

WHEN THE WORLD IS ON FIRE

And Other Evangelistic Messages

by Hyman J. Appelman

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CHAPTER EIGHT

An Old Testament Invitation

"Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters. and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David" (Isaiah 55:1-3).

This is by far the greatest, the choicest, the clearest invitation from GOD to the hearts of men in the entire Old Testament.

It is parallel to that other great invitation in the New Testament, "**Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest**" (Matthew 11:28). In order to appreciate this compassion for their desperate condition, you must know that GOD is so anxious for the children of men to understand His will for their welfare that He exhausts (and I speak reverently) even His own ability to use language in pressing upon the souls of the children of men the burning pleadings of His own great soul that they might turn, and repent, and find rest for their souls.

In this invitation, you will see four tremendous truths.

First, there is the INVITATION.

Second, there is the EXPOSITION.

Third, there is the SOLICITATION.

Fourth, there is the COMPENSATION.

The outline is borrowed from some book I read, or from some preacher I heard. I cannot remember which. I pretend no originality. It is not my purpose to hold myself aloft as a great preacher. It is my concern that the Word of GOD be pressed upon your heart and stressed to your attention.

I. Let us first consider, therefore, the INVITATION

Who are the invited? Search the Scriptures. Go through the Old Testament. Cover the New Testament. Listen to the appeals of the prophets. Hear the words of the Lord JESUS CHRIST. Pay attention to the message of the apostles. You will find that they are all unanimous in their pleading appeals to

- the needy,
- the thirsty,
- the hungry,
- the tremulous,
- the poor,
- the diseased,
- the lame,
- the halt,
- the blind.

There is very little in the Bible directed to the affluent, the powerful, the prosperous, the prominent of this earth to them it seems that GOD directs most of His warnings, while it is to the oppressed, the repressed, the suppressed, the depressed of this earth that GOD has most to say in the way of pleading, passionate benediction.

The world doesn't invite folks like that.

The world doesn't want the outcasts, the outlaws, the down-and-outs, the people who are born on the wrong side of the tracks.

The world has a price for everything it gives:

- You pay a hundred times, yea, a thousand times over for the tiniest bauble you get here upon earth.
- You pay for every second of happiness with minutes of toil.
- You pay for every minute of joy with days of pain.
- You pay for every hour of laughter with years of travail.

But this is not the way with GOD. GOD's bounties are free to all who will accept His invitation through the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

GOD's bounties are for those upon whom the world turns its self-righteous back. This invitation should evoke an echo in every thinking heart, in every thinking mind, in every crying, longing soul. GOD offers infinite superlative satisfaction for the taking.

Then, let us think about what we are invited to do. It says in this text, "**. . . come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.**"

That is the invitation:

- We are invited to drink the waters of life.
- We are invited to partake of the wine of GOD's joy.

- We are invited to quaff deeply of the milk of GOD's benediction.

These terms unquestionably include all the temporal and spiritual blessings that any of us may need in time or eternity. Just remember what GOD has for us. There is nothing else that can satisfy the guilty conscience, the longing heart, the yearning soul.

You will find only too soon that this world cannot content you. It may for a while. It may for hours, for days, or even for a few years, but there comes a reckoning, and you pay in bitter repentance and remorse for everything you have partaken of at the spread-out table of the world's banqueting.

The best that you get here upon this earth carries a sting, a joker. It is not what it pretends to be. There is too much tinsel, too much false fire, too much fool's gold about it. You may dance to the tune, if you wish, but you will have to pay the piper.

The price is too high for the little joy that you get out of it.

But, when you come to GOD

- there is the ambrosia and nectar;
- there is the bread and the water of life;
- there is the fullness of the abundance of GOD's grace.

None of GOD's mercies carry in them any sort of a sting. They are not polished up to represent themselves as what they are not. They are just exactly what they appear to be, only more so. GOD always gives good measure, pressed down, running over. You need not hesitate for one single second to pay the highest price GOD asks you. You will find in the end that you have obtained a bargain, a great bargain. The values of GOD will not only suffice you for the moment, or for the passing fashion, but for eternity.

