

Every Knee Shall Bow

By Paris Reidhead*

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God. But made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, given Him a name which is above every name. That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth. And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God, the Father” (Php. 2:5-11).

Christ is glorified in the salvation of the lost. But God has ordained that His Son should be glorified in the damnation of the lost as well. God has ordained that every knee shall bow to Jesus Christ. Our Lord bore the great love wherewith from eternity past He had loved a world that He had seen in rebellion and sin.

In the fullness of time He was made flesh. He took upon Himself our form and our likeness, found in our fashion, and accepted the limitations of our humanity that He might redeem a world at enmity against Him and in warfare with Him.

He consented to be made sin for us, He who knew no sin, that by this means we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. The Father ordained that should the Son thus leave heaven’s glory and come into the world and subject Himself to the humiliation of human flesh, and to temptation, and to death, “that every knee should bow and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ would be Lord”.

We noticed in this that He has given option. During this period that we call grace, men are invited to bow and live. But should they, in the impenitence and rebellion of their hearts persist in rejecting Christ and spurning God’s grace and the overtures of His love, He has also ordained that they shall bow. This time not by invitation but by commandment. I want you to realize today that God’s purpose that every knee should bow will be realized. It will be realized.

Where the book of Revelation makes it clear that there shall come an hour when the dead, the wicked dead, shall rise with bodies not described but so clearly taught, bodies by which they shall be able to appear before Him. It is described as a throne, a great white throne, and the one that’s seated upon it is seated there in splendor, and in glory, and in power. When these that have been in torment and suffering are thus brought into His presence, it is said that “they would cry to the rocks and to the mountains to fall upon them and to hide them from the face of the wrath of the Lamb” (Rev. 6:16).

Of course, God has ordained that they should thus stand before Him, and they should give an account of their lives. What they have done with that truth that they had heard and that God had invested in them. For He not only gave truth to the ear, but He also engraved it upon the fleshly tables of the heart.

Therefore, God is without excuse in just judgment for it is said that when the heathen which do not have the written record, the oracles and testimonies that came by revelation through Moses and others, but do by nature the things contained in this written record, they give evidence that the law has been “written upon their hearts” (Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:10). Thus they testify to the justice of God’s judgment upon them for their rebellion and their treason against Him.

They shall stand before Him in that day, and there shall be account given to them of all that they’ve had and done and their use of that which God gave. Then we hear that having consented to their judgment and the justice of their doom, they shall bow the knee, acknowledge Him to be Lord, worthy sovereign whom they ought to have rendered obedience and love because of His worth. But now, they render it coerced and forced by His inescapable majesty. Having acknowledged that Jesus Christ is Lord, they then shall go off on the left hand; the image that God used to convey to us their doom, into the lake of fire, which burneth forever and forever.

Now my friends, I want you to understand that God's commitment to His Son shall be kept. It shall be kept. There will come that hour when men shall be forced to render by the revelation of His majesty that which they refused to render in the revelation of His grace. But bow before Him they must. Having said that, we thus recognize that God only allows one option in regard to His Son, when we will bow. That we must bow He has established. When we must bow, we choose.

We are I think have said sufficiently, regarding the fact that we must bow. Now what I'd like to have you see is that you may bow. You may bow now, today, while it is called now, the day of salvation. First, if Jesus Christ is to be glorified in the salvation of the lost, we must discover that He was robbed of His glory, deprived of that which was His due by man's sin.

I would have you see that essentially sin is not a series of antisocial acts, which bring upon man indictment from God because of the fact that he [man] has in some way interfered with the on-working of God's plan for humanity.

Sin is far worse than most of us as preachers have ever dared to relate or perhaps ever discovered, and only the Lord Himself will one day be able, if He chooses, to reveal to us the total malignancy of this horrendous thing called sin. I'm afraid that most people that call themselves Christians in our churches today have had little or no revelation of sin. What they have done is had a recollection of sins. There's a difference.

Sin is something that is resident in the heart. It is deep in the motivational area of human personality, and it is the root upon which the fruit of sins grow. I'm afraid too many people have never traced the fruit back to its proper root. I'm afraid that too many people have had the kind of dealing with them, regarding their relationship to Christ that I would have given for most of my life and ministry.

I would have asked the candidate for salvation to recall whether or not he'd ever done anything that he could call sin. If I could elicit an affirmative from him that, yes, he had some time, somewhere done something that he might call sin then I would say all right, now you see you're lost. But this stops far short of the purpose of God in grace in revealing to us the nature of our crime against His Son, Jesus Christ.

