

Christ's invitation to sinners

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[0 : 00] This evening I have a very lovely text for you, for your meditation, for your salvation. It is found in verse 28 through to verse 30 of Matthew chapter 11.

The words of the Savior, 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. It is interesting to observe that these words, perhaps the words of the greatest gospel invitation, were spoken by the Lord Jesus in the time of his rejection.

Even John the Baptist seemed to have entertained some serious doubt about the identity of Jesus of Nazareth.

[1 : 35] Art thou he that should come, or are we to look for another? This gave the Lord the opportunity of commending John the Baptist in his life and in his ministry.

And showing that amongst the prophets of the Lord, none had arisen who would have greater name or fame than John the Baptist.

However that may be, the Lord Jesus showed the truth of his own personal mission into this world, demonstrating to the disciples of John, who had been sent to Jesus on that mission of inquiry, he demonstrated to them the miracles that he had performed, and the results of his ministry.

But how be it, there were whole cities who had rejected the Christ of God. There was Chorazin, there was Bethsaida, there were Tyre and Sidon and Capernaum, and Jesus condemned them for having refused him and for having rejected his message and testimony.

He said that in the day of judgment, it would be more tolerable for these cities of the plain like Sodom than for those cities of Capernaum and Bethsaida and Chorazin.

[3 : 35] In his condemnation of those cities for rejecting him, it is also interesting to note the doctrines which the Lord Jesus brings into the foreground.

He speaks of the doctrine of repentance. He said, if the mighty works which were done in Chorazin and Bethsaida had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

He brings in the doctrine of the day of judgment. It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you.

Thou Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell. He introduces the solemn subject of that place of everlasting torment, the place of hell.

He said that it would be more tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgment than for the city of Capernaum. If we were to make an application of this, we could refer to the cities of the kingdom of Great Britain and the city of God.

[5 : 19] In which city God from time to time was pleased to manifest his saving grace, his saving power in the conversion of many sinners to the Lord Jesus.

but that which was a savor of life unto so many was also a savor of death to multitudes of others who failed to respond to the gospel of the grace of God.

So it has been in every age. And cities like Glasgow and Edinburgh and Aberdeen, cities like Belfast and Londonderry in Northern Ireland who have known the power of the gospel of Christ in salvation.

It will be more tolerable for many of the cities of the Old Testament that fell under the stroke of God's judgment than for those cities in which multitudes failed to respond to the power and the saving grace of the Lord Jesus.

And it is good to reflect that the subjects introduced by the Lord Jesus in his condemnation of Chorazin and Bethsaida and Capernaum are still subjects that have relevance in the teaching and preaching of the whole counsel of God.

[7 : 19] They are subjects which are not being treated of in these days of spiritual declension. Where and when do we hear the doctrine of repentance being urged upon the sinners of mankind?

Where do we hear the truth of the day of judgment being enforced upon congregations in these days? where do we hear the Savior's teaching on the solemn subject of a lost eternity being told forth in all its seriousness?

My dear friends these are the things that Jesus spoke of prior to his giving this marvelous invitation to sinners come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden for I will give you rest.

And I can see the Savior's method in this for surely there is every inducement for sinners to rise up and come to Jesus when you consider the enforcement of a repentance upon them when you consider that there is a day of judgment which God has established that there is the place held to which guilty unrepentant sinners will be fated for all eternity.

But in the interval in this day of grace the invitation is sounded forth to sinners to rise up and to come to Jesus.

[9 : 40] may I say that incidentally the Lord Jesus introduced the doctrine of election and predestination that which we attempted to handle this morning for Jesus said I thank thee O Father Lord of heaven and earth because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes even so Father for so it seemed good in thy sight.

What is the electing and predestinating grace of God but that which is done according to what is good in his sight?

and it pleased the Father to conceal these truths from those who considered themselves wise and prudent God turned away from them and it is his good pleasure to reveal them unto babes because the kingdom of God is to be received as a little child.

It behoves sinners to beware that by their constant rejection of the light of the gospel that God turns from them and hence forward hides the truth from them but those who come in a childlike faith they will receive the explanation of the gospel of Christ the gospel will be ministered to them in the power of the Holy Spirit there will be such pleadings and urgings by the Spirit of God that they can do no other than respond and rise up and come to Jesus and have the revelation of God the Father given unto them oh the great question is do you know of God has

God the Father been revealed to you the great question is have you come to Jesus have you rest of soul have you the peace of God in your heart have you taken upon you the yoke of Christ those who have understanding scholarly understanding of the word of God teach us that this section of the word of God carries with it the savor of the gospel according to Saint John that this section of Matthew 11 verses 25 to 30 has a very definite

[13 : 24] Johannine emphasis we know that the study of the gospel according to Saint John becomes the study of the Lord Jesus revealing God the Father God the Father it is a study which reveals Jesus and the individual Jesus revealing God the Father to the individual soul the study of the gospel of John accords with this passage in Matthew because of the many invitations which Jesus issues in that gospel he said him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and

I will give you rest this passage reminds me of the experience of King David when in a similar situation of rejection by the people of Israel David departed and escaped to the cave at Dolem and when his brethren and all his father's house heard it they went down thither to him and everyone that was in distress everyone that was in debt everyone that was discontented gathered themselves to David and he became captain over them and he led them forth was unto them that which proved to be their help and their deliverance now the