You will never regret that with which you parted in order to obtain that which GOD so abundantly bestows upon you.

Consider next the manner of the invitation.

First, it is earnest. Listen to the cry of GOD! It seems to be torn out of His very heart. It seems that He bends down from the heavens and says, "Ho! Stop! Wait. Look. Listen."

The very fact of its repetition is a definite sign of its earnestness, of the anxious desire of GOD that we give heed to His admonition, to His appeal. Were we a hundredth part, yea, a thousandth part as earnest as GOD is for our welfare, everyone who is reading the words of this sermon would flee from the wrath of GOD to the love of GOD, closing with His anxious, Blood-written, Cross-offered mercy.

The invitation is not only earnest, but it is serious.

Someone has counted the word "**come**" as it appears in the Bible and has reported that it is there

642 times. Six hundred and forty-two times GOD uses that invitation, "**Come.**"

GOD knows our condition, our position, our peril, our condemnation. He is anxious for us to turn about face. Could we see ourselves as GOD sees us, the horrors of our situation would be the greatest invitation that could possibly be presented to us.

There would be no question, then, of agonizing to get people to come to church, let alone to get them to accept the Lord JESUS as their personal Saviour. There just cannot be any over-exaggeration of the necessity for the plan of redemption, for the provisions of GOD's grace, for the anxiety with which the HOLY SPIRIT portrays them and offers them to us.

The invitation is not only earnest, it is not only serious, but it is also general.

Thank GOD for that! Everyone is invited. There is no such thing as race difference or race hatred with GOD. GOD is not class-minded. There are no capital and labor factions in the courts of glory.

All mankind is urged to come to the fountain flowing from the throne of GOD's grace:

- There are no such things as national barriers.
- There are no mental qualifications.
- There are no moral degrees.

The convict in his jail cell, the queen in her dainty dressing room, and the harlot in her den of assignation, all others in between, are included in the words of this text. You need not hesitate; you need not question; you need not doubt. The words mean YOU! Every single, solitary one of you, without exception!

The invitation is not only earnest, it is not only general, but it is absolutely, totally, unqualifiedly free.

The things of GOD in CHRIST, the things of salvation, the things of eternal life, are above price, beyond price, without price. The very thought of paying for them, either before accepting them or after you have come into their estate, would make a cheap huckster out of GOD and minimize the matchless value of the precious Blood of the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

- Not by penance,
- nor by prayers,
- nor by toil,
- nor by Blood,
- nor by tears,
- nor by any sort of personal effort, is it expected of us to attain, to obtain, or even to retain the grace of GOD.

It is all the free gift of GOD's love available to us on the simple terms of the Gospel, repentance toward GOD and faith in the Lord JESUS CHRIST. It is hard to understand, harder to believe! Our own devilish pride stands in the way. Our own hellish stubbornness bedims our minds. We

want to do something for GOD. We are loathe to become beggars of GOD's bounties.

Remember this: Far so long as eternity shall stand, you cannot buy anything from GOD. You cannot earn anything of GOD's. All His blessings are free for the asking, free for the taking.

SIN LEADS TO DEATH

II. But, let us go on to the EXPOSTULATION. "**Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?**"

Sin is laborious, spending for things that will perish with using. When we get it, what do we have? We have to leave it all behind. It turns to ashes, to gall, to bitter wormwood. There is no need of elaborating on that. We have all learned it only too bitterly and, alas, too well.

Go out into the highways and byways of life. Watch the faces of the devotees of Satan. See how strained they are. See what efforts they put forth in order to obtain the things of this world, when in their sober moments they know that everything they do get will result in their harm, in their loss, in their spiritual death.

The way of the transgressor is hard. The wicked are like the troubled sea. The devil has no bargains. You pay a thousand times over for every bauble that you obtain in his market place. He cannot even give you a deed in fee simple. He has no control over life, over death, over eternity. Only GOD has that.

Sin is costly, more costly than any and every other pursuit, more expensive than any and every other engagement of life.