It isn't enough just to recognize that at some time, somewhere you may have done something that in all fairness you could call sin. This is true. It's true of everyone. I've never met anyone yet that in serious conversation would deny the fact that he had sinned. But I have met scores of people that would admit that they have sinned that had absolutely no conviction of sin. They've never discovered it. They've never seen it. They've never actually realized what it is that made God take this attitude of such intense anger against sin as the Scripture reveals that He has.

I think you have to go back to the fact that sin at its genesis is in the mind of the most intelligent, beautiful, and powerful creature that God ever created. Isaiah the 14th chapter gives you the record of this in which it describes this one, Lucifer, who using the intelligence with which he'd been equipped imagined what it would be to be God. Then he decided that he would become what he had imagined, that he would be like the Most High. In this, you see the essential nature of sin, that it is putting one's self in the place of God.

This is so fundamental to a proper understanding of the grace of God that I should try to approach it from several directions. We find in Isaiah the 53rd chapter, verse 6 that God speaks of the crime of men by saying, "They have turned everyone unto their own way." This sounds like a rather simple thing and hardly worth the condemnation that it receives until you realize that turning to one's own way is essentially setting one's self up upon the throne and establishing himself as God in his own eyes.

Turning to his own way simply means that he would have himself to be the object of his worship and live for himself; live to please and to gratify himself and to satisfy himself. His own pleasure now became the end of his being as well as the rule of his conduct. This we find with Lucifer. This we find with Eve when the proposition was presented to her to be as God. This we find to be God's great indictment against the human race down across the centuries. They have set themselves in the place of God, and worshiped themselves, and served themselves, and pleased themselves rather than God who alone was worthy.

Now because of this, because of this act which has in it all of the essential attributes of treason; refusal to recognize proper government to which one is committed, a gross betrayal of that government into the hands of committed enemies, and a

determined course of warfare against the rightful government, because of this, God has said, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Eze. 18:4b). And He has spoken, saying that, "He is angry with the wicked every day," that "He has bent His bow, and He has whet His sword," and if he turn not, He will slay him (Psa. 7:11-12).

Now God has pronounced this judgment upon sin and evidenced His attitude toward it throughout the entire Old Testament. For you see the cherubim stand in front of the garden after Adam and Eve sinned, and with flaming sword forbid the first pair to return to the place that had been prepared for them. You'll get a picture of how God feels about it. You come a little farther and see the ark floating on the wave, and the last hand slip from the topmost branch of the tallest tree, and the last life thus extinguished in God's judgment upon men for their sin.

You understand how He feels about it, this crime against Him. You see the city of Sodom and Gomorrah buried beneath the flood of fire from heaven. You understand how God feels about licenses is the rule in moral conduct. Across the ages, God has evidenced His attitude toward almost every kind of sin. Even in the case of Uzziah, that faithful king of Israel that dared to refuse to recognize the order of worship and the responsibility of the priest at the house of God. Thus he comes forth from the holy place white as snow with leprosy.

We find that with Ananias and Sapphira in the church and apparently respectable accepted members of the church, that when they lied against the Holy Ghost, they both were stricken dead. I say to you that in every instance in the past when God has in any ways dealt with sinners for their crime, He has illustrated for all the succeeding years and generations that should come His continuing attitude towards sin. It is thus that we would view it not simply as antisocial conduct, but we should recognize that sin is in its essence an enthronement of self, a deification of man, a putting of himself in the place of God.

Against this, God has set His hand in ceaseless warfare. Now sins are but the fruit that grow out of this monstrous major crime. The person sets himself upon the throne and prepares to live a life of self-pleasing. And when the truth stands in the way of his goal, he bends or breaks the truth. The lie simply becomes a tool to the end of pleasing himself. When sobriety stands in the way of his commitment to make himself the end of his being and his pleasure the reason for his existence, he readily accepts insobriety and drunkenness and thus pleases himself at the expense of others.

When he discovers that morality and the standards that God established for the protection of the home interfere with his personal pleasure, he has no hesitation at all about bursting over the sins that God not only put into social standards and mores but also wrote with such heavy pen on the human heart. He breaks those bounds and pleases himself at the expense of virtue and happiness of another.

We find then that all the things we call sins are but the tools in the kit of the one that has decided to be god in his own right and in his own name. They're simply the tools of the trade, if you please. God isn't fighting the tools. God is fighting the one that went into business. God is not concerned about the tools that are there as much as He is the fact that someone sat down and said I am going to live to please me. I'm going to make my own pleasure the end of my being. I will be as God. I'll do what I want to do.

