

Coming to Christ

by Ernest C. Reisinger

Ernest C. Reisinger emphasizes the importance of understanding and proclaiming the doctrines of grace in the context of evangelism and true conversion to Christ.

Duration: 1:10:32

Scripture: Matthew 11:28-30, Mark 1:17, Mark 10:52, John 6:35, Revelation 22:17

Topics: "Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses what coming to Christ is not. He emphasizes that it is not a physical experience, purely mental, mystical, or simply a volitional act. Instead, he explains that coming to Christ involves recognizing a spiritual need and understanding one's lost condition. The preacher also highlights the concept of man's inability to come to Christ without the assistance of God the Holy Ghost, drawing parallels to the animal world to illustrate this point.

Transcript

I had my beginnings in Flagstaff, Arizona, Phoenix and Flagstaff, and I was converted early. How early, I'm not sure, but nevertheless I feel confident that I was converted at least by the age of 15. It was during that time that a man graduated from a fundamentalist university in South Carolina and came to Flagstaff, Arizona and set up a youth ministry, joined our church, and we became intensely involved in his life.

There was something there that I knew was real and genuine. At that time he was going through a transition from a fundamentalist type of theology to Calvinistic theology. So everything that he gave me as he taught me the things of God was in the Puritan, Reformed, and Historic Baptist heritage.

I'd like to address the few comments I have tonight concerning the doctrines of grace in the area of evangelism. As Southern Baptists, as men come into the doctrines of grace, or for that matter any other type of church or denomination, anytime a man comes into the doctrines of grace, many of the claims that we hear are that they are inconsistent with evangelism and will deter us and destroy any efforts we have in the area of evangelism. I think probably because this conference deals this year quite a bit with that subject that my remarks might be more appropriate.

I think probably I was saved as a Calvinist. I was led to Christ under the teaching, I think, of those doctrines. And God made such an impact upon my life and upon the lives of our youth group at time through this man that we did a great deal of evangelism.

It wasn't the other people in the church or churches in the area that espoused a universal atonement or a free will type of thing that were on fire and evangelizing. When God got a hold of our youth group, we found ourselves in many times, many nights during the week, on the street, in the bus stations, in the train stations, in front of the bars on Route 66, in the jails and the rescue missions, giving the gospel of Jesus Christ. We had Bible clubs that started.

There are high schools. And we would attend the Bible club at one high school, one noon hour of the high school, and attend that one, seeking to bring teenagers to Christ. And it was all upon the premise of what we knew of sovereign grace.

We were quite zealous. I found myself passing out objections to God's sovereignty by pink in my conservative Baptist church, not knowing exactly what, at the beginning, what might take place. But we found some real, we found that our hearts were stirred.

We found that our hearts were moved. And we found that, as we really knew God, we had something burned within us. We had to make Christ known.

I left there and went to college in Durango, Colorado. And I was primarily interested, knowing then I wanted more than anything in this world, to preach the gospel. I, on my own, began to set up a youth ministry, like I'd been associated with in Flagstaff, rented a gymnasium on my own, and began to go to the churches and invite teenagers and have a gym night and then preach the gospel to them.

And through my years, I spent six and a half years, and it wasn't long after that a church took me on as a youth van, and I really endeavored to be evangelistic. My library is filled with all the books that I still read. And that was the theology that I read.

My problem was that what I was reading and what was being worked out in the church, and even in my own ministry, wasn't consistent at all. And it was driving me crazy. It was this schizophrenia of doctrine that was driving me to total frustration.

And finally, after having made a move with a pastor from Durango to Salt Lake City and having spent a year there, I finally came to my end and had to get in a situation where I could have some consistency. And so, by then, the man that God had used in my life early in Flagstaff had joined himself to the church in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, Grace Baptist Church. He had gone through a few other places in Philadelphia and ended up in Carlisle.

And it was in that time of desperation when I needed to, again, come back to some consistency between what I knew in my head and my heart and what I was doing in my life. So I called, and after chatting with not only he, but Pastor Martin and a few others, I sold out Lock, Stock, and Barrel and ended up in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. And I worked on the street crew and rode shotgun on the garbage truck for a good while, and so that I could read and study and be in a situation where I could find that consistency.

And I'm eternally indebted to the elders of that church and to the dear people of that church, who I love dearly and believe them to be my church family and Brother Chantry to be my pastor to this day. I've called him on many occasions asking for his wisdom and advice. And after having stayed there a while, Pastor Chantry told me a bit of advice.

He said, you need to be preaching. And he said, stay here a little bit longer and then go out and see if the Lord might give you a church, maybe like a Southern Baptist church, that believes the Bible, but they don't

know what it says. And so we prayed.

