

Delivered

1st. Temperance Meeting

2nd Allen's Corners School House

3rd Homerstown Baptist Church

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Christ's Gracious Reception of Sinners.

And the Pharisees and scribes murmured saying, "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." Luke XV - 2.

This text contains one of the most glorious truths contained anywhere in God's word; one of the most important that ever fell upon the ear of mankind, or can be taken into the heart as a comfort.

Christ had associated with publican and sinner. This displeased the scribes and Pharisees very much, who thought they were better than anyone else and despised everyone else.

They uttered the words of this text with the idea of degrading Christ and making others think ill of Him, as a large number of people had gathered about Him. But what they thought to be His shame was His glory: for these very words uttered by Pharisees in derision are the most glorious words we have to think of; they mean more to us than any other promise.

"This man receiveth sinners." Oh! how much they mean to sin-sick souls traveling in darkness. They are as a bright light which is to lead them out of darkness; they are the rock of safety; a shelter in the time of storm; throwing light and hope upon what seemed a life of gloom and despair.

that we are, might find favor with the Father and eternal life with Him.

We are saved by Christ: it is through Him that we have access to Heaven. There is no other name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. How can we reject Him when he says, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." "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." The burden is already carried for us, our load of sin is taken away. He carried it all for us, and blotted out our transgressions with His own precious blood.

3. He has issued His invitation for all sinners to come unto Him, so He is perfectly willing to receive them. He is more willing to receive and save us, than we are to be saved. We are indifferent and care little whether we find peace with God or not. We live from day to day giving no thought of what is to come; getting all the pleasure out of this life that it is possible to, never giving a thought of the great Eternity to come, which with each succeeding day draws nearer and yet nearer. Oh! what terrible messages it has for some of us. Do we not tremble at the very thought of meeting the Father as we are? Yet, why is it we do not seek the narrow way that leads to eternal glory with Christ Jesus our Lord? Delays are dangerous, many is the one who has lost

The praises of our Churches throughout the world ring and will continue to ring because we rejoice in a hope that lives forever, and that means Eternal life to us made manifest in these words, "This man receives sinners."

I. Let us look for a few moments to this person who receives sinners. By what names do we know Him?

He is sometimes called the Son of Man; the Son of God; the only begotten Son of God; Christ Jesus; He is represented as a Saviour, a Ransomer, a Deliverer. These are all beautiful names, and they convey a world of meaning in themselves.

But such representations imply

1. That he was Divine. No human being can save a soul, that is impossible. We can be of great help and influence to someone who is seeking the narrow way, but we cannot save him. It must be accomplished by a higher power. We may be the instruments used in saving souls, but that does not imply that it is our power that saves them.

Man's influence in this case may be compared to any piece of machinery which can perform its work only when there is a higher power in back of it. In itself there is no power. So to save a soul: it requires Infinite power, purity and love. All these qualities were possessed by Christ. He was Infinite in power (John I -4) "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men".

Christ possessed the power of God, He was the light of the world. All who believe on Him shall not abide in darkness, for when we believe in Him and accept Him as our Saviour; we become a part of Him, and in Him there is no darkness. He was pure and spotless from the hand of the Father, full of love and tender compassion for His people.

His Divinity was proved by his miracles and by his Resurrection. It seems impossible that anyone could have doubted his Divinity after He had performed so many miracles. And no doubt the people did recognize His Divinity although refusing to acknowledge it. But after His Resurrection from the dead and ascension to Glory, everything was proved beyond a doubt that He came from God, possessed with Divine power.

2. He became man that he might suffer the temptations of man, that He might be bruised and beaten, and at last even give His life as a substitute for guilty man. His sacrifice was a vicarious one. Surely He hath born our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. (Isa. LIII - 4-5) He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." In these words we find

Christ described. He suffered in our stead that we might (4) be free from all condemnation. And in order to cancel our debt of sin it was necessary for Him to become human; for Him to live among the people whom He was to redeem. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." Because He came in such a lowly manner. If He had descended from Heaven with great show amid convulsions of nature, shaking the earth from north to south; if He had come with legions of angels behind Him to execute his orders by force and compel people to believe His doctrine; and if they did not, immediately annihilate them, then perhaps He would have been looked upon as coming from God. But that was not the plan. He could not in that way be a substitute for guilty man. He must become as man in every respect; he must be born of woman, pass through childhood with all its advancements and peculiarities and by degrees become prepared to take up His great work of redemption among His fellowmen. It was a human soul that incurred the displeasure of God and a human soul was needed to cancel the debt. Christ might have suffered equal agonies as a spirit for us, but then He would not have left to us a type of perfect human life which we now have.