Now sin actually strikes at the very status of God Himself, comes right at the throne of God. It is direct warfare against the person of God.

Though it seems to be such a little thing, here is the person that just tells a white lie, and just steals a little bit, and just loves himself in a restrictive degree, and just commits immorality on the mental level, lasciviousness, or murder in the heart in anger. You say, well, why should God become so distressed by it? Because of the fact that it is basically the evidence that the individual has said, I will have no other gods to rule over me. I will be god in my own life. This, I say, constitutes the criminal aspect of sin.

This is that against which God has lifted His hand in fierce anger in centuries past. But unquestionably the place where you find this display of righteous wrath and anger most dramatically and most effectively presented is at Calvary. There the Lord Jesus Christ, God Himself, the very God who in His words spoke, saying, "Let us make man in our image" (Gen. 1:26). The one who in

the cool of the day walked in the garden calling, "Adam, where art thou?" (Gen. 3:19) The one who instructed Noah to make the Ark, and Abraham to leave his father's house, and Moses to lead his people forth from bondage, this one, the Jehovah of the Old Testament, now became the Jesus of the New Testament.

Out of the love for a world of rebels that were justly sentenced to death, and may I make one point clear? My friend, if you've ever been told by anyone as thoughtless as myself or others equally thoughtless that the rejection of Jesus Christ is the sin that sends a soul to hell, may I this moment disabuse your mind of that mild heresy. The reason people go to hell is not because they have rejected Christ but because they have become gods in their own right in rebellion against Him. For if God had never sent His Son into the world, the world would have perished. The weight of its guilt was sufficient to plunge it forever from His presence in suffering.

No, God did not send His Son in the world to condemn the world. Why? Because the world was condemned already. Nor did God send His Son into the world to pay a debt to humanity. He owed the race nothing. Man didn't hold a mortgage on God. Man had no claims against Him. God had written his law on the conscience, and man had in open defiance disregarded all that God had put in nature and in conscience to testify for Him. He refused to have God in his knowledge, and was justly sentenced.

God didn't pay a debt when He gave His Son or pay a mortgage, not at all. Moved by nothing but His own heart of measureless, unfathomable love, God Himself became flesh and dwelt among us. Oh, the mystery of it. Oh, the wonder of it. Incomprehensible grace that God out of love for a race so justly doomed and sentenced as ours should Himself take upon Himself our form and our likeness. Be made in our image and given the limitations of our humanity that by means of His human body and personality He might have a vehicle first to get into temptation.

"He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). When He had succeeded in coming through the valley of temptation that He might use that same body as the vehicle by which He, God, could get into death. Then the Lord Jesus Christ looked down across the centuries, and He saw you, justly damned, righteously condemned.

My dear sinner friend, you do not need to lie once more to be forever in hell. You need not reject Christ once again. You need not break one more commandment. All that needs to happen to you, my impenitent unbelieving friend, is for God to let go of you for so much as a moment.

Do you not know that there are forged around your spirits chains, which go right down into the pit and which the enemy has fastened upon and is doing all that he can to drag you to your place? Do you not know that the weight of your guilt is so immense that were God to so much as relax in His loving protection for a moment that angels in fiery indignation would sweep upon you and that the very pressure of your own conscience would make you unfit to live upon God's earth, breathe His air, and be warmed by His sunshine?

Do you not realize that the only thing that keeps you from the pit for so much as a moment is the hand of God that holds you in life? You reckon to fail so often to recognize this and blaspheme the name of the very one that holds you from your doom. Where all God would have to do to damn anyone here that's not in Christ would be just to relax His mercy for a moment, and the pressure and weight of guilt would press them to their place. The law of moral gravitation would slow seize upon your spirit. Just as it drew Judas to his doom it would draw you to your own. But God breaks that law of moral gravitation for the purpose of grace and sustains you.

No, think not that Christ came to destroy. Not so. Your destruction was complete. Your doom was certain. He didn't come to bring death but to bring life. The only way that He could possibly bring life for you was to look down across the ages and take the full inventory of your crimes as well as the indescribable iniquity of your sin and consent to be made what you were. Oh, I'm afraid too many people have failed to understand the passion of Christ.

They have seen Him as a spectacle performing a function that the race witnessed. Never. He was there for you in your place, laden with your guilt, saddled with your crimes, and reckoned to be saturated with your uncleanness. He was there as you, in

your place, in your stead. You ought to have been there. The Lord Jesus died for you, in your stead, in your place. He died for you.

