

# GOD'S ANSWER TO MAN'S SIN

by

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## CHAPTER THREE

### TAKING CHRIST'S PLACE

**"Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he showed them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained"** (John 20:19-23).

You WILL consider these five verses as my text, stressing especially the statement, **"As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."**

This is John's report of the Great Commission. You recall readily Matthew's statement, **"Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,"** and the rest of it. You will recall Mark's, **"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."** You will remember Luke's, **"Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."**

John's is the clearest, simplest, sweetest, most definite, most direct. As you analyze it, clearly, unmistakably, there surge into your mind three thoughts that will make up the outline for this humble message. First, What did Jesus Christ come to do? Second, What does Jesus Christ want us to do? Third, How are we going to do it?

#### I. WHAT DID JESUS CHRIST COME TO DO?

Why did He leave His glory home in heaven to come down to this earth, to limit Himself in man's estate to suffer, to bleed, to die? That is the mission of Christ. What was it? Hear the Spirit tell it. Hear the words of Jesus:

**"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."**

**“God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.”**

**“He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”**

Jesus came on a mission of revelation. He came to reveal the person, the passion, the purpose, the program, the power of the Father. He came to show that God was not some far off potentate exercising despotic authority over his unfortunate subjects, but a father-hearted, compassionate, yearning, loving parent brooding over the children of His heart. He came to show that it was the purpose of God not to condemn but to save a world of men. He came to show that God was ready, eager, anxious to go to any length to help, to keep, to sustain, to provide for the safety and the well-being of every one of us. But that is not all. Step out farther into the Word of God.

**“For the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”**

Jesus came on a mission of redemption. By the blood-sweat of Gethsemane, by the lonely agony of Calvary, by the cruel nails, by the sharp thorns, by the Roman spearhead, by the spilled blood, He came to redeem men from the slavery of Satan, from the wages of sin, from the curse of the law, from the wrath of God.

In His own dear body, He bore all of our sins that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. By His own cruel pains He freed us from the penalty that the justice of God had recorded against us in the books of eternity. He tasted the pangs of death that we might live forevermore. He slept in the narrow grave that it might form a doorway for us into glory. He sipped the bitter cup of hell that the burning pit might be bridged over for us.

But even that is not all. Come a little farther. How read ye?

**“The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”**

**“For it pleased the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell; and having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself . . . and you, that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight.”**

Jesus came on a mission of reconciliation. Between us and God there stood the barrier, the burden, the mountain, the river, the swollen ocean of our sins. We were enemies of God, aliens to the commonwealth of Israel. By His fearful death on the cross, Jesus removed that burden, tunneled that mountain, bridged that river, split that ocean.

There is a highway between us and the heart of God, a royal way, a red way, the way of the blood- stained cross that leads home to God and glory. By the awful work on Golgotha's gory ground, Jesus provided for our reconciliation to God.

The mission of revelation is finished. Not one jot or tittle can we add to it. Let a man be convinced that Jesus is the Son of God, that He came into the world to die for sinners. Let him follow Jesus in the wonderful ministries of His life. Let Him kneel in dark Gethsemane. Let him face cruel Calvary. That man will believe; he must believe that God is love, that God is anxious for his soul's welfare, that God stands ready to clasp him in arms of love.

The mission of redemption is finished. When Jesus threw back His head against the cross, cried, "**It is finished,**" bowed His head and died, redemption was completed. There remains no more to be done. The crimson price has been paid in full. Sin, all sin, has been atoned for. Were all the Christians of all the generations to mingle their sacrificially spilt blood with the blood of the Savior, it would not add a feather's weight of value to the effectiveness of Calvary's bloody shower.

Jesus does not need our help in that. He trod the winepress of God's wrath alone. He needed no help then. He needs no help now. He never shall need help in the ministry of redemption.

