

THE CHRISTIAN RACE

AND OTHER SERMONS

BY THE RIGHT REVEREND

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MCM

PREFATORY NOTE

ALTHOUGH the Bishop of Liverpool has published many books—Commentaries, Biographies, and Theological Dissertations—he has never published a volume of sermons.

When his many friends heard that he was about to resign the See of Liverpool, they urged him to publish a volume of his sermons as a “memorial” of his *sixty years’* ministry. The Bishop kindly consented to do so, and invited me to make a selection from his MSS. and to prepare the sermons for the press. I need hardly say that I willingly undertook the task as a “labour of love” for my aged Bishop. The selection I have made for publication sets forth the great doctrines of our Faith—Sin, Redemption, Regeneration, and Sanctification. I have also added sermons which call attention to the *Practical* side of Christianity, and which especially emphasise the “DUTIES” of the Christian life. The closing sermons proclaim the coming of our Lord; the Reward of His Saints; and the Rest of Heaven.

Friends, who knew of the preparation of these sermons for the press, have been praying that the “message of God” which they contain may bring blessing to many thousands. In the sure and certain hope that His Word will not return unto Him void I have prepared this volume of sermons by the first Bishop of Liverpool—and in this hope it is sent forth.

T. J. MADDEN,
Archdeacon of Warrington,

LIVERPOOL, *March 1st 1900.*

* The Bishopric of Liverpool was declared vacant on March 3rd, 1900. [J. C. Ryle died a few months later.]

VI

“COME UNTO ME”

“Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”—MATT. xi. 28.

THERE are few texts more striking than this in all the Bible—few that contain so wide and sweeping an invitation—few that hold out so full and comfortable a promise.

Let us consider—

I. Who it is that speaks.

II. Who they are that are spoken to.

III. What is the invitation.

IV. What is the promise.

I. WHO SPEAKS?—That is a most important question, and it is right to have it answered.

You live in a world of promise. “Come with us,” says one party, and you will be rich. “Come with us,” says another, and you will be happy.

The devil can promise. “Eat the forbidden fruit,” he said to Eve, “and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. You shall never die.” But he lied to her.

The world can promise. “Sell all and embark for California,” says one man, “and you will soon roll in wealth.” “Invest all your money in railways,” says another, “and you will soon make your fortune.” I never take up a newspaper without seeing many alluring invitations. I see page after page of advertisements, all full of high-sounding promises. I read of short ways to health, wealth, and happiness, of all descriptions. But it is all words and nothing more, and so many a man finds.

But He that promises in our text is One who can be depended on. It is the Lord Jesus Christ, God’s own Son.

He is ABLE to do what He promises. He has all power in heaven and on earth. He has the keys of death and hell. The government is given to Him in time, and all judgment committed to Him in eternity.

He is FAITHFUL to do what He promises. He will not lie, nor deceive, nor break His promise. What He speaks that He will do, and what He undertakes that He will perform. Heaven and earth may pass away, but His word shall not pass away.

He is WILLING to do what He promises. He has long since proved this by the love He has shown to man, and the sacrifice He has made for man’s soul. For man He came into the world; for man He suffered and died; for

man He endured the cross and the shame. Surely He has a right to be believed.

Beloved brethren, see that you refuse not Him that speaketh to you this day. If a letter came to you from the ruler of this country you would not despise it. If you were sick, and advice came from a wise physician, you would not reject it. If you were in danger, and counsel came from your best and truest friend, you would not make light of it. Then hear the words that Jesus sends to you this day. Listen to the King of kings. Then body and soul shall be His.

II. WHO ARE THEY THAT ARE SPOKEN TO?—Jesus addresses the “labouring and heavy laden”: “Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden.” Now, whom does this mean?

You must not fancy it describes the *poor in this world*. That would be a great mistake. It is possible to be poor in time and even poorer in eternity.

Nor yet must you fancy it describes the *sick and the afflicted*. That also is a great mistake. It is very possible to have trouble in this life and trouble in that to come—and this some of you may find.