It costs everything - character, influence, reputation, time, health, love, home, money. Finally, it costs the soul and Heaven itself. "**For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?**"

On top of that, you must remember - oh! I beseech you to remember - that the devil cannot, that the devil does not, that the devil will not ever give anyone the whole world in exchange for his soul. He bought Judas for thirty pieces of silver. Before that time and since that time he has been buying the eternal welfare of mankind, sometimes for even less than that.

Examine what the devil has to offer you and you will find that it is shoddy, that there is nothing to it, that it is not even worth one millionth of the price that the devil asks for it, that it is painted up and perfumed over to make it attractive, that there is nothing solid about it.

Sin is extremely unsatisfying.

There is nothing in sin that contents for any length of time. It is bitter, biting, blighting. It blights like the burning furnace, like the blazing noontide heat. It brings pains to the body, pangs to the heart, punishment to the soul. It is a whip of scorpions by day, a nightmare by night, the shadow of an inevitable doom hanging like the sword of Damocles over the head of the sinner. You lose yourself far awhile in its hectic preoccupation, but as soon as the moments of enchantment are

over, there comes the bitter sting of repentance, of remorse, of biting memories.

The most horrible thing about sin is that it is so universally and inescapably deadly.

It kills, without regard of person or position. It kills the young. It destroys the old. There is nothing holy for it. There is nothing sacred to it. Satan and sin encroach into the very sanctities of life, staining them with their slimy trails. That the wages of sin is death is recognized throughout the world. That the soul that sinneth must face punishment and eternal condemnation is written in the warp and woof of all mankind, civilized and uncivilized, Christian and unbelieving.

Eternal punishment, the flaming torments of hell, were originally, according to GOD's Word, prepared for the devil and his angels. Since then, however, hell has become peopled and is still being filled with the gainsayers, the unbelieving, the overt transgressors of GOD's laws and requirements.

Remember, O sinner friend, as you go on thwarting the will of GOD, that a day of reckoning is coming, that there is a judgment to face, that there is an accounting to render, that the flames of the lake of fire and brimstone are reserved for those who turn their backs on this mighty invitation of GOD.

THE HEAVENLY CALL

III. There is also in this text a SOLICITATION.

It is the mighty soul concern of GOD that we accept this wonderful, Blood-written invitation. "**Hearken diligently unto me.**"

It is an urgent appeal, to men and women in imminent danger. You are on the road to destruction. You are headed for perdition. Here is the way out. "**Incline your ear, and come unto me.**"

The voices of the world are so clamorous, so fascinating, so inviting, that one is in constant danger of missing the heavenly call. That is why GOD pleads so often with us, here and elsewhere, "**Hear, and your soul shall live.**" Scan the pages of the Bible. See how many times in it we are commanded to hear. JESUS Himself said, "**Take heed that ye hear.**" If you hear, you will heed. If you heed, you will receive. If you receive, you will live.

There can be no doubt in anyone's mind about the anxiety of GOD for the welfare of His creatures. Too many times and in too many different ways has GOD shown His passionate-hearted concern for the souls of men. Nature is dotted with the invitations of GOD.

The Bible is just one long cry from the Lord. Every drop of Blood of JESUS CHRIST on Calvary's Cross is an echoing "Amen" and "Amen" to the invitations of nature, of Providence, of Scripture, to turn to GOD and live.

It seems to me that when a sinner does go to hell,

- it is only because he knocks GOD out of the way;
- it is only because he crucifies CHRIST afresh;
- it is only because he stomps in the very face of the HOLY SPIRIT.

There is no one in the entire world who knows more about your plight than does GOD. It is because of His certain knowledge that He is so solicitous for your welfare. With all my soul I beseech you, hear GOD and live.

ETERNAL BLISS PROMISED

IV. The last thing in this wonderful text is the COMPENSATION.

"Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live."

The compensation is life, eternal life. You may have it. You will have it if you accept this wondrous invitation of GOD, if you will step out on the mercies and the promises of the Almighty outlined in these brief verses of Scripture. Here is life for the asking. Here is life for the taking. Here is life for the enjoying. Here is life right here on earth, the fullness of GOD's grace and the life that is everlasting. Here is life throughout an endless eternity, a life of reigning and rejoicing with the Lord JESUS CHRIST. Oh, I plead with you, close with it!