And there were, during the course of those next months, that we found out that not only my parents had moved to Prescott, but there was a few other Reformed Baptist families from the East that had moved there. And so we got communication going and we were going to start a Reformed Baptist church in Prescott. Having been there only a week or so, I'd passed by a church, it was a Southern Baptist church I'm in now, and noticed the sign for a Christian school and walked in to see what type of Christian school it might be.

I had children that would pretty soon be school age. And so we walked in about four days before school started that fall, nine years ago, and they needed a teacher and I needed a job. So I began teaching for them in the Christian school.

Two months later, the pastor of the church left and they were really sheep without a shepherd. So I began preaching for them on an interim basis. And then we agreed that we would join together and I would preach the gospel for them.

And so nine years have gone by and I'd never been a Southern Baptist before that. I found out since that I had some back in my great greats, there were Southern Baptist preachers in my family. And so I do have a little bit of heritage, but when I began preaching there, I didn't know very much at all.

In fact, that first December, they said, take an offering for Lottie Moon. And from the pulpit, I said, who's Lottie Moon? That went over real great, you know. They knew that they were going to have to train me, but I think the Lord was my helper through the whole thing.

And I tell you, through those nine years that I've been there, I know that I've made many mistakes. I've been terribly confused. I didn't know what to do with what I had.

I went to the Second American Banner of Truth Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, I think it was about 1980. And I, Pastor Walt and Ernie were there and they showed me about five Southern Baptist men at that time that were coming to the Doctrines of Grace. And so that was encouraging, but I was way out in Arizona.

So I really felt alone. And so we pretty much were alone. And what I really needed during all those years was this conference right here.

I needed to be here. I attended a few Banner of Truth conferences for my health and benefit, and some Reformed-type of conferences over on the coast, the West Coast, but I really needed to be here. I love what I'm hearing, and I love to be a part of this.

And I, God willing, want to be a part of this every year that I can possibly be here. I believe since, in the last two years especially, we came to a crossroads in our church, and it was that point where there was going to be a pretty much a trimming down of a lot of accommodation that I'd been doing, and became very serious, definitive, and strong in my presentation of the whole gospel of Jesus Christ and the whole counsel of the Word of God. And so I began working through Ephesians, and God has been pleased to remove a few more families from our church, but by and large there's been a tremendous growing of unity.

There's been people converted through the preaching of the doctrines of grace, and there's been people converted in a very strong sense. It's beautiful to see a person that's converted under the doctrines of grace, where they understand repentance, and they understand the holiness of God, and they understand

worship, and they understand that there's a God to be prayed to in His majesty and glory. It's a beautiful thing to see folks converted under the doctrines of grace.

And for those of you that have not yet arrived at that point, possibly in your churches where you have that full-blown opportunity to declare all that you would love to declare, be patient until that time, and God will make it known to you when that time will come. And when you do, you can be ready, I believe, for God, if you're still there, to bless you immeasurably, and it will thrill your heart. That day will come, God willing, by His grace and by His power.

I'd like to share just a few thoughts with you about the gospel of Christ from Ephesians, in chapter 1. The reason God would elect and predestinate a people unto Himself, according to verse 6, is that it would be to the praise of the glory of His grace. God has set apart a people unto Himself that His grace might be glorified, and that the glory of that grace might be praised. And then, in chapter 2, the reason why God would convert men in time is so that in the ages to come, He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

God elects and God converts because He will receive glory. God elects and God converts because His grace and His mercy and His love and His kindness are on display. God elects and God converts because He is drawing out a people to worship Him and to love Him and to serve Him with all their hearts.

What a beautiful thing to proclaim. And what an encouraging thing to stand with and be able to share unashamedly that kind of God of grace and mercy. And that's the kind of message we have.

We don't have, we don't take second place to anybody in the area of evangelism. You can preach, you can proclaim the truths of that gospel and it'll be glorious. And when God saves a man, it'll be a glorious thing to behold.

I love to run and my family and people in my church were constantly nagging me that possibly if I kept running I was going to have heart failure or this problem or that problem, knees give out and all kinds of difficulties. They said please at least go see a physician and get a whole physical and treadmill the whole thing and okay well I'll do that. And you know you hate to keep doing something under this threat and under that concern and under this fear and this possibility and all the rest.

So I finally did and the doctor said feel free to run. And so it's been good. I've set their mind at ease and my run and enjoy myself.

All the possibilities that people will come to us with that the gospel that evangelism will be killed and destroyed and thwarted and hindered are simply empty threats, are simply vain warnings. And if you've heard those things and they intimidate you, please my brother or sister come to the word of God and let God himself set your mind at rest. That you can find here the answer and the assurance that God's doctrines of eternal and sovereign grace will not hinder evangelism in one part, but God will own and vindicate his truth.

And you can rest assured and have your mind at peace. God will bless your labors. I thank the Lord who has called me by his grace.

Praise him. Our father we come to you in the name of your son the Lord Jesus Christ. We glory in his presence.