The “labouring and heavy laden” describes all who are pressed down and burdened by a feeling of sin. It describes all whose consciences are set at work, and who are brought to concern about their soul—all who are anxious about salvation, and desire to have it—all who tremble at the thought of judgment, and know not how to get through it, and of hell, and are afraid of falling into it; and long for heaven, and dread not getting to it; and are distressed at the thought of their own badness, and want deliverance. All such persons appear to be the labouring and heavy laden to whom Jesus speaks.

This was the state of mind in which the Jews were to whom Peter preached on the day of Pentecost. Their consciences were awakened; they felt convinced and condemned; and when he had finished, we are told they said, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” This was the state of mind in which Saul was when Jesus met him going to Damascus, and smote him to the ground. A light seemed to break in on his mind. He got a sight of his one enormous sin and danger; and we read that, trembling and astonished, he said, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” This was the state of mind in which we see the jailer at Philippi. He was roused from sleep by an earthquake. His fear brought his sin to his remembrance, and he came and fell down before Paul and Silas, and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

This is the state of mind I desire to see in each of you, for the beginning of all saving religion. You will never come to Christ till you feel your need.

You *ought*, everyone, to feel labouring and heavy laden. Truly it is a marvellous proof of man's corruption, that men can be so careless as they are. Many, I do believe, *feel something* of it, but never allow it. There are many aching hearts under silk and satin. There are many merry faces which only hide an uneasy conscience. All is not gold that glitters in happiness that seems like it. Few, I believe, are to be found who do not feel something of it *some time in their lives*. Halyburton said, not a soul in his parish, but once had conviction.

But to all labouring and heavy laden souls, whoever they may be, to you Jesus speaks—to you is this word of salvation sent. Take heed that it is not in vain.

Jesus speaks to ALL such: none are left out. Though you have been a persecutor like Saul, though a murderer like Manasseh, though a cheating extortioner like Zacchæus, though unclean and profligate like the Magdalen, it matters nothing. Are you labouring and heavy-laden?—then Jesus speaks to you. You may tell me, “I am such a sinner, Jesus never speaks to me.” I answer, “It may be so; but are you labouring and heavy-laden?—then Jesus speaks to you. You may say, “I am not fit.” I see nothing said of fitness; I only see Jesus calling the labouring and heavy laden: if this is your case, He calls you. You may say, “I am not this—I am not converted.” You do not know, perhaps; but are you labouring and heavy laden?—then Jesus is speaking to you.

Ah! brethren, I fear many of you know nothing of the state of the soul here spoken of. Your sins never cut you to the heart, or give you a moment's sorrow. You never really felt the confession of the Church this day—“no health in us.” You know nothing of communion with Christ. The remembrance of grievous burdens is not intolerable. You are satisfied with your present state: like Laodicea, “rich and increased with goods,” comfortable and content. And what shall I say? I will say plainly, there is no hope for your soul while in such a state. I say if your soul is in such a state, better never to have been born. Your hard heart must be broken. You must be brought to see your own guilt and danger, your eyes must be opened to understand your sinfulness. All who have entered heaven were once labouring and heavy laden; and except you are, you will never get there.

III. WHAT IS THE INVITATION TO THE LABOURING AND HEAVY LADEN? JESUS SAYS, “COME UNTO ME.”

I love that word “Come.” To me it seems full of grace, mercy and encouragement. “Come now,” says the Lord in Isaiah, “and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow.”

Come is the word put in the mouth of the king's messenger in the parable of the guest-supper: “All is now ready; come unto the marriage.”

Come is the last word in the Bible to sinners. “The Spirit and the Bride say, Come.”

Jesus does not say, “Go and get ready.” This is the word of the Pharisee and self-righteous. “Go and work out a righteousness. Do this and that and be saved.” Jesus says, Come.

Jesus does not say “Send.” This is the poor Roman Catholic’s word. “Put your soul in the hand of the priest. Commit your affairs to saints and angels, and not to Christ.” Jesus says *Come*.

Jesus does not say “Wait.” This is the word of the enthusiast and the fanatic. “You can do nothing. You must not ask; you cannot pray; you must sit still.” Cold comfort for troubled souls. Jesus says *come*.