He left us an example of perfect submission to the Father's will, of purity, kindness, of a forgiving spirit. He suffered, bled and died on Calvary, that we, miserable sinners

his mark in life by waiting too long. Many men have lost their lives by trying to board a train while it was in motion because of a few moments delay. Do not let us hear the words, "Almost, but lost." They sound like an awful verdict upon our ears. Do not try to gain so much in this world that by a few moments delay you lose your own soul.

How much better it is to have nothing in this world, and a hope in Christ, than to gain millions here and lose eternal happiness. Come to Him just as you are. He is the good Samaritan, and will bind up your wounds; he will heal your bruised soul with the balm of His own body, He will spread sunshine and happiness into your heart, and give you a new existence; He will change your heart by casting out the devil who has reigned there so long, and will put in his place a part of His own self; He will give living water to your thirsty soul, and in times of gloom and disappointment, to which we are all prone, he will be your constant guide, and in Him alone can you find the comfort needed at such times; He will sustain you through life's darkest hour, if you will but let the good Samaritan come in; He is the great Physician of souls and will heal all diseases. None too complicated, none too longstanding, Jesus saith unto them, "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they

that are sick." I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. (Mark II -17) Sinners Christ receives whose diseases are sin, and his redeeming blood is a remedy that can never fail. Many have been cured by Him, and their testimonials have resounded down through the ages. We do not have to take simply words as a proof of Christ's skill, as we do many human physicians; but we have living testimonials before us every day, who have consulted this great Physician and found relief. Come and be cured of your load of sin. His service is a free gift and it will bring sunshine in upon your soul, and strength to your drooping heart.

He is the compassionate Shepherd ready to receive the wandering sheep into the fold. "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost." I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.

There is rejoicing in heaven over one soul that is found and brought back to the fold from which it has strayed. How often we step just outside of the fold not intending to go far away, but we see something which attracts our attention and go to look at it and getting farther and farther away from the fold we lose our way and are lost. But the good Shepherd is every where seeking the lost sheep, those who have strayed away from the fold, and are being carried

farther away by the sin and temptation of this world. He does not leave us alone to find our way back to the fold, or to perish in the storm, but He comes after us and taking us in His arms carries us safely back to the fold. And then, there is joy in Heaven among the angels. We are not left alone in this world, even the angels in Heaven remember us, and rejoice when we find the way into the arch of safety.

Oh! take courage you who have long been following the paths of Satan. There is help still, be not discouraged. Christ comes out to meet you, do not hide from Him, He is a loving Shepherd and will carry you tenderly home. He waits to save you now, why longer delay? Go and meet the good Shepherd who waits to gather you into his fold, where there is protection from the darts of Satan and the storms of life. Oh! how many souls there are to-day tossing about on the huge billows of sin, and should their frail barks break all would be lost. There is a harbor in the distance, the lights of safety can be seen; but we have not strength to reach it: but there is help near, Christ will calm the troubled sea and anchor you safely in the harbor of the blest. Trust Him for He is able to keep that which we have committed unto Him against that day.

II.

The person whom Christ receives. "Sinners".

This is the character of all men; this is the title we have received by inheritance from our first parents. It was conferred upon them in the Garden of Eden and has been handed down from generation to generation increasing in meaning and becoming more and more the proper term by which to designate humanity. For humanity has, like a huge snow-ball rolling down hill, added more and more to its load of sin with each succeeding generation.

They were said to be lost, ready to perish, guilty, condemned and helpless: they had broken the laws of God and death stared them in the face, it being the penalty of their crime: they stood in their condemnation, helpless to do anything to better their condition, ready to perish and be lost forever. This was the state of humanity when Christ came into this world. Only Divine power could save them, could they have been recovered by any other means, He would not have come. If they had needed instruction only, the prophets might have sufficed, but He came to do that which prophets could not do - to destroy the works of the Devil, and to deliver his people from wrath to come. Christ receives.