We stand complete in his righteousness and we triumph in his grace. We give you blessing and honor and praise. You are the God of eternity.

We gather humbly before you this evening, resting in Christ the Lord and yet Lord seeking the blessings of your spirit, seeking to know you more fully. And we ask of you father that you would truly give eyes of understanding and enlightenment. Father give wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of yourself.

And we ask that you would make us as the apostles that in the midst of those great and lofty doctrines of grace that you would burden our hearts to such a great degree that as we look upon the multitudes our hearts would be moved with compassion and that they would burn with concern that men are apart from the grace of God. Oh father we would pray for the cause of God and truth on this earth. We would pray for the glory of your grace and we'd ask that you would display that multiplied times in our churches, in our mission fields, through our literature, through these conferences.

Father call a multitude to yourself. Revive your church in the midst of these days. Father may we know the power and might of your spirit.

We lean upon you and rest in you and we cry out, oh God, make it so. We ask for your blessing upon our speaker. May his lips be blessed.

May the presence of the Lord carry him along and enable him to make known the riches of your grace. Oh Lord Jesus, draw men to yourself so that they might come and when they come they shall indeed come home to be with you. In Jesus' holy name we pray.

Amen. Thank you pastor. He's my pastor now.

I suppose this would be considered as somewhat a controversial subject, my subject tonight. And I don't think there's a preacher, a true preacher in the world, who enjoys preaching on controversial subjects. In fact, as I believe, the heart of every true Christian and every true minister hates controversy.

And yet all the men that have left their marks on the sands of time, Calvin, Burgin, I thought when Mr. Carnes gave that excellent biographical sketch of Keech this morning, he was in one controversy after the other. I don't like controversy. The fact is I told my wife one time that I wasn't going to tell the truths of Calvinism to another young preacher, because it's gotten me in a lot of trouble.

And you know these young fellows, they ought to be in a cage for about two years before you let them out when they come into the wonderful truths of grace. As our brother said today, he got a new Bible, he got a new God, everything was new to him. Well, that's about the time he should have been put in a cage for a couple years maybe.

And you know what happens to me? You see, they get their sword out and they cut off everybody's ear and they don't have power to put it back on and they leave a trail of blood. And then somebody said, where'd you get that sword? From early rising. That's right.

Well, it is somewhat controversial, but that doesn't make it less important. And by the way, even though all Christians dislike controversy, let me assure you something. The closer you get to that river that has no bridge, the more you hate controversy.

The more you hate it. The scripture was read in your ears about one of the great invitations of the Bible, Isaiah 53. And I'm going to read from my scripture lesson a couple other passages that have to do with coming to Christ.

And the first one is John 6.35. This is going to be scattered scriptures before we get into the subject. John 6.35. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life. He that cometh to me shall never hunger.

And he that believeth on me shall never thirst. That's a commentary on the chapter of what it means to hunger. You see, coming is hunger.

Believing is, thirsting is believing. Hungering is coming. And that'll keep you from cannibalism as you read the rest of the chapter.

That's a commentary on those verses, what it means to hunger. Coming, hungering is coming. Believing is thirsting, or thirsting is believing.

And then John 6.53. Same chapter. Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Coming is eating, and believing is drinking.

Again, we have passages that have to do with coming to him in the seventh chapter of John. Verse 37. In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirsts, let him come unto me, and drink.

And then we have what I believe is our Lord's first invitation. Matthew 11, verses 28 to 30. Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. And the last invitation in the Bible.

The Spirit and the bride say, Come, and let him that heareth say, Come, and let him that is of thirst come, and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely. Coming to Christ is a common expression. It's used to express the act of the soul.

Coming to Christ includes leaving all self-righteousness and sin, receiving his righteousness to be our righteousness, his blood to be our covering, our atonement. Coming to Christ embraces repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Coming to Christ is the effect of regeneration.

But if you ask people, preachers sometimes as well, what do you mean by coming to Christ? How do you do that? Now that's an important question. Well, what would you say? What would your parishioners say if their little children asked their parents, Mama, what does it mean when the preacher says, Come to Christ? What does the preacher mean Sunday by Sunday? Many clouds and much confusion and ignorance surround this blessed expression. When the preacher says, Come to Christ at the end of a service, at the end of a service, it may mean that in some places coming to the front or going forward.

And that's the answer you get from many Southern Baptist people. That's why our children and our adults are so confused. But every true preacher and every true evangelist knows in his heart of hearts that coming forward in the church is not the same thing as coming to Christ.

Now, they may say, Well, walking an hour won't save you. I've heard people say that. But then they go on and act like it, what they do, is a denial of what they're saying.

Because they act like it does. Many preachers are not judicious in their so-called invitations. And as a result of not being judicious, many people, many of our people, equate coming to Christ and coming forward.

Many, many, many. And again I say, every true preacher knows that there's not a case in the Bible, not a case in the Bible. It was never practiced by our Lord or His apostles.