Come is a word of *merciful invitation*. It seems to say, “I want you to escape the wrath to come. I am not willing that any should perish. I have no pleasure in death. I would fain have all men saved, and I offer all the water of life freely. So come to Me.”

Come is a word of *gracious expectation*. It seems to say, “I am here waiting for you. I sit on my mercy-seat expecting you to come. I wait to be gracious. I wait for more sinners to come in before I close the door. I want more names written down in the book of life before it is closed for ever. So come to Me.”

Come is a word of *kind encouragement*. It seems to say, I have got treasures to bestow if you will only receive them. I have that to give which makes it worthwhile to come: a free pardon, a robe of righteousness, a new heart, a star of peace. So come to Me.

Brethren, I ask you to hear these words and lay them to heart. I plead for my Master; I stand here an ambassador; I ask you to come and be reconciled to God.

I ask you to *come with all your sins*, however many they may be. If you come to Him they will be taken away. I ask you *to come as you are*. You feel unfit; you say you are not good enough. The worse you think yourself, the better prepared you are. Christ is not a Saviour of the FIT, but of sinners. I ask you *to come now*. No other time is your own. The opportunity past, the door will be shut, and yourself dead. Come now. Come to Christ.

Ah! brethren, I fear that many of you will not take one saving step—will not come to Christ. You go on content with your own devices, like Balaam; like Felix, you never finally come to Christ.

I warn you plainly that you may come to church, and come to the table, and come to the minister, and yet never be saved. The one thing needed is actual coming to the Saviour, actual coming to the Fountain, actual washing in the blood of atonement. Except you do this, you will die in your sins.

Gird up your loins like a man, and resolve that you will come. Do you feel vile and unworthy to come? Tell it to Jesus. Do you feel as if you know

not what to say and do when you come? Tell it to Jesus. Tell Him you are all sins; tell Him you are all weakness; tell Him you feel as if you had no faith and no power, no grace and no strength, no goodness and no love; but come to Him, and commit your soul to His charge. Let nothing keep you back from Christ.

Tell Him you have heard that He receiveth sinners; that you are such a one, and you want to be saved. Tell Him you have nothing to plead but His own word; but He said Come, and therefore you come to Him.

IV. LET US CONSIDER THE PROMISE HELD OUT: "I WILL GIVE YOU REST."

Rest is a pleasant thing, and a thing that all seek after. The merchant, the banker, the tradesman, the soldier, the lawyer, the farmer, all look forward to the day when they shall be able to rest. But how few can find rest in this world! How many pass their lives in seeking it, and never seem able to reach it! It seems very near sometimes, and they fancy it will soon be their own. Some new event happens, and they are as far off rest as ever.

The whole world is full of restlessness and disappointment, weariness and emptiness. The very faces of worldly men let out the secret; their countenances give evidence that the Bible is true; they find no rest. "Vanity and vexation of spirit" is the true report of all here below. "Who will show us any good?" the bitter confession of many now, just as in David's time.

Take warning, young men and women. Think not that happiness is to be found in any earthly thing. Do not have to learn this by bitter experience. Realise it while young, and do not waste your time in hewing out "cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."

But Jesus offers rest to all who will come to Him. "Come unto Me," he says, "and I will give you rest." He will give it. He will not SELL it, as the Pharisee supposes—so much rest and peace in return for so many good works. He gives it freely to every coming sinner, without money and without price. He will not LEND, as the Arminian supposes, so much peace and rest, all to be taken away by-and-by if we do not please Him; He gives it forever and for aye [eternity]. His gifts are "without repentance."

"But what kind of rest will Jesus give me?" some men will say. "He will not give me freedom from labour and trouble. What kind of rest will He give?" Listen a few minutes, and I will tell you.

He will give you *rest from fear of sin*. The sins of the man who comes to Christ are completely taken away; they are forgiven, pardoned, removed, blotted out. They can no longer appear in condemnation against him. They are sunk in the depths of the sea. Ah! brethren, that is rest.

He will give you *rest from fear of law*. The law has no further claim on the man who has come to Christ. Its debts are all paid; its requirements are

all satisfied. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of law. “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect in the day of Judgment?” No believer can run his eye over the fifth chapter of Matthew, and not feel comforted. And that is rest.