You see, Psalm 7:11 says that, "God hath bent His bow, and He has whet His sword." That bow and that sword had been aimed at every human heart. You, you I say, deserved it. You ought to have received it, but He stood there in your place and had laid to Him all your crimes. Had laid upon Him and counted to Him all your corruption. And because the arrows were just and the sword was righteous, the Lord Jesus Christ bared His breast in your name and said, Lord, try me on all of your wrath, for your wrath is right.

Let fall the sword of Your justice, for Your justice is perfect. He bore on Himself the arrows of God's wrath and the sword of His justice for you, in your place, and in your stead. Died for you, was buried for you, and was raised again for your justification. That the law thus by His resurrection body could be declared kept, its righteousness intact, God's holiness vindicated, for you.

Now I submit to you in the salvation of the lost, Jesus Christ is glorified. Oh when a man discovers the enormity of his crime. When God's truth has done its work in dividing between soul and spirit. When God's law as His ten-tooth saw has cut through the callus of sophistication and egotism over the corrupt human heart. When God has peeled back the human soul and shown you what you are, and you have been prepared to say, yes, God's judgment and justice was right. I deserved all His wrath sentenced upon me, I deserved it all.

When you come and stand before Him as a self-condemned, self-confessed rebel and traitor, an anarchist, an enemy in perpetual lifetime warfare against Him. I submit to you that when you thus see yourself to be what God has seen you the while to be, when you thus deal with yourself as God dealt with you at Calvary, when you come and throw down the arms of your rebellion and admit to the guilt of the crimes that have been laid to your charge, and take sides with God against yourself, and cast yourself down at the nail pierced feet of the rightful sovereign, that He's glorified.

Or He's glorified in this, in that first the sentence that He pronounced upon you is a true sentence. The crimes that He charged to you were fair and justly charged. Thus His justice and His holiness are vindicated. When you come and throw yourself down at His feet, you are doing farther than that. You are now revealing to Him the magnitude of His grace, His mercy, and His love. When you stand before Him a self-condemned criminal, recognize that you deserve the worst of His wrath. And you stand there before Him broken by the revelation of your guilt and yet pleading for part of His mercy, you do glorify Him as the gracious, loving, all gracious God. You glorify Him. You glorify Him.

My friends, I don't ask sinners any longer to come to Jesus Christ for what they'll get, for my friend, you deserve to get nothing but justice for your crimes. I would not rob the Lord Jesus of the glory that's His due in your repentance and in your faith by saying, "Now, you come and accept Him to get from Him forgiveness of your sins and the certainty of a home in heaven." I believe that such an appeal directed to your heart could only be to confirm you, confirm you in your selfishness.

This is the appeal that I make to you. By your crimes, you have slandered the worthy sovereign. By your iniquity, you have been in ceaseless warfare with one that deserves better at your hand. By your rebellion, you have brought upon yourself the crimes that He so justly fastened to your account. He has sentenced you for them. Now, you come, you come to Christ because of what He will get by your coming. He will get the worship that He's deserved awhile and what you've criminally robbed Him of.

He will receive the adoration that He alone is worthy to obtain. You've adored yourself. You've worshiped yourself. You live to please yourself, and in so doing you've been idolatrous the while. Now come, worship the righteous sovereign. Sue for peace, plead for mercy because by your coming, you render to Jesus Christ that which is His due. He deserves your worship. He deserved your love. He deserved adoration to arise ceaselessly from your heart. He deserved obedience rendered from a glad heart.

You've robbed Him, deprived Him. Come to Jesus Christ and render to Him His due. Oh, what has been done by sinners not only committing all these crimes against the sovereignty of God's Son, but adding to them that most indescribably vicious crime of treading under His feet the blood of the everlasting covenant and counting that blood an unworthy thing. That when

God died for you, after all of your crimes, you add further to it by trampling beneath unbelieving feet and an impenitent heart, the blood of the everlasting covenant.

You need not do it to die, but when you do it, I say to you, my dear friend today, when you do it, when you go one day having heard of the grace of God and the death of Jesus Christ without bowing at His feet, rendering to Him the homage, and the love, and the adoration, and the obedience that He deserves, by treading beneath your feet His blood, you do testify to wondering angels at the enormity of your hatred of God.

You come to Christ. Even if you should have after having come spend eternity in hell, you come to Christ and begin today to recognize that you have no right to rule your life.

Confess with your mouth Jesus Christ to be Lord, and gladly consent to the extension of His sovereignty in the days or years that remain before you. Come to Jesus Christ so you see His hand that which He gives to criminals that deserve nothing. Come I say and render to Him that which is His due. Come to Christ not for what you'll get out of it but for that which He will get out of it. He deserves it. He's worthy of it. You come. You come to Him because He will be glorified in your coming.