1. **Convinced sinners.** Those who feel convinced in their own hearts that it is their true service to present their bodies living sacrifices to God. Those who feel their

guilt and condemnation, and realize that in Christ alone can they find deliverance from their sin and unrighteousness.

How many there are to-day, who are standing in just this condition. In a condition that they feel as though they ought to give themselves to Christ; but for some reason that they cannot explain, do not yield up all they have to him. Why is it? Simply this: The devil has not entirely been exterminated from their hearts. They are standing on neutral ground which is a dangerous place to be, they are trying to serve two masters, which we know, is an impossible thing to do, they cannot serve them equally. One is sure to receive a little more attention, a little better service than the other. In life we must stick to one thing if we would make a success of any. If we would serve God, we must give Him all of our service, all of our love and devotion. We must surrender every thing to Him, and keep nothing in reserve for the devil. The natural propensity of man is toward the devil. So, if we let him have even a portion of our service, he will gradually undermine our good impulses, those, that lean toward Christ and that which is good; until he finally wins our whole service.

Now if you are convinced that Christ is your only help, your only Deliverer, why do you hesitate to let Him come in and rule within your heart? If you are convinced that He

is your only Saviour, surely He has come into your heart, and it is dangerous to leave him standing at your door knocking. Let Him come in and dwell with you and you will find in Him a loving companion.

2. Christ receives penitential sinners (Acts II-37)

Oh! for a penitent soul, one who is sorry for the past, and comes back and pleads with the Father for forgiveness. Those like the Prodigal who have tasted of the bitter cup of sin to the very dregs; those who have enjoyed the pleasure of sin for a season: but what a terrible re-action they have experienced. The devil may lead us in a great many seemingly pleasant places, but they are false. For were there outside cloaks to be removed, we would see in them the very depths of hell. How many glittering beautiful things we see, yet within whose walls are crime and death. The devil leads us for a while, but his leadership is poor, and soon we waste our substance with riotous living and begin to want. Who ~~cannot~~ help us then? Does the devil give us any comfort? No. And those who were our friends in prosperity turn their backs upon us now, and refuse to help us or shelter us from the storms.

What can we do? There is one thing to do. The words of the prodigal tell us what that is. 'I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned

against Heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me one of thy hired servants."

This is an example of what to do. Go to the Father with a penitent heart, and He will receive you and rejoice because of your return.

"When the father saw him, he ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And they all began to be merry". The father waits to-day for the penitent sinner and receives him to himself with out-stretched arms.

A penitent sinner like the publican who went into the Temple to pray. These are his words "God be merciful to me, a sinner." Instead of telling God the things - which he esteemed good that he did, he realized that he was a sinner at the most, and prayed God to have compassion on him. Did God receive him? Yes. He went out of the Temple justified for he had humbled himself before God. And it is the promise of God, that "he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted." We must humble ourselves before Christ. How humble and small we consider ourselves when in the presence of some high official, or in the presence of someone of noble birth. We are glad even to be permitted to look at them, as they pass by, and are willing to do anything to gain this privilege.

Yet the Son of God to whom we owe all that we are, we refuse to humble ourselves enough to confess him.

3. Christ receives the vilest sinners. None are too vile to be saved for Christ is able to save unto the uttermost. Many there are who feel that they have led such wicked lives, that they have strayed so far from the right path and sinned against God and Christ in such terrible ways, that they are beyond redemption, beyond all hope of reconciliation. But not so, there is a way to eternal life, open for each one of us. No matter what our past life may have been, that has been blotted out by the great sacrifice made for all; and if we show by our future life that we intend to be followers of Jesus, then we are saved from the wrath of God on a par with everyone else.

It is a serious question that confronts the minds of so many sinners. They do not understand that Christ died for all, not an elect few. He died for the slave as well as the king, without respect to persons is salvation given.

It is given to the vilest as well as to the most virtuous. Even a man who has spent many years of his life in a business which has helped to bring humanity lower into the depths of sin, he can be saved if he will seek the narrow way and live henceforth in the fear of God, keeping his commandments. That man who has been behind the prison bars, who has brought a stain upon his character which will stick to him as long as life lasts, can be saved.