The mission of reconciliation is unfinished. It is here that Christ uses us. As long as there is an unsaved soul anywhere in the world, as long as there is a slave of sin who needs to know about the fountain that flowed from Immanuel's veins, just so long is the mission of reconciliation unfinished. That is the task to which Christ calls us. We are to tell a dying, sin-cursed, Satan-ridden, hell-bound world that there is balm in Gilead, that there is peace at the empty tomb, that there is pardon on Calvary. That is what Jesus Christ wants us to do, to preach, to sing, to witness to the ends of the earth, to bring Christ to men and men to Christ.

Consider then what Jesus wants us to do, or, in one brief word, the commission of Christ. It is directed to every one of us who names the name of Jesus as Christ and Lord. There is no exception, no escape, no excuse. The selfsame blood that washed away our sins signed our commission, enlisted and enrolled us in the great task of winning souls for Christ.

By the Word of the Master, we are to be the salt of the earth with the tangy savor and flavor of Christ's abiding presence exercising its pervasive, purifying, preserving, taste-inducing influence in every sphere of our activities. Our lives are to leaven the world for God. None coming into contact with our personalities and activities but are to feel the steadying, sanctifying, sustaining presence of the Holy Spirit permeating through us. Our activities must radiate a perfume that will make men homesick for the gardens of glory.

By the appeal of the Redeemer, we are to shine as the lights of the world, pointing blundering, wondering, wandering souls out of the miasmatic darkness of sin's desolation into the glorious light of God's grace.

All about us a world is staggering in the darkness of iniquity, in the stupidity of transgression, in the blackness of unbelief. Leaders they have, many and clamorous, yet are they but the blind leaders of the blind. This whole world is a prison cell, a slave dungeon, a squirrel's cage treadmill.

Everywhere men are sighing for release and relief. We know the way of the cross. We are basking in the light of Calvary's beacon. Lighting our souls, our hearts, our lives at the blazing conflagration of Golgotha, let us up, and out, and on, calling to men, beckoning men, pleading with men, guiding men to the Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings.

By the command of the Lord, we are to be witnesses, testimony-bearers. We are to witness to the world that Jesus Christ is abundantly and super-abundantly able to save unto the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. We are to witness by our courageous, heroic, challenging, lofty living that this Jesus not only saves but keeps. With the brightness of God on our faces, with the joy of salvation bubbling up in our hearts, with the songs of the redeemed on our lips, with springing step and back-thrown head, let us march on to Zion. That will make men want to share the secret of our zest and zeal.

Meditating in our minds, singing in our hearts, proclaiming with our lips, we are to tell the story again and again, in home, in school, in marketplace, in factory, in office, everywhere men gather in this workaday world. Christ has commissioned us to be winners of men, fishers of souls. He has promised us all the power in heaven and on earth. He has guaranteed us His victory-bringing presence to the end of the world, to the end of the age. We shall not fear, nor faint, nor grow tired, nor become discouraged until we hear the welcome plaudit of Prince Immanuel, "**Well done, thou good and faithful servant.**"

But, how are we going to do all this? How are we going to carry on and out the task of the Redeemer? We are so weak. We are so few. We are so small. The generations have swept by and on and out. There are more myriads without Christ today than there have ever been. Our talents are too meager, our powers too weak, our days too short, our weaknesses too many. Now, how are we going to keep faith with Him who loved us and gave His life for us? In just one way, in but one way, in only one way is there hope for our success—in the way of submission to Christ. Jesus said, "**Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.**"

Let us take Christ at His word. To do that three steps are required.

*First, there is to be the enthroning of Christ, the giving to Christ of the first, the choicest, the best, the most valuable that we have.*

Someone has very aptly said, "You do not crown Christ at all, if you do not crown Him Lord of all." Therein is the secret of victorious living. Great Christians were not born great. They did not have greatness thrust upon them. One by one, in agony, in self-denial, in self-surrender, in total oblivion to the things of the world, the flesh, and the devil; toiling, struggling, striving, up and up they climbed the steep ascent to Victory. Treading in the bloody footprints of their Great Example, they left many a drop of blood to mingle with His. With Paul, they filled up the cup of Christ's sufferings. There is no other way to lofty Christianity, to successful service in the field of the Master. It is all or nothing. Trifling, piddling, dribbling, all these may avail in other fields, although even in them the guerdon goes to the single-minded, to the stout-hearted, but in triumphant kingdom building, they have no place. Give Christ the right of way in all things, in all places, at all times. That is the first step.