In fact, it was never practiced until about 130 to 150 years ago. And we heard so adequately about that today. Between 1830 and 1850 by a man by the name of Charles Finney.

And by the way, his so-called invitations was not near as dangerous as ours. Because he did not equate coming forward to coming to Christ. He called them to an inquiry room, and he didn't make any reference to come to Christ.

He called those to come and inquire after Christ. And it kept degenerating and degenerating and degenerating. It's because of this always, do we have what we have today.

Now, not only is it not in the Bible, and I say it was never practiced by our Lord and His apostles. As far as I can tell, as far as I can learn, the first we heard of it is when I just mentioned. I often wonder, especially in our beloved circles, I wonder how some people think that people got saved the first 1800 years of the Church.

How did they get saved for the first 1800 years of the Church? Because some people think there's no other way to get saved. And I've had that experience many times. Well, why am I so concerned about this subject? First of all, because I believe many are deceived on this point.

And to be deceived about your own soul is the worst kind of deception that can come upon a person as he passes between eternity past and eternity future. The worst kind of deception. And just as many of my dear Roman Catholic friends are deceived about the Mass, so many of my dear Baptist friends are deceived about the altar call.

Many are confused, preachers as well. I remember preaching for a fellow by the name of Doug Dakin, a dear young pastor. And I preached night by night the best I knew how.

About the third night he said, when are you going to invite them to Christ? And I had faithfully every night invited them to Christ. My whole message was an invitation to Christ. But I didn't invite them to the front of the Church.

Invitation and altar call is two different things. An invitation to come to Christ and the altar call is two different things. And if you don't get anything out of this conference, I hope you have that straight forever.

That's two different things. Somebody said, well, he doesn't give invitations. Don't you ever admit that.

And if that comes in your life where you stop giving invitations, you take off your badge, turn in your button, get out of the ministry. Well, my question to this young fellow, Doug Dakin, was this. I said, Doug, what does it mean to come to Christ? Well, he stammered and stuttered.

But it was obvious that he equated walking in hell with coming to Christ. My dear, many preachers are confused right here at this point. They equate coming to Christ with some physical act.

And I say it was never practiced by the early Church. It was never practiced by our Lord or His apostles. Well, what is it based on? Why the confusion? Why the controversy over such an important thing? My subject is important tonight.

Whether I handle it properly or not, it's an important subject. Why so much confusion? Well, this is the very question. It's a very good question.

And if you are honest and seek a biblical answer and give diligent and prayerful seeking that answer, you will be shocked to find that it's nothing like, nothing like what you experience in many evangelistic efforts. Now, of course, you must lay aside all previous ideas. You must lay aside your traditions.

You must lay aside previous ideas. You must come to the scripture alone, sola scriptura. Which leads to the question, if so many do it, what are the scriptures that they base this system, I say system, on? Well, the two principal scriptures that I've heard, and I can only, I've only ever had one other person give me a different scripture than these two.

But the two principal scriptures that our friends use to support this, and by the way, when I say our friends, I want to put in a little parenthesis here, some of the dearest men of God, some of the men used of God, that's why you must be kind to them. Some of the great men of God don't see this, and their experience with God is something to be coveted, even though their understanding is a million miles from biblical truth in this respect. But their experience with God is good.

And I say in particular to you young preachers, before you start wiping these guys off a map, just remember that it's possible for a man's experience with God to be genuine, and his understanding to be faulty. Well, coming back to these two scriptures. One scripture is Mark 117.

Follow me and I will make you fishers of men. Well, when Jesus said that, he was there physically. And the disciples did literally leave their nets and follow him.

They followed him physically. But today, suppose I went down to some dock at a marina, and I said to the fishermen, follow me, or follow Jesus, and he will make you fishers of men. Would I mean that they should drop their nets literally and follow him? That would be impossible, because he's not here physically.

What is it now, since Jesus is not here physically, what is it now to follow him? Following Jesus, and I think we would agree, is, is learning his teaching, and living under the influence of those teachings, and applying his teaching to everyday practice. That's following Jesus. Though in the days of flesh, a physical response may have been possible.

The fishermen literally did it. Zacchaeus literally came down out of that tree. It was possible then.

But even then, I think the spiritual identification of faith and repentance was clearly the fundamental sense of those words, follow me, come to me. That being true, Mark 1 17 is not a valid text to support the system. The second scripture used to support this system that has deceived so many, is Matthew chapter 10 verse 32 and 33.

Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. Now let's take a careful look at these two passages of scripture.

Let's take a careful look. Just what was our Lord saying? Is our Lord teaching that by the act of confession, or some physical act, we become Christians? Or is he teaching that the one indispensable mark of those who are Christians is that they will confess and live a life that openly acknowledges Him? There's no question about that. To confess Christ is a spiritual duty of Christians.