Lord Jesus is despised and rejected of men he came unto his own and his own received him not but to as many as received him to them give he the power to become the sons of God even to them that believe in his name we dealt with this last Lord's Day evening and here we come upon it again the Christ of God is either received or rejected just as David in the time of his rejection received all who came unto him so the Lord Jesus now rejected by this world will receive all who come to him let them be in distress let them be in debt to the penalty of

God's laws let them be discontented in their hearts and minds if they but come to the feet of the Lord Jesus they will find rest for their souls so the people that would not have him but rather

disowned him and rejected him treated him as a blasphemer and an imposter still in the gospel narrative there is the account of those who came to the Savior and who received his grace and venturing upon him were saved with an everlasting salvation how is it with you my dear friend have you come to the Savior for

Jesus reveals the Father to all who come to him and what can this mean but this that if you rise up and come God is true to his word which he spoke through Isaiah the prophet I will be a father unto you and ye shall be my children Jesus reveals the father and perhaps the greatest word in the gospel prefaces this invitation which the Savior issues come unto me these words show that Jesus is the source of rest and peace of heart and conscience the words indeed vibrate with his sympathy and compassion for sinners those who are invited are the laboring and the heavy laden which refers to spiritual burdens to spiritual concerns ah the worldly person who has plunged himself into all that the world can give in the way of pleasure isn't so burdened the person who is filled with worldly ambition has no concern for his soul

[19 : 25] I listen to the empty laughter and to the empty mirth of this world and it is that empty laughter and that empty mirth that conceals the emptiness of heart and the uneasiness of conscience the psalmist says that the laughter of fools is like the crackling of thorns under a pot you know that when you light a fire of thorns there is loud crackling which is only momentary and then the fire goes out such is the pleasure of the world it is not abiding it does not last it is soon extinguished it soon vanishes but oh the soul that has risen up and come to the

Lord Jesus and has obtained rest of heart and conscience and mind and knows the peace of God within his soul and heart it is that soul who has found true pleasure for I can assure you that the pleasures of a forgiven soul so far excel the pleasures of the worldling as the heavens are higher than the earth earth so those that are burdened with guilt and have the pangs of a guilt laden conscience may rise up and come to Jesus their experience of being ill at ease will soon be remedied when the Christ of God speaks the word of gospel peace into that troubled conscience the spiritual experience of

Murray McShane is preserved in one of his matchless poems he was a young man who found a pleasure in the pursuit of worldly things he tells how he used to be stricken in conscience as he was going out for a night's pleasure when his older brother would look grief stricken upon him that touched his heart often to see his brother grieving over the way he was living he tells in this poem when free grace awoke me by light from on high then legal fear shook me I trembled to die no refuge no safety in self could I see Jehovah said can you my savior must be and it is when a soul is thus trembling before

God the God of judgment that Jesus calls that soul to him come to me and you will find rest for your soul love the more unawakened sinner strives against his inward corruptions the more they seem to increase and the burden seems to become all the more intolerable this is conviction of sin personal conviction of sin you've heard of John Chenick the Moravian preacher John Chenick who worked in association with George Whitefield and the Wesleyans and who saw many sinners broken down under the power of this gracious invitation of the savior his own personal experience was this my grief and burden long have been because

I could not cease from sin the more I strove against its power I sinned and stumbled but the more till late I heard the savior say come hither soul I am the way glad I come and thou blessed lamb shall take me to thee as I am nothing but sin have I to give nothing but love shall I receive John Chenick found rest for his soul at the feet of the Lord Jesus ah there is the burden of guilt and of sin and the burden of conviction but there is also the burden of law works for sinners who are awakened to their sinnerhood they strive to rid themselves of this load by attempting to fulfill the demands of

[25 : 21] God's holy and righteous law but this is an impossibility it is totally impossible for a sinner to keep the whole of God's law if we offend in one point alone the word of God tells us we are guilty of transgressing it all those who seek salvation by fulfilling the works of the law are on the wrong track altogether that is not God's way of salvation it is not by works of righteousness which we have done but according to his mercy that he saves us and where do we obtain this mercy where but at the feet of the Lord

Jesus and we cannot obtain it until we come to him approaching him and taking up that mercy as he bestows it there is the burden of the native corruption and wickedness of the human heart how can you get rid of that how can a sinner get rid of a heart that is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked that is unsearchably wicked to such the Lord Jesus speaks the word come

come unto me and I will give you rest he will take away the stony heart out of the flesh and he will give you a heart of flesh he will give you a new heart the burden of sorrow and of loneliness and affliction to all such the Lord Jesus speaks he says come to me and

I will give you rest the wonderful thing is that the Christ of God is so very approachable read the gospels see the number of those who came to the Savior who approached him he gladly received them he loved them he saved them he spoke words of peace and counsel and help to them this grand old text come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden for I will give you rest this grand old text I say defies exposition there are no depths no height to it it is totally unfathomable and no added light can make the sun more glorious and neither can any added explanation make this text more full than what it is come to the

Savior and you have his assurance him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out come to him then for the saving of your soul come to him for the forgiveness of your sins come to him for the revelation of God of God the father and you will be received as the very child of God let us pray we thank thee oh God our heavenly father that it has pleased thee that we should live in an age of gospel enlightenment and of gospel preaching and we pray of thee oh Lord that our understanding of thy truth may be imparted to us we pray that thy grace may illumine our hearts that there may be revealed to us such a view of the

Lord Jesus in all his grace and glory that we can do no other than come to him to his very feet and kneeling before him receive all that his gracious hand gives it to us peace of heart and rest of soul and conscience and the revelation of God the Father do this this evening oh God we pray of thee and establish thy people in the true grace of God we ask it for Jesus sake Amen