in their hearts “No God.” God is not in all their thoughts. They may have sublime thoughts of nature, but few yearnings after Him who made nature. They think much of time and sense and of the things that are below. But as to eternity and its substantial realities, the things that are unseen and everlasting, these they scarce can think upon.

“Beware, you that forget God,” for your state is no better than the state of those I first described. “The wicked shall be turned into Hell.” Those who hate God shall feel His torment, but so shall their companions, for thus runs the text, “The wicked shall be cast into Hell with all the nations that forget God.” It is not needful that you should *hate* God—only that you should go to war with Him in order to destroy yourself. The simple *neglect* of Him is enough to ruin you. Thus has the Apostle put it, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” You need not fly upon the thick bosses of Jehovah’s buckler. You need not rush upon the point of his glittering spear. Stand still and do nothing. Regard Him not—shut your eyes to His existence and engross yourself with the groveling toys of earth and you have as surely destroyed yourselves as if you had defied Him to His face. Neglect of God is the open gate of damnation. To forget God is to ensure a portion in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone.

There is to be found, however, upon the face of the earth a third class of men who would not like to be classed among the enemies of God and who can truly say that they are not utterly indifferent with regard to His favor. They would prefer to be numbered with those who are *seeking* God. Their desire is to go to their Father. They may not as yet, perhaps, be brought to that only way at coming which He has ordained, but still their profession is that they desire to worship God and to come before Him with thanksgiving and show themselves glad in Him. It is to this very character, one that has so much that is hopeful in it, that I shall address myself particularly this morning. But indeed, to everyone in this assembly would I desire to preach the great truth of the text. No man—desire he ever so earnestly, labor he ever so diligently—no man comes unto the Father, but by Jesus Christ.

When Adam was perfect in the garden of Eden, God walked with him in the cool of the day. God and man held the most intimate and affectionate communion with one another. Man was a happy creature. God was a condescending Creator and the two met together and held sweet converse and communion. But from the moment when Adam touched the forbidden fruit, the way from God to man became blocked up—the bridge was broken down, a great gulf was fixed—so that if it had not been for the Divine plan of Grace, we could not have ascended to God, and neither could God in justice come down to us. Happily, however, the Everlasting Covenant ordered in all things and sure, had provided for this great catastrophe. Christ Jesus the Mediator had in old eternity been ordained to become the medium of access between man and God.

If you want a figure of Him, remember the memorable dream of Jacob. He laid him down in a solitary place and he dreamed a dream which had in it something more substantial than anything he had seen with his eyes wide open. He saw

a *ladder*, the foot whereof rested upon earth and the top thereof reached to Heaven itself. Upon this ladder he saw angels ascending and descending. Now this ladder was Christ. Christ in His humanity rested upon the earth, He is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. In His Divinity He reaches to the highest Heaven, for He is very God of very God. When our prayers ascend on high they must tread the staves of this ladder and when God's blessings descend to us, the rounds of this marvelous ladder must be the means of their descent. Never has a prayer ascended to God save through Jesus Christ.

Never has a blessing come down to man save through the same Divine Mediator. There is now a highway, a way of holiness wherein the redeemed can walk to God and God can come to us. The king's highway—

*“The way the holy Prophets went—
The road that leads from banishment.”*

Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life. Let us think for a moment of Jesus Christ as the way to God. The reason why man cannot come to God as he did in the garden is that *God is the same*, but *man is changed*. God is as affectionate and as condescending as ever, but man is unholy and impure. Now God is as pure as He is affectionate, while God is love it is just as true that God is infinitely just and holy. His holy eyes cannot endure iniquity. If, then, a sinful creature could obtain access to God, if a rebellious creature could come into the immediate presence of the Most High, the effect must be disastrous in the extreme, for it would be a necessity of God's nature that He must utterly devour the creature in which He sees sin to be.

Come into the presence of God, O Sinner, and you might as well march into a consuming fire. As Nebuchadnezzar's furnace burned the men who came to throw in the three holy children so must God, the consuming Fire, burn and destroy us—if we approach Him with our prayers and thanksgivings—were it not for the interposition of Jesus Christ the Mediator. I say this is a necessity of His nature. God is necessarily Just and justice cannot endure a sin. God is necessarily pure and holy—He might sooner cease to be God than cease to be pure. Now, the approach of impurity to Him He must repel. Though no laws can bind Him, yet the law of His nature never can be broken. His nature is, “I will by no means clear the guilty.” He is slow to anger, He is great in power and He is ready to forgive, but so long as guilt lies unforgiven He is also ready to punish, no, He *must* punish or else cease to be.