Confessing Him is not how to become a Christian. That's a difference. And in this passage, Jesus is not telling sinners how to make a decision, or how the new birth takes place.

He is teaching that confessing Him is the spiritual duty of His followers. Now it is certainly clear that confessing Christ is Christian duty. On this point, the New Testament is clear.

But I ask you a question, and I'm going to ask you for an audible response. I never did this in a sermon before. If I were to ask you, on this point, how, what was the public confession in the New Testament, in the book of Acts particularly, which is the book of Evangelism? One thing.

How did they confess after they were converted? They confessed it by baptism, openly, baptism. Let me return to the question. What does it mean to come to Christ? First, let me tell you what it's not.

And secondly, let me tell you what's involved, and that's the best I can do. That's the best I can do. What it's not.

Coming to Christ is not a physical or overt act. Coming to Christ is not physically to come, because He's not here physically to come to. He is not at the front of the church, up there floating around like a phantom.

You can't come to Christ with your feet. It's a good place for us to look at a very startling verse in the New Testament, a verse that's obnoxious to the natural mind, and a verse that confuses many Christians. John 6, 44.

No man can come to me unless, or the King James says, except the Father which has sent me draw him, and I will raise him up at the last day. Some describe Christ, coming to Christ, as the easiest thing in the world. And there's a sense in which that's true, because if you will, you're welcome.

But this verse says it's impossible. No man can come to me except the Father which has sent me draw him, and I will raise him up at the last day. And though this text is offensive to the carnal mind, we must remember that sometimes the offending the natural man is often the first step in a soul coming to Christ in a saving relationship.

They must see their lost condition, or they'll never desire to be saved. Now I'm very poor in English grammar, but I'm going to give you a grammar lesson tonight. All right? A little grammar lesson on this verse.

I had an old lawyer friend, a dear friend, 45 years friend, and he used to say, I'd be at his house and maybe one of his children would say, Dad, can I go out and play? And he'd say, I don't know, are you able? Are you able? Of course he was teaching them to say, may I go out and play? That's what he wanted to do. Please note this verse, that this verse says no man can. That means he doesn't have the

ability.

He doesn't have the ability. The text clearly teaches man's inability to come to Christ. Just as clearly as it teaches the Father's gracious drawing.

That is, in this text, the sweet consolation of the text that the Father draws. Man's inability. Well where does this inability lie? It doesn't lie in any physical defect.

It cannot mean a man is not able to move his body or walk to front of a church with his feet. A sinner can do that. He can walk to the front of the seat, front of the church, because he has legs.

If he was, he can say words of prayer, the sinner can say words of prayer, because he has a mouth and a tongue. Many unregenerate preacher, persons, pray prayers. So there's no lack in physical power in coming to Christ.

The inability doesn't lie there. The inability doesn't lie in his mind or intellect. The unconverted can learn the Bible intellectually, just as he can learn math or history or physics or music or any other subject.

He can learn anything about the Christian faith, intellectually. He can believe that the Bible is true, just the same as he can believe there are other books that are true. And we shouldn't tell men that they can't believe.

They can believe, they can believe that the Bible is true. They can believe that every word of the Bible is true, and be lost as a dodo. The inability is not in the faculty of the intellect or the mind or the body.

Or where is it? The inability lies deep in man's nature. Through the fall and our own sin, the nature of man has become debased, depraved, corrupt. And it is impossible for him to come to Christ without the assistance of God the Holy Ghost.

We see it in the animal world, and we wouldn't argue about it. We see it in the animal world. Animals act according to their nature.

A sheep will not eat garbage, and a hog will not eat grass. Not because they have a physical problem. They both have mouths, they both have legs, they both have ears.

But the sheep won't eat garbage, because of his nature, and it's man's nature. It's because of his nature that he cannot come to Christ. Put that butcher knife into the baby, and of course she'll say, I can't, I cannot do that.

She doesn't mean that she doesn't have the physical strength, but she has the heart of a mother, the nature of a mother. Again, where does this inability to come to Christ lie? It lies in the obstinacy of man's will. Oh yes, men can be saved if they will.

Yes, if they will. I believe tonight that every sinner outside of hell could be saved if he will. But that's the root of the matter, if he will.

I get tired of these arguments about the will. B.B. Warfield once said, what's the use of arguing about whosoever will in a world of whosoever won't? We live in a world of whosoever won't. My dear friend, we are preaching and witnessing to a world of whosoever will not.

I hear someone say, oh but Ernie, I believe men could be saved if they will. I say, my dear brother, so do I. But the question is, are natural men ever found willing to submit to the humbling terms of the gospel apart from the work of the Spirit? Do you know the most pessimistic verse in all the Bible? The most pessimistic verse in all the Bible is John 6 40. You will, this is Jesus, you will not come to me that you might have life.