Even though he may be looked upon and pointed at with scorn, still in Jesus he finds a friend who will forgive all past sins. The one who he has sinned against the most is the first one to grant him pardon, if he will but ask for it. So we see, that all can be saved, every one from the greatest to the lowest of mankind. It now lies entirely with us. The gift is free and can be had for the asking.

III

The design of his receiving them.

Christ's design of saving man was glorious, magnificent in itself. It was to save him in time and through all eternity, to raise him from the mire into which he was sinking deeper and deeper, and to plant him upon the solid rock of eternal hope. It was to put man in a position to spend eternity in fellowship with himself.

1. To pardon and justify. "Go and sin no more". John 8-11

Is not the spirit of perfect forgiveness embodied in these words. How many times these words brought gladness into the heart of many who came to Jesus to be healed. But we have the same words to-day, although not spoken in our hearing by his holy lips; yet we have them in his Holy word.

Christ did not die for man to glorify himself. No. He did not think of himself, but sacrificed everything ~~to~~^{for} to redeem man from his fallen estate, and to justify him in the sight of God. He left heaven with all its glories, all its

angelic companionship, and condescended to come and dwell with man in order that he might purchase his pardon, and having purchased this pardon, he receives man into himself and pardons all his transgressions, blots all those black lines from his character, which have been brought there by years of sin and crime, and makes ~~them~~^{it} as white as the purest snow. He gives us as it were a clean white page upon which to start again, in exchange for the soiled and unkept record of the past.

2. To adopt us into his family and give to us all the privileges of his people.

"To as many as received him, to them he gave power (or the privilege) to become sons of God even to them that believe on His name." John I - 12.

What would we think if some great king or ruler should tell us that by believing on him, we would become adopted into his family and receive all the privileges connected with his station in life? We would esteem it too good to be true, we would not be able to show our appreciation enough for his kind offer. Yet we do not esteem the offer of Christ so highly when this is just what Christ offers to us.

It was his design to make man his brother, and to give to him all the privileges of Heaven. Is not the design glorious? Think of being admitted into the great circle

round about the Throne in company with Jesus. We can then see Him who bore our sins, we can then see the nailprints in His hands. We can see all the prophets and overcomers of ages ago, who did so much to uphold the banner of Jesus Christ during its darkest times; we can see Paul, the great Preacher of Christ, and John to whom those beautiful Revelations were given. Is it not a glorious privilege which Christ has given us.

And in addition to the company of all these Divines, we have the privilege of being in the company of all the overcoming saints of these latter days. Oh! just think of that glorious, greatest, most sublime of all reunions, when we shall have passed through that misty vale into the light of eternal glory which crowns the Home of the blest, when time shall be no more. That reunion which will never be broken, being bound together with angelic love. No more tears shed over broken vows, no more visits to that cemetery, which almost broke our heart strings, no more pain and sorrow, no more battle for position; but all bliss and harmony; perfect love and obedience.

This is the family into which we are adopted by Christ, for had He not purchased it for us instead of enjoying all of these sublime privileges, we would be in the midst of torment, contention, and strife; through all eternity, Christ's

design was to save man from all this, and to give him the joys of heavenly mansion instead.

To take away that sting of death and power of the grave which so many of us dread; teaching us to look upon one whose earthly frame is laid to its eternal resting place, as being born into that family beyond. A loss to us, but a gain to Him. It was Christ who gave to these words their great power. "Oh! Death, where is thy sting! Oh, Grave! where is thy victory?" For He stands just on the other side of the grave waiting to receive us unto himself.

We are certain of such a reception. It was the design of His incarnation and death, it was proved by the gracious declarations of His holy word. "For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost." He came down from Heaven to save us, He suffered and died and rose again to save us. And now He sits at the right hand of God - having accomplished His mission - waiting to receive sinners, to pardon, justify and adopt them into His family. He waits to-day with outstretched arms, and having assurance that Christ will save us if we will but believe, and knowing the rewards and blessings of this reception, is it not our reasonable service to present our bodies living sacrifices unto Him?

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Written by God's help at Peck's Institute Nov. 1897