He will give you *rest from fear of hell*. Hell cannot touch the man who has come to Christ. The punishment has been borne, the pain and suffering have been undergone by another, and he is free. And that, too, is rest.

He will give you *rest from fear of the devil*. The devil is mighty, but he cannot touch those who have come to Christ. Their Redeemer is strong. He will set a hedge around them that Satan cannot overthrow. He may sift and buffet and vex, but he cannot destroy such. And that, too, is rest.

He will give you *rest from fear of death*. The sting of death is taken away when a man comes to Christ. Jesus has overcome death, and it is a conquered enemy. The grave loses half its terrors when we think it is “the place where the Lord lay.” The believer’s soul is safe whatever happens to his body. His flesh rests in hope. This also is rest.

He will give you *rest in the storm of affliction*. He will comfort you with comfort the world knows nothing of. He will cheer your heart, and sustain your fainting spirit. He will enable you to bear loss patiently, and to hold your peace in the day of wrath. Oh! this is rest indeed.

I know well, brethren, that believers do not enjoy so much rest as they might. I know well that they “bring a bad report of the land,” and live below their privileges. It is their unbelief; it is their indwelling sin. There was a well near Hagar, but she never saw it. There was safety for Peter on the water, but he did not look to Jesus, and was afraid. And just so it is with many believers: they give way to needless fear—are straitened in themselves.

But still there is a real rest and peace in Christ for all who come to Him. The man that fled to the city of refuge was safe when once within the walls, though perhaps at first he hardly believed it; and so it is with the believer.

And, after all, the most downcast and complaining child of God has got a something within him he would not exchange for all the world. I never met with one, however low and desponding, who would consent to part with the rest and peace he had, however small. Like Naboth he prizes his little vineyard like a kingdom. And this shows me that coming to Christ can give rest.

Be advised, every one of you who is now seeking rest in the world. Be advised, and come and seek rest in Christ. You have no home, no refuge, no hiding-place, no portion. Sickness and death will soon be upon you, and you are unprepared. Be advised, and seek rest in Christ. There is enough in Him and to spare. Who has tried and did not find? A dying Welsh boy said, in broken English, “Jesus Christ plenty for everybody.” Know your privi-

leges, all you who have come to Christ. You have something solid under foot and something firm under hand. You have a rest even now, and you shall have more abundantly.

Let me speak to *those who have not yet come to Christ*.

Why do you not come? What possible reason can you give? What excuse can you show for your present conduct?

Will you tell me you have no need? What! no sin to be pardoned—no iniquity to be covered over! There is no state so bad as that of utter insensibility. Beware, lest you only awake to hear the word “Depart.”

Will you tell me you are happy without Christ? I do not believe you. I know you are not. You dare not look into your heart,—you dare not search your conscience. It is the happiness of a tradesman who is bankrupt and does not look at his books. There is no happiness out of Christ.

Take heed. Every morning you are in awful danger. You stand on the brink of hell. Let a fever, an accident, an attack of disease carry you off, and you are lost for ever. Oh! take the warning. Escape for your life. Flee, flee to Christ!

Let me speak to those *who have not come to Christ, but mean to some day*. I marvel at your presumption. Who are you, that talk of meaning? You may be dead in a week. Who are you that talk of meaning? You may never have the will or opportunity, if not today. How long will you go on halting between two opinions? You must come to Christ sometime—some day; why not now? The longer you stay away, the less chance there is of your coming at all; and the less happiness will you have in the world.

“Take heed, therefore, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.”

Many meant to have come in the robes, but put it off till too late. If like the Levite you put off your journey till late in the day, you must not wonder if the sun has gone down when you are far from home. Come now.

Let me speak to *those who have come to Christ indeed*. You are often cast down and disquieted within you. And why? Just because you do not abide in Christ and seek all rest and peace in Him. You wander from the fold: no wonder you return weary, footsore, and tired. Come again to the Lord Jesus and renew the covenant. Believe me, if you live to be as old as Methuselah, you will never get beyond this: a sinner saved by the grace of Christ. And think of the sinner’s end.

Rest in Christ, and so rest indeed.