You will not come to me that you might have life. That is the most pessimistic verse in all the Bible. And that's why, that's exactly why John 6 44 is the most optimistic verse in all the Bible.

It's the most optimistic verse in all the Bible. Why? Do you know that if it were not for this sweet, oh this sweet verse in all the Bible, if it were not for that little word, except, every person ever born of a woman would be in hell? Except, except every person would be there. And so I used to, you know, before I got my theology partly straightened out, I used to wonder about this verse.

And I'd hope when I was trying to teach people and witness, I'd hope they wouldn't ask me about this verse. When I read that verse, it looked like it closed all the doors. It looked like it closed all the doors.

No man can come to me. But I want to tell you something about it. It shows you where the door is.

Accept the Father. Accept, blessed accept, blessed accept. Note well the Father draws.

How does he draw sinners? All would agree that the preaching of the gospel is the instrument of drawing men. But preaching alone will not draw men. Our Lord's preaching did not draw men, apart from the Father sending the Spirit.

No preaching. It doesn't matter how good, and that's humbling, but it ought to teach us to cry to the Father. Well, first, coming to Christ is not a physical act.

Secondly, the second thing it's not, I'm still on the word it's not. It's not, coming to Christ is not purely a mental act. As I just mentioned, one can learn the truths of the Bible as we learn geography, history, any other science.

You can memorize verses. It's a good exercise. I highly recommend it.

I've met men at the missions where I dealt with drunks at the front of the church, with the mission verses quoted around the wall. Those drunks could quote all the verses around the wall, but they weren't saved. They were strangers to Christ, even though they had memorized those verses.

So it's not purely a mental act. I didn't say it wasn't a mental act, I said it wasn't purely a mental act. Coming to Christ is not some mystical experience unfounded on Bible truth.

Apart, it's not some mystical experience apart from the truths of the Scripture. That's the third thing it's not. The fourth thing, coming to Christ, is not merely a volitional act.

That is an act of the will, an act of choosing. It is an act of exercising the will. I'm going to roll up my sleeves and follow Jesus.

No, it's not that. So these are four things it's not. It's not physical, it's not purely mental, it's not something mystical unfounded on truth, and it's not merely a volitional act.

Well, you say, Preacher, you're doing fine, tell us what it's not. But that's not what you're meant to do. What is it? And before I set out, I'll just tell you what's involved.

I can't tell you what it is, but I'll tell you what's involved. First thing that's involved with this. The recognition of a spiritual need.

And if you study those invitations that were read in your hearing tonight, come unto me all ye that labor, didn't say all, said all that labor and are heavy laden. That's a qualification. That's a qualification.

That passage that Pastor Askel read from Isaiah, that wonderful, oh it's a beautiful, beautiful invitation. Oh everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters. It didn't say, oh everyone, oh that's true, everyone may come.

Oh everyone that thirsteth, come to the waters. Who wants a drink? Only thirsty people. And that verse says, oh everyone that thirsteth, come to the waters.

The last invitation in the Bible. You know, people say, the Bible teaches whosoever will. Now, it does teach it, but when you ask them to show you that, you know where they go? Every time I've ever asked anybody to show me that in the Bible, do you know where they go? Revelation? No, they go to Revelation, back there where it says the Spirit and the Bride say come.

But that verse does not say whosoever will may come. It is true that whosoever will may come, but you don't try to prove it by that verse, because that's not what the verse says. The verse, let me give it to you.

The Spirit and the Bride say come, let him that heareth come, say come, and let him that is a thirst come, and whosoever will let him take of the life of water of life freely. Who wants water? Thirsty people. Well, the first thing involved in coming to Christ, therefore, is recognizing a spiritual need.

The second thing involved, the second thing involved in coming to Christ, is a revelation of Christ to the heart as the only suitable one to meet that need. And what I'm saying there is this, Christ must be revealed to the heart. I've been asked more than once in these many, many years trying to serve the Lord, what do you think is the greatest problem with Sunday morning Christianity? And do you know what I always say? And I believe I'm right.

What is the greatest problem with Sunday morning Christianity? That host of people gathered at eleven o'clock. Do you know what my answer is? It's just this. A host of people gathered at the eleven o'clock hour, trying to worship a Christ that's never been revealed to their heart by the Holy Ghost.

And I want to say to you, if the Bible teaches anything, it teaches that Christ must be revealed to the heart. When Jesus came to the coast of Caesarea Philippi, Matthew 16, He asked His disciples a question saying, whom do men say that I the Son of Man am? That's a good question. I wish everybody would ask it.

I wish everybody would seek an answer for it. Who do men say that I the Son of Man am? They said, some said you're John the Baptist. I guess they saw some of the characteristics of John the Baptist in Him.

Some say Elias. Others, Jeremiah. Good guess.

I suppose when they saw the tears of Jesus, they thought of Jeremiah. Or one of the prophets. All good guesses.