Consequently, no man can come to God as a sinner, unless he comes to Him to be utterly destroyed and that without remedy. You do not wish so to come to God. Happy is it, then, that we are enabled to tell all our fellow creatures of a way whereby we can come with joy and gladness to the Father—through Jesus Christ.

Now, this morning I shall have to divide my subject into three or four heads and notice—

I. Some men have a desire to come to God in worship, but there are many who desire to come to Him the wrong way. You will sometimes meet with men who say, “Well, I do not go up to a Church or Chapel—it is all ridiculous. I do not read the Bible. I have no faith in Christ. But I spend my Sunday in the open air—in that glorious temple which God has built. How Divinely can I worship Him there, while ‘the lark, singing, up to Heaven's gate ascends.’ While every flower tells me of Him whose breath perfumes it and whose pencil paints. While all the cattle on a thousand hills are lowing forth his praise I feel that in His temple does everyone speak of His glory. What need for me to go and hear what you call the Gospel, to join in the united song of praise, or bend my knee in prayer? I worship the god of nature,” says such a man, “not the God of Revelation, but the god of nature.”

To this man we reply in the words of our text. Your thanksgiving and your praise are unacceptable to the God you worship, for that God has declared that no man comes to Him except through His Son, Jesus Christ. If then, you reject the way of access and persist in bringing your prayers and your thanksgivings to Him in a way which He does not acknowledge, remember, this shall you have as the answer to your prayers and your thanksgivings. You shall lie down in sorrow when God shall come to judge you at the Last Great Day. The true Christian can “go from nature up to nature's God,” because he has come from nature's God down to nature. No man can climb the steeps and “go from nature up to nature's God,” unless he has first descended. God must take you up into the mount where He dwells, first, and then you can come down, as Moses did from the top of Sinai. But, until He has caught you up there, your weary feet shall be exhausted and your strength decay before you can reach the God of nature through your works.

Now, my Friend, you may be very sincere, as you imagine, in all your prayers and thanksgivings offered to the unpropitiated God of nature in your garden, or in the fields, but, sincere though they are, they miss the mark. They are not shot from a bow which is strong enough to carry them to their desired target. They miss the mark, I say, and they shall

fall back on your own head to your injury. But they shall not reach the Throne of God. But I observe here that those men who talk about natural religion, as far as I know them, have no religion at all. I have noticed that the people who say, "I can worship God without attending any religious service, or believing in Jesus," do not really do so. I have sometimes had an opportunity on a Sunday of seeing many worshippers of the god of nature come down the lane where I reside. They consist, for the most part, of men who carry cages with them in which to catch birds on the common.

There is another very respectable confraternity of men who go to a boxing place somewhere about there, where they spend their day in the bowling alley and many fist fights. These might adopt the cry of our genteel sinners, "We don't want to go into a Church or Chapel—we spend our Sunday in the worship of the god of nature." And very fine worship it is. I mostly find that those people who worship the "god of nature" worship the god of fallen nature—that is, the devil—not the God of the glorious nature which is spread about us in the roaring sea, the rolling flood and the blooming meads. No, for the most part the men who talk like that know, in their own conscience, that the god they worship is their belly, their own lusts. And they glory in their shame. Don't believe all the nonsense that you hear from the Sunday league and all that, when they talk about worshipping the god of nature. Do they do it? Follow any of them into their privacy and see whether any of this fine devotion of theirs has any existence whatever and I think you will discover at once that they are greater hypocrites than the men they call hypocrites.

But again, is it not rather a suspicious circumstance that these men who are so much ahead of us, that worship the god of nature prefer the company, according to their own confession, of sheep and bullocks and horses and skylarks, to the presence of the saints of God? It looks rather suspicious when a man finds more congenial company in a sheepfold than he does in an assembly of intelligent beings. It looks as if his own mind were brutish when he can never get his spirit wound up into devotion till he gets into the midst of brutes. For my part, I feel more able to worship God in the great congregation, in the assembly of the saints, than anywhere Else. "In the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of you, O Jerusalem, praise the Lord!" I know that all His works praise Him. It is my joy to feel that the changing seasons are but the varied characteristics of God—that spring speaks of His tenderness and love, summer of His majesty, autumn of His bounty and winter of His awful power. But still I know that in His sanctuary I behold His glory yet more fully and there I discover Him to my heart's solace and delight. The true Christian can worship God in nature. But a man who has not learned to worship God in his house, I am quite sure has not learned to worship God anywhere.

