

Dear Fellow Redeemed by the blood of God's own Son,

If you had lived 2,000 years ago with the technology you are carrying in your pockets and purses at this very moment, would God have been your "facebook friend?" Would you have been satisfied to "skype" God or twitter Him? Ridiculous isn't it? Yes, but not because of time or technology. Such contact with God could never have happened, because God Himself would have had no part of it! He did not want us to know Him from far off, or have us visit Him when we could find the time. Instead, God came to us Himself in the person of His eternal Son, Jesus Christ. God came in the flesh of man.

The problem is that natural man for all his modern age technology is no different than he was in the days of Jesus: Natural man would much rather come God with sacrifices and worship, than to have God visit him!

Man does not like the idea that God sees him. He would rather have a god made of stone, an immovable object that may be placed in a temple, out of sight and out of mind most of the time! Man likes to have room to maneuver, to get around God at times. Because of fear and guilt, man's religion is a "Don't call me; I'll call you," set up. But

CHRIST COMES CLOSE FOR COMFORT!

I.

Jesus Christ is an un-called for Helper. The people in Jesus' day were thrilled by His miracles of power – healing the sick, raising the dead, and the like. When He fed the 5,000 with five loaves and two small fish, the people said: "Come we will make You king! We want more of this!"

But whenever Christ spoke of the self-righteousness of the people or corrected their sins, they said: "We didn't ask for this and we won't stand for it " And whenever He presented Himself as equal with God, forgiving sins, they said: "We don't need forgiveness for our behavior!"

Sometimes we have a similar problem because of the sinful flesh. It may be easier for us to "come to God" in the church service when it is convenient, than for us to want God with us during the week, wherever we go. When the pastor or another brother or sister wants to bring God into our personal lives in some way, the sinful flesh squirms. The temptation is to say: "If I need your help, I'll ask for it. Don't call me, I'll call you!"

Is this the way we want to think of Christ, as the uncalled for Helper?

Surely not! For there is something truly wonderful in our Lord's invitation: **"Come here!"** When you and I need a doctor, we have to call him. We may have to wait a long time for an appointment. And when we get to the office, we may have to wait for a long time. If he can, the doctor will heal our physical ailments. But it will cost us something! In most cases the doctor who would heal us, or the lawyer who would defend us say, "Come here – if you can pay!"

But our Lord Christ truly came to heal us and defend us without our calling. When we were helpless in our sins, and were unable to call anyone to help, He came into our flesh. He surrendered Himself on the altar of His cross in order to save us from the eternal penalty of our sins, and defend us against the power of sin, Death, and Satan. We never called Him to do such a thing! But He goes out in the message of the Gospel to beg all the world: **"Come, you who have no money. . . Come, buy and eat. . . Listen diligently to Me. . . and let your soul delight itself in fatness."** (Is. 55:1-2)

II.

Christ calls people to Himself! **"Come unto Me,"** He says. Whenever we want to help the poor or feed the hungry, or visit a prisoner, we must go to them. This we can do. But can any of us say to ALL PEOPLE, **"Come to Me?"** We would have to become very poor, and share the burdens and sorrows of the most despised people on earth! At the same time we would have to be able to serve and minister to the needs of the rich and the rulers of the world! Who among us could say to the world, **"Come to ME"?**

We can't, but Christ did. He alone is both poor enough to experience every burden of sins's grief in this world, yet rich enough to be able to give healing and heavenly blessing to everyone who believes in Him.

And do you see how He invites the most frightened and timid souls? There are those who have been burdened not only with their own sins, but also with the laws and traditions of men. When you share Christ with a person like this he may be thinking to himself: "This person wants me to get involved again in another church where I am going to have to meet rules and requirements like before." Or, he may be thinking: "How can I go to church when my life isn't good enough? Haven't I heard before

about the holiness of God? Why should I risk getting so close to God?" To these we must say:

Christ does not call you to another list of legal requirements; He calls you to HIMSELF! That's why He did not come as the Judge of sinners, but the Savior of sinners. That's why He came in great meekness and lowliness, and placed Himself under the Law of God in our places.

He calls you to HIMSELF to lift you up, not put you down! Christ does not say to you: "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me as a new law-giver from heaven!" He says: "**Be joined to Me and learn from me, because I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your soul. My yoke is easy and my burden is light,** because I give you grace and forgiveness of your sins." How can such a Savior come too close as He calls the sinner to Himself for salvation?

III.

Notice that Christ says: "**Come here, ALL you who labor and are heavy-laden.**" Why doesn't Christ say precisely what He means by "**all who Labor and heavy laden.**" – Because with these words He covers all who travel this wilderness of sin and trouble: The rich, the poor, the rulers and those who are ruled; the beautiful, the ugly, and the plain; those who are sick and those who are well. No matter whatever else each of us is, we ALL carry the burden of sin, "**for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.**" (Rom. 3:23)

If the Lord Christ seems to come too close for comfort, it can only be that we do not want to be included among those who are pressed down with a load of sin. It could be that we are not experiencing the comfort of Christ's closeness because we have not confessed a sin that is particularly burdensome to us. But the ALL of our text includes not only every sinner, but every SIN! It includes you and me and ALL the evil we have done!

IV.

Finally, notice the promise of Christ: "**I will give you rest.**" It's not easy for a person suffering from a serious physical illness to be sent by one doctor to the next doctor, and then to the next for treatment. Yet this often happens. But our Lord Christ promises that when we come to Him with the burden of our sin-sickness – the most life-threatening disease we have – He will not send us somewhere else!

He Himself is not only the HELPER, but the HELP – not only the doctor, but the CURE! In Him we can find rest for our poor souls. While the physical doctor cannot be with each of his patients day and night, our Christ is with His believing people constantly through the power of His Spirit and His Gospel-Word.

Only those who don't consider themselves to be very sick would say to a doctor: "Don't call me; I'll call you!" Only those who are in perfect health might object to a doctor who came too close to them. But let us say to Christ, Who **comes close to comfort us:**

O draw us Savior to Your side,
For we are oft by sin oppressed.
In words of grace we come to hide!
Come close, O Christ, to be our Rest. Amen.