When you stand before Him, accept your doom, accept your condemnation, accept the justice of His sentence upon you. Cast yourself before Him at His feet, broken in spirit, bankrupt in morals, nothing to bring, nothing to present, nothing to offer. When you come thus, He is glorified. When you bow the knee, receive Him and live. But hear me, you must come. You must come. Did you hear me? You must come.

You will either come now in response to such an invitation, as this message brings, or go out in ultimate impenitence and stand before Him and come because you cannot escape even to the holes in mountains to cover you. Then render to Him what the Father promised. All sin is insanity, moral insanity, moral insanity.

Dear friend, the sane, the wise thing to do is to come gladly to the feet of Jesus Christ, not to get but to bring to Him that which you so long deprived Him of; worship, adoration, obedience, praise. Come. Come. Come while it's called day. Come while you can. Come. Come to the Savior. Make no delay, not for what you'll get but for what He will get by your coming.

Let us pray.

Look well into your heart. Look well into your spirit. Have you come? Have you come in name only? Are you one of those that have a name to live but are dead and are in the synagogue of Satan? Or are you one that's never even pretended to bow the knee and still live in open obstinacy against Him? Or have you come, come gladly to bow at His feet? Where are you? Look well.

Father of our Lord Jesus, look Thou down upon us. How long we've used the Lord Jesus as a means to something for ourselves. We've appealed to our own humanistic interests, and desires, and appetites, trying to persuade people to accept Christ for what they'll get out of Him. Today, Lord, we want people to come because of what Jesus Christ will get out of rebellious sinners ceasing their warfare, and throwing down their arms of rebellion, and standing there before Thy justice, self-condemned.

Accepting all the sentence Thou has pronounced upon them is true. Then Lord, to see Thy mercy in Thy Son, Thy grace in the Lord Jesus, Thy wondrous love in His poured out life. Oh God, breathe upon us. Let there be those today who say, I'm through with the crimes against the Holy God, through with a lifetime of rebellion against the worthy sovereign. Today, today I come, today I come. Let us remain in prayer for just a moment.

I want you to listen, I want you to think, and in these next few moments, if God has found your heart and you're prepared to come and say, I'm through, I'm through. I'll not go any longer in warfare against Him. While the strains of this closing song are sung, you just quietly get up from where you are and come and take your place here at the front, and we'll pray with you and open the Word to you. You mind God.

Will you stand please, still in the attitude of prayer. In just a moment, you'll hear the words and strains of that song, that stanza, "Just as I am, poor wretched, blind¹." Before we go and while we wait before Him, I wonder if there are those, while every head is bowed and eyes closed, as will say, "Pray for me. I know I'm lost. I know I've never come and sued for peace. I've never met Him, but I see something of my crime and something of my need, and I want prayer. I'm not ready to come today, but I do want prayer. Pray for me."

Would you put your hand up, anywhere in this house, anyone? Would you? Anyone, anywhere? Bless you. God bless you. Anyone? While we sing "Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind, sight, riches, healing of the mind, yea all I need in Thee I find. Oh Lamb of God, I come," won't you come? You come now. After this, we'll have prayer and benediction. You come now and mind God.

Reveal again to our hearts, our Father, that Christ is glorified in the salvation of the lost. And for the glory of Jesus Christ, the Lamb that was slain, may we live Him, and preach Him, and exalt Him that He may receive of the reward of His suffering and of the spoils of His victory. And be glorified as blasphemous rebels cast themselves before Him and sue for peace and glorify Him by their coming.

Seal now we pray Thee this service, and Thy truth, let it burn, burn, burn deeply to our hearts until there shall come upon us as a people a passionate desire to see people coming to Christ. Not so much for what they'll get out of it as for what He'll get out of it, the glory, the praise, the honor that is His due. Now Lord, we pray Thee Thou would go with us as we part.

Send us away a sober people, and those who ought to have come and made known their need, lovingly deal with them. Bring them to the nail pierced feet of Thy dear Son, the Lamb of God while it is called day, while there is still life and salvation. Go Thou with us. Part Thou with us as we leave one another. We go in Thy presence. Speak to needy hearts. Bring us back this evening. May Thy grace and Thy mercy, and Thy peace be and abide with us. Amen.

* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Sunday Evening, by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.

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¹ "Just as I am, without one Plea" – By Charlotte Elliott; Tune by L.M. Woodworth, 1835.