Natural religion is a lie. Men may say much about it, but it does not exist. Trace these Pharisaic members of the synagogue of Satan to their homes and you will find that they make this natural religion an excuse for religion. It is an utter impossibility for any man to come to God in worship, save through Jesus Christ. See, then, how my text shuts out of all acceptance with God all those who do not receive Christ to be the Son of God, the Mediator. Men sometimes say, "All are right—whether they are Jews or Gentiles, whatever they may be, they are all right." Now, be it understood once and for all, that the religion of Christ gives no heed to such a fancy. It claims for itself, alone, the solitary throne in the kingdom of religious truth. It uses no chains and racks to obtain an unwilling profession of its faith. But the unbeliever is not flattered with promises of security—rather, he is threatened with a doom dreadful beyond all thought.

There is not, in this Book of God, one single sentence which could lead me to believe that there is a way to God for the Mohammedan, for the Jew, or for anyone who does not come to Him through Jesus Christ. The religion of Christ is exclusive in this. It declares that no other foundation can man lay than that which is laid, Jesus Christ. It declares that no man can come to God except through Jesus. All the charity of which some men talk is deceitful and valueless. We can have no hope for those who receive not Christ. We pity them, we love them, we pray for them, we plead for them that they may be brought to this. But we dare not deceive them, we dare not tell them that God will hear their prayers, if they will not come to Him through Jesus Christ. No, we will be as tolerant as Jesus was, but Jesus Himself said, "He that believes not must be damned," and whatever you may be—Unitarian, Socinian, Infidel, deist, theist, or what-not—however sincere your prayers—God abhors and hates them if you do not offer them through Jesus Christ, the one way between the sinner and God.

II. Other men there are who, conscious that they cannot come to God as perfect beings in worship, desire to approach Him in the way of penitence. But mark, even in the way of penitence, no man can come to God except through Jesus Christ. Those tears in your eyes, when Jesus the Sun of Righteousness shines on them, are as diamonds in the esteem of the God of Mercy. But even your tears and sighs and groans cannot prevail with the heart of God, unless they are min-

gled with a humble faith in Jesus Christ, His only Son. In vain you weep till your eyes are red to blindness. In vain you groan till your ribs burst with your expanding heart of agony. In vain you kneel till your knees are stiff with prayer. God hears you not. He accepts you not until you make mention of Jesus the crucified, His Son, the Savior of mankind. Oh, it is mournful to see how men try to approach God in any way but through Jesus Christ.

You have the Romish Church putting men to penance, in order that they may so come to God. It was but one day this week I went into a Romish cathedral and there, to my disgust and horror, I saw poor women on their knees, going entirely round the cathedral having as a penance to pray before a whole set of pictures that were exhibited upon the walls. Well, I thought, if this be acceptable to their god, I am sure it would not be to mine! To give these poor women the rheumatism, or something worse, in order that god might be pleased with them, is the most extraordinary way of going to work that I know of. What a god must theirs be, that is pleased with poor souls when they torture themselves.

Behold the monk—if he would gratify his god, he must not wash himself. For their god is a god of filth and according to their own confession, cleanliness is not acceptable to him. Again, he must fast—their god is a god of starvation. It is quite clear he is not our God—for our God is a God of bounty. The poor monk must flog himself—he must flagellate his poor back till the blood runs down in streams—their god delights in the blood of his creatures, evidently, and nothing pleases him so much, according to their own confession, as for his creatures to torture themselves. Happily however, their god has nothing whatever to do with our God. Their god is an old Romish pagan demon that was cursed of old and is cursed now. But our God is a God who takes delight in the happiness of his creatures, who, if there is any merit anywhere, would sooner see it in our happiness than in our sorrow, although, mark you, there is no merit in either. When we come to God in penitence we must bring but one oblation, for there is but one way of offering acceptable penitence to God and that is through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We will imagine there is a man over yonder who is feeling that he has been guilty, but he desires to be forgiven. “Oh,” says he, “I know I am guilty. I feel that I deserve God’s wrath. Well, I will promise I will never be drunk again. I will not swear—make a resolution that I will be better.” Ah, Friend, ah, Friend! You will never come to God in penitence that way. O Man, that way—that way of works—is a way of death. The very first time you put your foot on it I can hear the low mutterings of the thunder-curse—“Cursed is every man that continues not in all things that are written in the book of the Law to do them.” Go on with your resolves—try to carry them out. You shall find that this road of yours will grow more difficult every day. The more you do, the more you will have to do. When you have climbed a hill, you will see a mountain beyond. When you have forded a stream, you will see a sea before you and no means of crossing it. The way to Heaven through good works would be a very hard one, even if it were a possible one. Conscience is like the horseleech—it always cries, “Give, give, give.” Conscience is never satisfied with the best works that we can do. It always wants more.

