

THE LORD'S FAVORITE WORD COME

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It has often been said that good things come in small packages. It may also be claimed that sublime truth is often expressed in simple words. I once heard a theological student say his greatest ambition as a preacher would be to shower his congregation with the spray from an oceanic vocabulary! That young man devoted time each day to the learning and use of new words. Most ministers would prefer to utter one meaningful sentence than to speak for an hour and say nothing. Christians believe that Jesus was the Master of everything—including speech. Had He desired. He could have delivered orations that would have dumbfounded the most educated Pharisees. When the Lord spoke. "they were astonished and said. Whence hath this man this wisdom. and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren. James and Joseph. and Simon. and Judas'? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?" (Matt. 13:54-56).

It seems strange that one of the longest words Jesus used was "whosoever." and the one He liked best was "Come." He invited His disciples to "come and see" (John 1:39). "come and drink" (John 7:37), "come and dine" (John 21:12).' The Lord asked all kinds of people to come, and some of the Bible's most delightful stories describe folk who gladly accepted His invitation. Even before babies understand words, they recognize the meaning conveyed by the outstretched arms of a mother. Constantly Jesus had pleasure in asking people to come to Him, and He has never changed. A simple acrostic is self-explanatory—Christ Offers Me Everything.

Come and Rest

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Matt. 11:28).

This challenging promise was one of the Lord's greatest statements. If there were nothing more to support His claim to deity, this brief utterance would be enough.

Consider Its Simplicity ... "Come"

I have seen people in India and other parts of the world attempting to perform the impossible, and when I asked why they

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did such things, I was told, "I hope to please God and be forgiven." Pilgrims travel to distant shrines, desperate men flog themselves in their search for peace, and every Easter men in the Philippines are crucified in the hope of obtaining forgiveness. The Savior said, "Come unto me," and this is possible at any time, in any part of the world. There is no charge to pay. no promise to make, and nothing to do except come.

Consider Its Scope ... "All"

"All ye that labour and are heavy laden." Oppression, misery, and despondency afflict all people. Money cannot buy everything and sorrow invades the life of everybody. The doors of a palace cannot exclude it; great wealth cannot prevent it. Education may influence a man's mind but cannot guarantee immunity from grief. Unrest is universal, therefore the promise of Christ was meant for all people irrespective of creed, color, or nationality. Consider Its Sufficiency ... "Rest"

Jesus said, "I will give you rest." Wise men offer advice and wealthy people financial assistance, but only Jesus can give rest. The Savior is able to relieve a tortured conscience and calm a

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troubled soul. Jesus of Nazareth has been approached by millions of distressed souls, and not one came to Him in vain. The same love that welcomed children cares for the sick, the aged, and the dying.

Come and Renew

And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. And he said unto them. Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile: for there were many coming and going. and they had no leisure so much as to eat (Mark 6:30-32).

The disciples were enthusiastic. They had completed their missionary itinerary but could hardly believe what had been accomplished. Sick people had been healed, the blind given sight, and the response to their teaching had been phenomenal. Large crowds had attended their meetings, but now they were in danger of overestimating their own importance. Satan had been given the greatest shock of his life! "Lord," they exclaimed, "even the devils were subject unto us!"