*Second, there is absolute dependence on the Holy Spirit.*

Jesus knew the importance of that. He gave the disciples no college or seminary course; He bequeathed them no organization or set of rules; He bade them tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high. The disciples learned that lesson ably and well. Time and time again they returned to the Lord in earnest, tarrying prayer for the refilling of their souls with the Holy Spirit. The ages of Christianity that have passed, the lives of the mighty servants of the cross that have passed on before us, are another demonstration of the need, the utter, absolute need of the Pentecostal experience of those who would win the fight against Satan in their own hearts and in the hearts and lives of others. The Holy Spirit is available. You may have Him now, today, this hour, this moment, if, O God, grant that this if may become indeed and in truth your experience, if you will let Him have you. God is ready, eager, anxious to pour out the fulness of His mighty power into and upon your soul, if you will enthrone Christ now and forever. That is the second step. Submit to God, surrender your heart, your minds, your life, your soul, your all. Stay on your face before God until the fulness of the Pentecostal tide sweeps and surges across your souls, endueing you with the power that is from above.

*Third, each of us, personally, definitely, unassignably, inescapably, is to take his or her place in the ranks of the marching, fighting, winning armies of the cross.*

Regardless of age, of circumstances, of training, of personality, the Captain has a place, a task, a duty for each of us to perform. Some of us are to go to the ends of the earth, carrying the message of eternal life to those in the darkness and bitterness of heathen idolatry. Some of us are to stay by the stuff, giving of our prayers, of our means, holding the ropes. Some of us are to battle the enemy in the home lines, preaching, teaching, organizing, building. All are to give themselves to the task of holding aloft the cross of Him who said, **“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”**

At home and abroad, in business, in pleasure, by day, by night, in season, out of season, precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, there a little, as God gives us strength, as the Spirit gives us utterance, we are to bring the bread and water of life to those in the hunger and thirst of sin.

You say, “Preacher, it is easy for you to speak that way. You are college-bred, seminary-trained. Your work as an evangelist has given you the practice, the training that you need to carry on in this business. But with us, it is different. We are just run of the mill. We try to be good Christians. We try to live clean lives. We want to win souls, none better, none more anxious than we, but we just don’t know how to begin.”

Permit me then to finish this humble message with an illustration that marked an epoch in my own Christian life.

I have a dear preacher friend, Oby Nelson, pastor of Royse City, Texas. We have been praying partners for many years. He told this story in a Baptist association meeting in Texas.

When he was much younger, say, twenty years ago, Brother Nelson and another young preacher, John Skaggs, held a brush arbor meeting in one of the school communities on the Red River near Gainesville, Texas. People came. The Lord was with them. Souls were converted and baptized into the church. One day, after the morning service, a young man told Brother Nelson that Dummy Walker was coming to the mourner's bench that night for salvation. Now, Dummy was the deaf and dumb (born that way) son of a Baptist deacon of that community named Walker. Dummy had not missed a service of the revival, but of course he had not heard a syllable of the proceedings. The two preachers, Nelson and Skaggs, walked over to where dummy was standing by a buggy and accosted him.

"Dummy, do you know what it means to be a Christian? Are you ready to accept Christ as your Savior?"

Dummy opened his mouth, smiled widely, and made that awful, heart-rending sound that a deaf and dumb person makes when he tries to speak. It was clearly seen that Dummy neither understood the others nor could he make himself understood. Not willing to give up too easily, the two preachers placed Dummy in their buggy and drove over to his father's place. The old man was in the yard of his home, working on some harness, when they rode up.

"Mr. Walker, Dummy wants to give his heart to Christ, and we want to be sure he knows what he is doing. Will you try to explain to him the meaning of being saved?"