But ah, I remind you, Man, that if you go on in that way of works and seek to be forgiven through it, your destruction is as sure as if you did run in the way of sin. Mark you, Man, the Jews of old would not accept the righteousness of Christ and they went about to establish their own righteousness and would not submit themselves to the righteousness of Christ and hence they perished and that without mercy. And so shall you. O turn from that way! God will not receive you in it. Turn from it! If you were perfect and had never broken God’s Law at all, then might you be saved by the Law. But *one* sin breaks the Law to shivers and you cannot mend the breach. You are lost if you stand on the footing of works. Come away, then, come away! Come to the Cross of Christ! There is no way to Heaven but by Jesus Christ. Come! Both from your works and your sins. Look to Him and live. Look to Him and see your sins forgiven. Look to Him and behold your penitence accepted and a gracious answer given.

III. There are other men who feel, “Well, we know Jesus must forgive our sins, it is through His sufferings that we must be pardoned. But,” say they, “we desire now to be acceptable to God all the days of our life. We will therefore endeavor to come to God in a way in which He shall accept us.” Many there are that light upon a way like this. “We will be very scrupulous,” say they, “in all our transactions, exact in our dealings with men and bountiful in our liberality to God. In this way shall we be accepted. Christ,” say they, “shall be trusted to take away our sins but we will have the clothing of ourselves with a robe of righteousness. We will let Christ wash us and wash our works, too, if He pleases. But at least we will be the manufacturers of our own virtues and excellencies. God shall accept us through what *we* do—Jesus shall make up the deficiency. He shall darn a hole or two that may occur in the garment, but nevertheless we will stick to

the old cloth throughout and though we do hear that our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, yet we will have them washed and wear them over again, rags though they are.”

Now, mark, my Hearers, as when we come to God first we must bring nothing with us but the blood of Christ, so when we come to Him afterwards, we must still bring nothing but the same offering. A guilty sinner, when he approaches God’s Throne, can never be pardoned, except by pleading the blood once shed by Christ. The highest saint, the most eminent professor, can no more be accepted by God than the meanest sinner, unless he still pleads the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. The Arminian, despite his denial of it, has in his own mind, a notion that his acceptance with God in some measure depends upon his own actions. Although many Arminian divines say that they do not believe this, yet they must nevertheless believe it. It lies at the very root and basis of their fallen doctrine. They believe that if the Christian falls into sin, God will cast him out of His family. And I say it follows as a necessary influence that acceptance of a Christian, must, on that theory, depend on good works—so that in coming to God he comes through his own good behavior and not through what Jesus did.

Now mark, this is an offensive falsehood and as damnable an error as if I were to preach that salvation was entirely by works. There is no part of the Christian’s experience in which a Christian can deal with God otherwise than through Christ. At the beginning it is all through Christ. In the middle it is all through Christ. And in the end it must be the same. If it were possible for you, my Brother, to be clean rid of sin, you still could not come to God except through Christ. When your faith shall grow into assurance, when the follies of your life shall all be expunged, when your character shall be saintly, when your heart shall be perfectly sanctified—even *then* the means of access and the mode of acceptance of your soul before God will remain unalterable and unchanged. Jesus, Jesus, JESUS—the path for the sinner and the way for the saint. No road to God—even for the holiest man—no road to God’s acceptance, but through Jesus and through Jesus, only.

Do we not each of us in ourselves at times have an aptness to come to God in some other way than through Jesus Christ? “Now you have preached well,” says Satan, “you have been successful in such-and-such a labor. Ah,” says the devil, “how liberal you have been in such-and-such a cause. Now go to God in prayer.” And we go and we pray with such assurance we think we are sure to be heard. But perhaps without our knowing it there is lurking at the bottom of our excellent fluency in prayer an evil thought that surely God will hear us, for we have been so diligent and liberal. And on the other hand, when we have been committing sin, when conscience chides us, then we go to the Throne and we are half afraid, because we say God will not hear us. Is not that still pride? Why, were we ever better than we are now? Were we not always and are we not now, as bad as ever we can be? In ourselves is there anything that can commend us to God? Is not the very fact that when in our good state we come boldly and when in our low state we come timidly, proof that there is lurking in us a secret suspicion that we are to come to God by something that is in *us*?

