

## Jesus Christ Says “Come to Me”

Isaiah 55:3

*Incline your ear and come to Me ....*

Consider two expressions repeatedly heard from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ: “Come to Me” and “Depart from Me.”

Consider first His expression “Depart from Me.” They who hear Him speak those words to them will find them to be the most dreadful words they ever heard. They will hear them at the Final Judgment (Matthew 25:41, 46): “41 Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels .... 46 And these will go away into everlasting punishment ....”

Who will hear Jesus say these words to them? All who refused His gracious call at this present time “Come to Me.”

Many then will protest, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?” (Matthew 7:22). But He will reply to them “depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!” (v.23).

Others will protest, “We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets” (Luke 13:26). But He will reply to them, “Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity” (v.27).

Learn well this lesson from the two instances cited above: Coming to Christ is not the same as calling yourself a Christian, or going to hear His preaching and teaching, or partaking of Him in the Lord’s Supper, or professing to be Christ’s prophet or preacher, or claiming to have cast out demons and done miracles in Christ’s name. One may do all these things and nevertheless hear Him say at the Final Day, “Depart from Me, you lawless worker of iniquity.”

What is it to come to Christ? Coming to Christ is believing in Him unto salvation. This we know from the instances in which Jesus called men to come to Him, and in which He equated *coming* to Him with *believing* in Him: “If anyone thirsts, let him *come* to Me and drink. He who *believes* in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water” (John 7:37f); “He who *comes* to Me shall never hunger, and he who *believes* in Me shall never thirst” (John 6:35). He who savingly *believes* in Christ has savingly *come* to Christ.

Consider now the people to whom Jesus Christ says “Come to Me” and who therefore may do so.

**1. Jesus says “Come to Me” to the most sinful** (Isaiah 1:18): “‘Come now, and let us reason together,’ says Jehovah, ‘though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.’”

What are sins that are “like scarlet” and “red like crimson”? They are the worst of sins? We do not imply that some sins are inconsequential, for all deserve the punishment of death. But as surely as murder is considered a worse sin than lying, so are sins “like scarlet” and “red like crimson” worse than others.

The color of these sins denotes *bloodguilt*, the state of being guilty of murder, for red is the color of blood. And Jesus here speaks to people whose “hands are full of blood” (v.15), stained with its guilt. Jesus therefore here speaks to murderers! You may not have committed murder with your physical hands, but in God’s sight “Whoever hates his brother is a murderer” (1 John 3:15; Matthew 5:21f). Therefore, we all have committed murder in God’s sight, and our “hands are full of blood”, and our sins are “like scarlet” and “red like crimson”.

The color of these sins also denotes their *permanence*, for cloth dyed scarlet was “double-dyed” by dipping it twice in the dye in order to make it colorfast. You are a *double-dyed* sinner, because you are a sinner first by nature and afterward by deeds. And you are a *colorfast* sinner, for you cannot absolve yourself of your guilt by all the tears you shed, and all the waters of baptism, and all the religious deeds you perform, and all of everything else you do.

But Jesus Christ here calls even these worst of sinners to “Come to Me.”

And He assures all who come to Him that “they shall be as white as snow” and “they shall be as wool”. To “be as white as snow” is to be innocent through justification and holy through sanctification. To “be as wool” is to be as fleece from which all dirt and filth and stains have been removed, so that the wool is restored to its original whiteness.

This is what happens to all who come to Christ. When they believe and trust in Him, all their sins are washed away from them by the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ. He answers their prayer “wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow” (Psalm 51:7). And they become identified as “These are the ones who ... washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Revelation 7:14).

But if you refuse Jesus Christ's call today "Come to Me" you will at last hear Him say to you "Depart from Me."

**2. Jesus says "Come to Me" to the heavily laden weary toilers** (Matthew 11:28): "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

These who "labor" are *weary toilers*. The Greek word (*kopos*) refers not so much to actual exertion as to the weariness that results from extreme straining. They are weary toilers because they are "heavy laden" or overburdened.

Some are weary toilers under their load of *sin*. These are not every sinner, for some sinners delight in their sin, as do the sexually immoral, liars, thieves and robbers. But Jesus here speaks to those who are weary from their sins, and who can confess "my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me" (Psalm 38:4). If you are weary from your load of sins, Jesus Christ calls you to "Come to Me, and I will give you rest."

Some are weary toilers under the *Law of Moses*, which promised life to all who perfectly obeyed its Ten Commandments and kept its sabbath days, and other legal requirements including abstaining from unclean foods such as pork (Leviticus 18:5). These weary toilers are not everyone under the law, for some delight in being under it and boasting of their legal self-righteousness (as did Pharisees). But Jesus here speaks to those who find the law to be "a yoke ... which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear" (Acts 15:10). If you are weary from the heavy yoke and burden of the law, Jesus Christ calls you to "Come to Me, and I will give you rest."

Some are weary toilers under their load of *religion*. Their leaders have heavily laden them with sectarian laws and human traditions purported to merit favor with God (as in Matthew 15:2). Jesus said that their leaders "bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders" (Matthew 23:4 / Luke 11:46). Some tell their followers what they may and may not eat and drink, what clothes they may and may not wear, when and how they must pray – and even which direction they must face while doing so, and many other such man-made requirements, and so forth. Jesus does not speak here to everyone who is under such religious requirements, for some delight in being slaves to their religion and taskmasters. Rather, Jesus speaks to those who are weary of their heavy load of religion, and desire to be free from it. If you are such a person, Jesus Christ calls you to "Come to Me, and I will give you rest."

This "rest" that Jesus will give to all comers is "rest for your souls" (v.29). He will take from you your load of sin and all its burdensome guilt and pollution. He will make you free from the law by giving to you a righteousness that fulfills all its requirements. He will liberate you from religion and all its manmade laws.

But if you refuse Jesus Christ's call today "Come to Me" you will at last hear Him say to you "Depart from Me."

**3. Jesus says "Come to Me" to the spiritually thirsty.** We here consider two texts. First, Jesus said in Isaiah 55:1, 3: "1 Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; ... 3 Incline your ear and come to Me. ..." Second, He said in John 7:37-39: "37 ... 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. 38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' 39 But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive ...."

Jesus Christ here equates "come to the waters" with "come to Me". This is true because He is "the fountain of living waters" (Jeremiah 2:13). Chief among these is the "rivers of living water" through the Holy Spirit given by Christ. Here is the living water of life that both gives life to the spiritually dead and sustains the life of the spiritually regenerate.

These waters are available to "anyone and everyone who thirsts". Unhappily, not every one does. Jesus said "My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns – broken cisterns that can hold no water" (Jeremiah 2:13). They want water from cisterns they themselves have hewn – water of works that will eventually dry up, water from the broken cisterns of freewill and works religion.

But if you refuse Jesus Christ's call today "Come to Me" you will at last hear Him say to you "Depart from Me."

If you heed Jesus Christ's call today "Come to Me" you will hear Him say to you at the Last Day "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34).

– Daniel E. Parks (September 11, 2016; #955)