In this matchless superlative life, this life that neither the world, nor the flesh, nor the devil can give, there is, first of all, the forgiveness of your sins.

You cannot really be said to enjoy life as long as the thoughts of your sins beset you on every hand, as long as they trouble you during the day and torment you through the night.

In this offer, there is included the blotting out of every transgression, the removing of every iniquity, the washing away, in the shower of Calvary's Blood, of every blot, from now on - forever. It is GOD's prerogative to forgive sin. GOD alone forgives sin. He does it gladly, eagerly, fully through the Lord JESUS CHRIST. You may confess your sins to each other. You may make restitution. You may do all that is in your power to amend in the future, but you will never have the peace of GOD that passes all understanding or the fullness and abundance of Scriptural spiritual life until you repent of your sins before GOD, confess them to Him, and claim the shed Blood of JESUS CHRIST for your remission.

There is further, in this life contemplated in this text, not only the forgiveness of your sins but also the constant and abiding fellowship with the HOLY SPIRIT.

He is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. He will never lead you astray He will comfort you, sustain you, support you, supply your needs, teach you, encourage you, inspire you, lead you in the way of righteousness for GOD's Name's sake. He is one Friend you need never be troubled about as you carry on your days in and with Him. He is one Friend far whom you need never apologize. You can introduce Him into the chiefest, the highest, the richest, the most cultured circles. He who finds ought of fault in this Friend of yours is merely branding himself, placing himself, classifying himself with those who are in the devil's toils. You need the

friendship and fellowship of this HOLY SPIRIT. There are so many vicissitudes in life. There are so many uncertainties. There are so many hills to climb, so many rivers to Cross, so many oceans to traverse. There are so many Crosses to bear. There are so many dark places full of traps, of mysteries, of doubts, of fears. Here is a Guide who never falters. GOD offers Him to you in this invitation.

We have also in this compensation not only the forgiveness of our sins, not only the fellowship of the blessed Third Person of the Holy Trinity, the Vice-regent of GOD and CHRIST here upon this earth, *but also future glory*.

In no other way, in no other place, under no other condition, can you escape the torments of hell, can you enjoy the bliss of Heaven.

Heaven is GOD's realm. CHRIST has the keys to it. Read Revelation 1:18 to understand what I mean. JESUS said, "**I . . . have the keys of hell and of death.**"

- His Cross is the bridge across the flaming pit of Tophet.
- His Name is the title deed to the mansions of glory.
- His Blood is the purchase price that GOD requires for a home in bliss.

Even were GOD to exact of you a thousand times greater sacrifices than He has asked you to make, even if you were required to give up everything else in this world beside, still that would be a small price to pay for eternity with GOD in glory. Yet here GOD proffers it to you without money and without price.

The question then becomes: What will you do with this invitation? GOD is writing it upon your hearts. You cannot turn to the left hand or to the right. You cannot walk away from it.

It is not this humble preacher, not this poor preacher's appeal, but the very impact of the HOLY SPIRIT that insists, that demands, yea, commands you to choose between GOD and Satan, between life and death. The choice is yours.

- GOD has chosen for you a long time ago when He nailed His Son JESUS to the Cross.
- GOD has chosen for you a long time ago when He sent His HOLY SPIRIT into the world.
- GOD has chosen for you a long time ago when He caused men of old to write the Bible containing this and multiplied other invitations.
- GOD has been choosing for you, surrounding you with every blessing, with every benison, with every benediction, with every benefit of His mighty bounties.
- GOD has chosen for you when He spared your life instead of taking it the very first time you transgressed.
- GOD has chosen for you by bringing you to this hour and giving you this matchless opportunity.

Now, what will you do?

You cannot turn to the left hand or to the right. Decide you must. Decide you will. Before you finish reading these pages, you will have made a decision, perhaps for eternity. My prayer is, my

plea is, first to GOD for you, then to you for GOD, that you accept JESUS CHRIST as your personal Saviour right now, that you say "yes" to GOD this minute.

May the Lord in His compassionate grace give you the power - and He will, if you but ask Him - to say "no" to Satan and "yes" to the Saviour.

~ end of chapter 8 ~