Oh, if we could but learn this Truth of God and stand to it—our acceptance with God depends upon *nothing* that we do, or can do—nothing that we can think, or feel, or be—but depends wholly and entirely and solely upon what Jesus is and what He has done and what He has suffered! Let us once get that thought—and it is in the text—we shall then be able, by the Divine assistance of the Holy Spirit, to come to God at all times with boldness, knowing that we were so coming through *Christ* and therefore we might always come boldly to the Throne of Grace.

Have I here today?—I am sure I have—some timid soul that is afraid to come to God through Christ? Ah, my dear Brothers and Sisters, I know your fear and I can pity you. But I know your fear and I can blame you, too. What? Are you afraid to come to God through Christ and do you want someone to speak to Christ for you? Oh, foolish Heart! You do need a Mediator in coming to God, but you do not need any in coming to Christ. Go to Him just as you are, without making yourself any better. Go straight away, rags and sin and leprosy and blotches and sores and all, straight away to Him. Do not be afraid that the Father will reject you if you come alone through Him. Let me lead you, my poor, timid Brother, to this way. Come with me. Do you see yon Cross? Do you mark that glorious Man dying on it in agonies that cannot be described? Do you not think that those sufferings are enough to expiate the wrath of God? Why, listen to Him! Will you not believe what He says?—“It is finished!” He cries before He gives up the ghost.

Now, if Jesus thought it finished, do you not think it so? If He Himself thought that He had done enough, is not that enough for you that is enough for Him? Come boldly, for Jesus smiles upon you. His blood is dropping—his heart is still flowing with the blood and water. Come! None ever were cast out—shall you be the first? Those arms that are nailed to

the Cross are wide open, as if they would show you that they can receive the biggest of sinners. Those feet that are nailed to the Cross are fastened there as if they meant to stop there and wait to be gracious to you. O do you see His pierced side, it seems as if it said to you, "My heart is not hard to reach. See, here is a straight road to it opened by the Roman spear. Come, breathe your sighs into My heart and I will hear and answer."

Come, Soul! Come this way. How safe it is, for over it hangs the banner of Jehovah's love. And on the ground is the mark of blood of the Savior's footsteps. This gory pathway to the Throne of God, I now entreat you to enter. Jesus made it. Jesus smoothed it. Jesus dyed it with His blood. Come, come away poor soul! Come, put your trust alone in Jesus and then you need not come to God the Father with trembling and with dismay. God help you, timid one, God help you. You have no need to despond—Jesus said He will cast out none that come to Him by faith.

IV. I shall not keep you much longer, but I must now observe that there are others who desire to come to God in communion. You will meet, every now and then, with a devout man who has but very imperfect notions of the Gospel and who, nevertheless, has a kind of reverence for the living God. He is an astronomer and he will tell you that an undevout astronomer is mad. He says that while his eyes look through the telescope glass upon the wondrous worlds that float in ether, he communes with God, marvels at His power and admires His matchless benevolence and skill. The geologist, too, will tell you that when digging into the deep foundations of the world and bringing out those old inhabitants, who in days of yore stalked through gigantic forests, he feels he can talk with God the Eternal One—that those gray hairs of an ancient world remind him of the Ancient of Days—and the bones of a buried generation all remind him of the Eternal One, who was before all things and by whom all things consist.

Now, these men are sincere. But do not imagine for an instant that their devotion is acceptable, or that their communion is true and real, unless in this they tincture and savor their communion with the knowledge that Jesus Christ is the only way of access to God. Oh, Soul, if you would walk with God, as Adam did in Eden and it is quite possible—if you would walk with Him as Enoch did and that is quite possible, too—if you would see Him face to face and talk to Him as a man would talk with his friend, remember you must be set in the cleft of the rock, Christ Jesus, or else you cannot do it. Once let a man stand in that cleft and see Jesus' blood, then he can commune with God in nature readily enough. Standing at the foot of the mountain he may see that hill like a wedge piercing the ebon darkness and his soul may climb the summit and enter into the invisible. He may look upon that awful summit as upon an ambassador sent from earth to Heaven—and his spirit may seem to rise on the mountaintop, until it appears to grasp the hand of the Almighty One.