But then Jesus asked another question. But whom say ye that I am? And of course, you all know that classic answer. Apostle Peter, when he said, thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Jesus answered and said unto him, blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah. Let me ask you, how is it that Peter had the right answer? All these other people are wrong. You're the Baptist? You're wrong.

Elias? Jeremiah? One of the prophets? Wrong. How did Peter get it right? Was he smarter than those who said he's John the Baptist? Did he have a little more intellect? Was he more moral? Did he have more religious training? The verse answers it. Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto you, but my Father.

Christ had to be revealed. Paul, given a little short testimony. He has a lot of little short testimonies through his epistle.

But one of those little short testimonies is found in Galatians 1, where he said, but when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, listen, to reveal his Son in my preaching only. He didn't confer with flesh and blood. My point is, he had to be revealed.

Rob Ritchie gave us that wonderful paper on Hopeful, and he missed a very important part of Hopeful. The fact is, he might have missed the punchline. That is the part where Hopeful, he did get the part where, when the Father said he must be revealed to you.

And he said he prayed once, twice, six times. He wasn't revealed. But he prayed until Christ was revealed to his heart.

And he went on to ask him how he knew he was revealed. It was great. But the point is this.

In that wonderful, vivid picture, the same truth as me. Hopeful was telling him that Faithful made it clear that Christ had to be revealed to his heart. Let me give you another illustration.

You know, we love that Christmas verse when the wise men came to Jesus, a young child, knelt down. The Bible says they knelt down. And when they came in the house that night to the baby, they knelt down and they saw the young child and his mother.

And the Bible says they fell down and worshipped him. Now I want to ask you a question. As a baby, did he look any different than any other babies? He didn't look any different than any other babies.

And yet it says they worshipped him. And that was blasphemy! Except, how did they find out he was God if he looked like every other baby? It was revealed to their heart that they worshipped him. Well, the second thing, therefore, in coming to Christ, Christ must be revealed to the heart by the Holy Spirit.

Christianity is supernatural. And I pray to God that preachers would not forget that. It's a supernatural religion.

Well, there's a third thing involved in coming to Christ, and that is it involves committing yourself to him without reservation as the only one who can meet my need. Anything less than that is to be a stranger to true religion. Ah, but listen, hear me.

When one recognizes his spiritual needs, when one sees Christ as the only one to meet that need, there will be a commitment. And you won't have to send the follow-up workers out to find him. Because you will

find one that has something to confess.

You will find one who has a desire to confess. You will find one who has joy in confessing him. It will help you to understand why we should never, never equate walking in an hour with coming to Christ, if that's what's involved.

Now, I couldn't pass tonight without pointing out a few of the dangers and errors of this deceptive system, a monster that has swallowed up so many serious people. Why so much about this issue? Well, by failing to make the invitation, by failing to make it clear, has introduced a system or a condition of salvation that is not in the Bible, or never practiced, or approved by Christ or his apostles. Public confession is not a condition of salvation, and never was.

And there's not a line of scripture to support that. Public confession is not a condition of salvation. That's one danger.

To call, the call to come forward in a church is not a divine command. But many times, and I've sat and watched it many times, those who do go forward are led to believe that they did something commendable to God. I've heard them thank, I've heard them thank for coming forward.

While those who don't go forward are falsely supposed to be disobeying God, when God never commanded such a thing. Nor is there any record of it in the Bible of the early church. Another danger of equating coming to Christ and coming to the front is the same thing.

It tends to mislead people. And it's been my experience over and over and over again, that people think you must go there to be saved. We had a deacon in North Pompano Baptist Church by the name of Johnny Johnson.

He was a dear man. And he used to, he liked my preaching by the way. And the thing of it is, he said, Ernie said, if you'd have just had him sing a different kind of song, I'm sure many would have come forward.

Now that's his concept, and he's a deacon. So what had this concept drilled into him over the years? That's what was ding-bonged into his mind. Or I've had people say to me, well I didn't get saved last night, and I couldn't wait to get back the next night to go forward and get saved.

Do you think the Holy Spirit left when the lights went out? If I believed that, I'd quit preaching altogether. I want to tell you the Holy Ghost has followed many a man and a boy or girl to their bedroom, or their mother's knee, or the cornfield. People have been saved everywhere.

Every kind of situation. Well you see, it makes, it misleads people. It misleads people in the most important thing, that is their soul.

Just last week I had somebody call me from Atlanta, and they were talking about the Southern Baptist pastor there. And he's had some trouble with the doctors of grace, as some of you have, one or two of you maybe. And he was telling about this pastor, the preacher didn't give an altar call Sunday night, and this young couple with their little boy went to him, and they wanted him to, they went to him after the service, and they said, oh my, we wanted to get our little boy saved tonight.