The farmer man looked out across his fields. His eyes filmed over with unshed tears. "Brother Nelson, and you, Brother Skaggs," he said, "I am fifty-three years old. Dummy is twenty-four. I have been a Christian and a Baptist since I was nine and a deacon for over thirty years. I can make that boy understand almost anything about the work of the farm, but I have never been able to explain Christ to him, and God knows I've tried. Perhaps his mother can; she is in the kitchen."

They walked into the kitchen. "Mother, Dummy wants to be saved. We do not want to stand in his way, but we want to be sure he understands what he is doing. Can you ask him some questions about his soul and his sins, also about the Savior?"

The mother covered her face with her apron and sobbed. After some minutes, her face streaked with tears, she turned to the preachers. "Brethren," she said, "I am forty-eight years old. I have been a Christian since I was eleven and a church-member all this time. I can make my son understand almost anything about the house, but I have found it impossible to explain the plan of salvation to him. Perhaps his sister can make him see it. She is visiting from Sherman. She is in the garden."

The group walked out into the garden. "Sister," spoke Nelson; "Bud here wants to come into the church. We want to know if he understands the step he contemplates. Can you ask him some questions about Jesus Christ for us and make him understand?"

"Brother Nelson," said the sister, "I am twenty-seven years old. I have been a Christian and a church-member since I was eight."

“Ever since I was a little girl, I have brought picture cards from Sunday-school for Dummy. I’ve tried every way I know how to make him know-about the Savior, but it just is no use. He doesn’t seem to understand. Don’t you reckon the Lord will take care of him anyway?”

“I do not know, sister,” said the preacher, “but let’s ask Him. Let us pray.” The six of them got down on their knees in the garden. One by one the five normal ones lifted their voices to God for Dummy’s soul. They then separated to their tasks.

That night the brush arbor was packed. The news of Dummy’s problem had been broadcast over the countryside. Skaggs led the song service. Oby Nelson preached. When he gave the invitation, the first man to walk down the aisle was Dummy Walker.

Nelson bowed his head in his hands and sobbed. The problem was beyond him. Dummy knelt at the mourner’s bench. A deathly silence, broken only by muffled sobs, settled on the crowd. After some minutes the preacher felt a tug at his coat. Dummy, face lit up with an unearthly light, stood before him. The boy did not offer his hand as was the custom. Instead, he raised his two hands and made as though he were embracing the skies, then brought them down to his heart. He repeated the gesture, touching the Bible, touched his dusty knees, stretched out his hand to the preacher, and everybody in the crowd knew that Jesus had worked one more miracle and saved the deaf and dumb boy’s soul.

Facing that Baptist Association crowd in Navarro County, Texas, Nelson finished his story. “Brethren and sisters,” he said, “Dummy Walker won more souls to Christ during the remainder of that revival than any three of us.” When the service was over and we all were out in the church yard, eating our association dinner, I questioned Oby further. “Oby, that surely was a great story, but, boy, didn’t you put on the rousements at the end?”

“What do you mean, rousements?”

“Well, how could a deaf and dumb person lead souls to Christ?”

“That’s all you know, Jew. Put your plate and cup down.”

I did, on the running-board of a near-by car. Oby did the same. He came up to me, put his arm around my shoulder, and spoke on.

“After the night of his decision, Dummy would do personal work in that crowd. He’d go up to an unsaved man or boy, put his arm about him, press him a little, point to his heart, point to his own heart, point to the heavens, point down the aisle, and gently compel them to the front.”

Nelson and I left our lunches just where they were. We walked over to a barn almost filled with hay, burrowed into it, stretched out on our faces, and held a prayer-meeting. I do not know what Oby said. I was too busy getting right with Jesus about that time. When my friend had finished his prayer, I lifted my heart and voice to God, and this is what I said:

“Lord Jesus, it is not in me to be a Paul. It is not in me to be a Wesley. It is not in me to be a Truett. But, oh, make me, oh, do make me a Dummy Walker. Let me use what You have given me for Your glory and the salvation of souls.”

Brethren and sisters in Christ, that is my message to you. In Jesus’ holy, precious name, take up the pleading, challenging, inviting, constraining appeal of the Lord Jesus Christ, “**As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.**”

~ end of chapter 3 ~

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