But mark, the steep summit of fellowship cannot be climbed, except Jesus Christ lend Himself to be the sacred ladder and gives strength to the weary footsteps of our faith. He is the way to God. He is the Truth to guide us. He is the life to enable us to run in the road. Without Christ there is no way to communion, no truth in communion and no life in our pretended fellowship. Christian, take heed that you never try to commune with God except through Jesus Christ. Never try to commune with Him even through the Holy Spirit, if you forget Christ. The Holy Spirit acts the communion. But still, Christ is the medium through which it flows. The Holy Spirit runs through Christ as through a channel. As water from the conduit runs through the pipe, so fellowship must run through Jesus Christ. There can be no coming of God to us and no going of our soul to God, except through the highway of communion, Jesus Christ, the Man and yet the God.

V. And lastly, to conclude—Who is there among us who does not desire to come to God in Heaven? Lives there a man with soul so dead that he has no desire for another and a better world? Is there a heart so seared that it never longs to be at rest—an eye so blind that it never looks into the hereafter and a soul so stolid that it never leaps with exulting spirit, in the prospect of a world of joy and happiness? The wild untutored savage of the woods looks to another world and when some beloved one is buried, he lights a fire upon the grave, to light the spirit through the dreary shades of death, that it may find its way to paradise. And then he sits upon the grave, when the fire is quenched and thinks of the spirit that is gone and hopes for it that it has gone to the kingdom of the blessed, to the land of the hereafter. Never is he content, unless he hopes that the spirit of his beloved one is gone to a better land.

And shall it be imagined that any of us who are living in a Christian country are shutting our eyes to the future and never think of looking beyond the grave? There are many here—no, all of us are longing for another and a better world. O world of woe, what were you if you were not a steppingstone to a world of bliss? O land of graves and shrouds, of pickaxe and of spade, what were you if we did not dive through you into the land of light? O vale of tears, what were you, if it

were not that you are the pathway to the mountain of transfiguration? O valley of Baca, filled with tears of sorrow, till the pools thereof are overflowing—what were you, if you did not lead to the tabernacles of our God—the peaceful sanctuary in which we hope to dwell?

But there is no way to Heaven, whatever our hopes may be, but through Christ. O spirit of man, there is no way to the gates of pearl but through the bleeding side of Jesus. These are the gates of Paradise—these bleeding wounds. If you would find your way to God's bright Throne, find first your way to Jesus' shameful Cross. If you would know the way to happiness, tread in that path of misery which Jesus trod. What? Attempt another way? Man, are you mad enough to think that you can rend the posts and bars and gates of Heaven from their perpetual places and force your way by your created strength? The arm of God shall dash you down to the nethermost pit. Or do you think to purchase with your riches and your gold a foothold in paradise? Fool! What is your gold where streets are made of it and where the gates are solid pearl—where the foundations are of jasper and the walls whereof are precious gems?

And do you think to get there by your merits? Ah, fool that you are, by pride fell the angels and by your pride you fall. In your talking of merit you confess that you are Lucifer himself incarnate. Away with you! Heaven is not for such as you are. But do you say, "I will leave my wealth after I have gone. I will build a hospital, or feed the poor." Then let *men* pay you. You have worked for your nation, let *them* pay the debt. Let *them* rear the stony pillar and set your effigy upon the top. If you have worked for your country, let your country pay you what they owe to you. But God, what does He owe to you? You have forgotten him, you have despised his Son, you have rejected his Gospel. Be you warrior, statesman—Patriot, let *men* pay you. God owes you nothing and all you can do will not bribe Him to admit you to His palace, if you come not in the right way through Jesus Christ, who lived and died and is alive forever more and has the keys of Heaven at His side.

Come, now, you that have nothing to bring, come to Christ this morning, you perishing, you guilty and you lost. God's ambassador stands before you and as though Christ did woo you, he pleads with you to come to Jesus NOW. You that are under conviction of sin and want salvation, believe on Him now. In your heart, poor sinner, say—

*"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Your blood was shed for me,
And that you bid me come to You,
O Lamb of God, I come."*

The invitation is freely given, the proclamation is openly made. My God is not a God of hatred and of anger. He is a God of love. He bids you who are thirsty, who are longing to see His face, He bids you now come. And He tells you and he confirms the same with an oath—"As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked but that the wicked turn from his way and live—turn you, turn you from your evil ways. For why will you die, O house of Israel?"

Come now! "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." O Spirit of God, draw sinners to Christ! O glorious One, be pleased now to draw them to the Father, through Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

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