Now this is true. What kind of concept has been dangled into their head when they've faithfully attended church all those years, if that's the concept they had? And he wanted to take them to study. That's why it's dangerous.

What a perverted concept. Therefore, it misleads the unconverted as to their duty. If unconverted people think that's their duty, when was Scripture so clear? When our Lord was asked the question, what must I do that I may do the works of God? He didn't ask him to move a finger.

He said, and I quote John 6.29, Jesus, how shall I answer that question? Jesus answered and said this is the work of God, that you believe on him whom he has sent. No physical act. Well, there's another danger, unavoidable confusion of the conscience of those who did not go forward.

Have you ever met anyone whose conscience was confused because they didn't go forward when the Bible never commanded such a thing? There are many times they are left with the impression that they've rebelled against God, when the truth of the matter is they haven't. They haven't at all. This is no hobby with me.

I care about the souls of men. I like what Spurgeon said, go home alone. Read that thing on the program.

I put that in there especially so you get a quote from Spurgeon. This false notion of equating coming forward with coming to Christ, it has produced the greatest record of false statistics that has ever been compiled by church or business. Businesses be in jail if they falsify the statistics like that.

Businessmen would be in jail if falsifies the role of the preacher or the evangelist. Did you get decisions? How many decisions were in the meeting? I used to go to the associational meeting, and there was a fellow outside the door, and he had a pencil and paper, and he said, how many did you baptize last week? I never did it, and I guess it was the old man coming up, but I felt like popping him, you know. So I finally said to him, because our prayer meetings had tripled from the time I went there.

Our services didn't go up so much in the morning, they went down a little. But our prayer meetings had tripled. There were about 13 people at the prayer meeting, and we were getting 60 and 70.

So I thought, well, I won't hit him. I'm going to ask him something else. So next week when he said, how many did you baptize last week? I said, how many were in your prayer meeting last week? He quit asking me.

It falsifies the role of the preacher. You see, my dear brothers, it's not our job to explain faith. It's not our job to explain faith.

It's our job to set forth the object of gospel invitations, though extended to all. And they're so varied in the Bible. They're so varied.

Let me give you an example what I mean. Many are enemies of God, are invited to be reconciled to God. Men whose hearts are hard as stone are invited to one who will take away their stony heart and give them a heart of flesh.

Men who are dancing gaily and rushing madly along the way that leads to death are invited. He calls them to turn. Turn ye, turn ye, why will you die? Men who are sleeping the sleep of death are invited in this manner.

Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead and I will give you life. Men who are hungering with a craving hunger are invited and he tells them that he's the bread that came down from heaven, come. Men who are thirsty he calls them to the water of life that they may never thirst again.

Come unto me, come unto me. Where is he? Where is he? He's not at some geographical point. Where is he? Listen carefully.

He's closer than the front of a church. He's closer than the tip of your fingers. He's at the heart's door, the innermost being.

He's where there is a tear of repentance and a sigh of godly sorrow. Where is he? Well, where there is a sincere earnest prayer for salvation. He's there.

Where there's not even a desire to pray in the right way, there's Jesus. So, men and women must come like that poor Sarafinician woman in humility satisfied to have the crumbs that fell from the master's table. A picture of humility if there ever was one.

Come crying for the crumbs that fell from the table or like that poor blind Bartimaeus who said by the race I had blind crying, oh son of David have mercy on me. They said to him be of good cheer he calleth for thee and he threw off his coat so that nothing would hinder him. All he wanted to receive his sight and he heard Jesus say go thy way.

I suppose in every audience there are some who have never savingly come to Jesus Christ and when I'm in an audience of over 12 I always assume that my audience isn't any better than our Lord's and I wonder tonight and even in this audience if there's some woman preacher's wife has never come savingly to Jesus Christ and if so I hope you've been helped by coming. I wonder if there's some preacher I know at least one preacher here that was ordained to preach and wasn't converted and others have been converted through his testimony. I know one preacher here that was in the Southern Baptist Church went to the altar every every revival they had whether it was twice a year he went twice a year and if it was once a year he went once a year he still didn't get converted until he got to college.

Well I want to invite you to come you say well I can't get to Jesus by the way you're talking well let me tell you something you fall where you are and he'll get to you but you better fall that word come is a wonderful word a word of merciful invitation it seems to say I want to I want you to escape the wrath to come it seems to say I'm not willing that any should perish it seems to say I have no pleasure in death come to me come is a gracious invitation you may come to church you may come to the Lord's table you may come to the minister and yet never be saved the one thing needed is actually coming to the Savior actually coming to the fountain actually being washed in the blood of atonement come to Christ the one thing necessary if you do everything in this world if you do everything in this world religiously and do not come to Christ I've asked Harry Russell to sing an invitation one of my favorites the fact is this hymn was written by a minister where Dr. DeWitt preached for a couple years Joseph Irons Harry will you sing that song may God bless you all

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