Jesus smiled. He knew them better than they knew themselves. To use modern terms, their lights were shining brightly. but they were in danger of draining their batteries! Crowds of people were waiting expectantly. questions were being asked, and sick folk were clamoring for attention. There was no time for a meal! The Lord said, "Follow me," and led them to a secluded place in the wilderness. His followers were shocked. "Master, the devil is almost vanquished. Let's finish him off before he recovers. If God be for us, who can be against us'? A couple more days and our followers will exceed the Romans. The kingdom can be established, and you will be the King of Kings." The Savior probably answered, "Sit down and enjoy your food." He was calm and peaceful: it appeared He had all the time in the world. "Master, what about the lame and the blind and the others?" He replied, "What about them'? They will be here tomorrow. Just lie down, take a deep breath and dream about the future." Then as darkness began to cover the area, he fell asleep. and with nothing left to do, they emulated His example. Jesus was trying to impart wisdom to men whose enthusiasm could be dangerous. It is unwise to burn a candle at both ends! The disciples needed to learn that lesson. When Christ commands people to work, it is sinful to disobey. When He says, "Stop and rest," it is foolish to work harder. Satan does not resent people working for the Lord as long as their labor is ineffective. He prefers to attend their funeral than to listen to their testimony. Unfortunately, many of God's children work until they drop. They forget the command: "Be still and know that I am God." Excessive work leads to stress, tension, irritability, and anger. People become upset. It is difficult to live with them and remain undisturbed. They hurt other people, and their happiness is ruined. The only cure for that kind of sickness is to go out into the country with God and stay there until the fever subsides. Some young preachers cannot understand how the church existed for almost two thousand years without their aid! Every Christian worker needs to recharge his batteries by being connected continually to the Source of all power. The poet said: "Oh, to be nothing, nothing, simply to lie at His feet. A broken and emptied vessel for the Master's use made meet.

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Come and Reason

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though

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they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool (Isa. 1:18).

Isaiah preached during the reign of four kings. but his counsel had a mixed reception. Uzziah, Jothan, and Hezekiah did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but Ahaz pleased himself. Unfortunately, the nation tried to walk in two directions at the same time and succeeded in getting nowhere! They professed to love God but worshiped idols and offered incense in the shrines of the nation.

I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider (Isa. 1:2-3).

How Fair

Had Israel been rejected, they could not have complained: they were unfaithful. God had treated them as His children, but they had been rebellious. The animals were more intelligent than their owners. They knew how to return to their stalls, but the Jews forgot their Benefactor. Nevertheless, the Lord was willing to consider their complaints and pardon their behavior. He invited them to consider what they had done. He was the giver of every good and perfect gift, but Israel remained ungrateful.

How Fortunate

"I have nourished and brought up children." Israel had not been strangers to the Almighty; they belonged to His family. Throughout their history they had been protected from enemies; there were no reasons to justify their conduct; God would listen and do what He could to correct their grievances. It was extremely fortunate for the tribes that it could be said: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him" (Ps. 103:13). If God had not sustained His people, they would have perished. God's love was indestructible, and that is true today. To those who have lost their fellowship, He continues to say, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings" (Jer. 3:22).

How Forgiving

though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

It is difficult to understand the greatness of God's mercy. Our tolerance of sinners would not equal His. Jehovah was considered to be a harsh and frightening God. To believe Him to be a Father welcoming sinners was something new. God was not an austere deity waiting to pounce upon transgressors. He was, as Jesus described, the Father of prodigals.

Come and Rejoice

Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world (Matt. 25:34).

At the end of his career Paul wrote: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8). Among the nations of the world it is customary after any great victory for the participating soldiers to parade before their commander-in-chief. Some men who distinguished themselves on the field of battle are given the highest honors offered by their country. Paul believed the greatest of all parades will take place "when the saints go marching in."

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Unfortunately not all Christians will be rewarded for gallantry. The apostle expected to be given a crown of righteousness, and John, writing to the churches of Asia, mentioned other crowns available to those who earn them. The Savior was definitive when He spoke about a kingdom prepared and planned from before the beginning of time. It was surprising that he spoke of feeding the hungry, giving water to thirsty people, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, and helping people in prison. He said these were the deeds meriting rewards. He never mentioned dynamic preaching, great fame within the church, convincing oratory, or generous gifts to worthy organizations.

Then shall the righteous answer him saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or
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naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me (Matt. 25:37-40).

Many people will be surprised when they stand before the throne of God. Some who expect great recognition may be disappointed. Others anticipating nothing, may receive crowns. When Christ spoke about that glittering occasion. He introduced his message by saying. "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Blessed are they who can confidently say:

Oh that will be glory for me, glory for me, glory for me:
When by His grace I shall look on His face,
That will be glory, be glory for me.

1. Ivor Powell, John's Wonderful Gospel (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1986). 44-46.

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