
The Drawing Power of the Cross

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“Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.”

—John 12:31–33

The death by which He should die was now fast approaching. Jesus appears on this occasion to have had a foretaste both of “the travail of his soul” and of its fruits, of which it was promised Him He “should see and be satisfied.” Certain Greeks had come up to worship at the feast—not Greek Jews, but native Greeks, who appear to have been worshipers of the Lord God of Israel. Having heard of Jesus, they applied to one of the disciples, express-

ing a wish to see Him, and the disciple reported it to Jesus. In this Jesus saw that though promises were budding forth to their fulfillment—that in the promised “root of Jesse the Gentiles should trust,” and these, the first fruits of His death, were present—yet the death being itself first to be undergone, the very joys reminded Him of its necessity. “The hour,” said He, “is come that the Son of Man should be glorified.” Already the hour had come that the nations, in their first fruits, look to “the root of Jesse, which should rise to be an ensign for the people, to whom the Gentiles should seek.” But before this can be realized, His death was necessary. He must sow in tears if He would reap in joy. He, the seed of corn, the root of the whole, must die. “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” “Much fruit”—here is the joy that was set before Him. And He needed the joy set before Him; for heavy, inconceiv-

ably heavy, were the toils, the agonies, and the sufferings that must precede. For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame. It to Him was awful; only the joy was set before Him. "He endured the cross," for He must die—must fall into the ground and die. And as this was the law for the Christ, so it is the law for the Christian. "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me"—follow Me in hating his life—follow Me in falling as a corn of wheat into the ground and dying. "If any man serve me, let him follow me," said Jesus, "and where I am, there shall also my servant be." Where I am, on the cross, there shall also My servant be. "If any man serve me, him will my Father honor."

Jesus, for the joy set before Him, endured the cross. He endured the cross, but it was awful. Awful to us to think

of. Awful to Him. Even with the joy set before Him, it was awful. Without the joy, it would have been impossible to be endured: with the joy, it could be sustained. "Now is my soul troubled: and what shall I say?" "Shall I say, Father, save Me from this hour?" for so would I place the mark of interrogation. "Shall I say this, Father, save Me from this hour?" Ah, no! That He will not say. "Father, glorify thy name." *That* will He say. Glorify Thy name. I came for this cause. I undertook the work just for this. The whole of My mission, incarnation, all that I have done, all that I have endured up to this moment, was for this: Christ not only being born and dying, but Christ being born that He might die. "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law." "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." For it was necessary that this man

should have something to offer. "A body hast thou prepared me." "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." "By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." "For this cause came I unto this hour." And now, troubled in soul I must be; I will not, I wish not, to be otherwise. "Father, glorify thy name." "Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." I have glorified it in Thee; I will glorify it in Thee still more. Of this voice some gave one interpretation: they said it thundered. Others said an angel spake to Him. Jesus explained it: "This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes." The voice came for the sake of those from whom we find afterwards Jesus departed and hid Himself. "For though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him." For their sakes—of whom Isaiah had prophesied that He had blinded their eyes and hardened

their heart—came this voice, and so for the sake of all unto whom this recorded voice comes. God speaks from heaven to the whole visible church, in whose ear the testimony of the Father concerning His Son sounds. He speaks in His Word to all to whom it comes—not for Jesus' sake, but for the sake of these unbelieving people. And God does something for the sake of those whose eyes He has blinded, who cannot see with their eyes nor hear with their ears nor understand with their heart. He had not forsaken them utterly. It is to be feared multitudes of them forsook *Him*. And now Jesus explains to these unbelieving people the meaning of the voice and the meaning of the death He was about to die. "Now," says He, "is the judgment of this world, signifying, or giving to be understood to them, what death he should die."

I. We are here to contemplate the death of Christ as setting forth "the judgment

of this world"—the crisis. It was a mighty hour for this world. It was the hour of its judgment. The world is a lost world, but it is a divinely visited world. In this world God had been dishonored. In this world God had been already glorified; more glorified already had He been than ever before in the heaven of heavens. Jesus had glorified His name upon the earth. Truth had sprung from earth while righteousness looked down from heaven. Here stood a guilty, condemned world with the Incarnate God tabernacling in it. Here stood humanity, the race which had been as smoke in God's nostrils, a fire that burneth all the day. There stood humanity in higher-than-Adamic glory. There stood man, the glorifier of God—man, the equal and fellow of the Lord of hosts. Human excellency in its perfection united to eternal Godhead, in the close union of which in Jesus the two natures were one person, Immanuel. A sinful race, the righteous One. Man,

God's dishonor; Man, God's glorifier. And now was coming the judgment of this world. Not the still future one, for Jesus said "Now" to signify by what death He should die. Ah, but that future one proceeds upon principles deducible from this one. In this one is the coming one in its seeds and principles already fixed and determined.

...Here the world is not taken unawares. The Son of God is not sent to an unprepared world. He came to His own. Prophets and holy men of God had for the previous thousand years been announcing His coming. People had been set apart and placed under a system of training for His reception. They had been taught to look forward to "the consolation of Israel." "In Judah is God known: His name is great in Israel. In Salem also is his tabernacle, And his dwelling-place in Zion." He had not dealt so with any nation, and as for His judgments, these other nations had not known them. Now

He comes to His own, to the vineyard planted on the very fruitful hill with the stones gathered out and the hedge planted round, planted with the noble vine in that vineyard of which the Lord of hosts says, "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?" He had planted the vineyard long ago and had sent many seeking fruit, and they had taken one servant after another and killed and stoned them. But He had one Son, His well-beloved, and He said, "I will send Him; when they see Him, they will reverence My Son." And so He came — came to His own, and His own received Him not. That was in Judah's land: that was to men prepared. And what was the reception? "Ye have both seen and hated both me and my Father."

Here then is the judgment of this world, for there is no difference. "Are we," says the apostle, "better than they?" meaning the Gentiles. No, in no wise.

We have before proved to both Jews and Gentiles that they are all under sin. If there were a spark of good in fallen man, it would have come out; it would gather and cluster round Him and, finding Him, "increase with the increase of God." If there were any good, it would find its way to the Christ of God when He came. He had indeed some that came to Him. But how? "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them which believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." So it was, "he came to his own, and his own received him not." Those who received Him were as little disposed as others; they received Him, not in consequence of being born of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God.

Here then is the judgment of this world: this world received not the Christ. Adam fell, but Christ has come! "He hath finished transgression and made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness." Man had gone away from God. God has come to bring him back. But will fallen man go back? The two cherubim with flaming sword are not keeping the door to the way of life. The way into the Eden of God is open. God is standing in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses. Will they go back then? Oh, speak not of Adam's fall; the second Adam reverses it. No return! Do not say, "Adam fell." Who fell the second fall? When the second Adam came and you said, "No," who fell that second fall? To what gain-saying and disobedient people has the Messiah stretched out His hands all the day long? And who is worse—the man who went away from God, or the man to whom God said,

“Come back through Jesus Christ,” and he stays away and will not go back? Now is the world judged. That’s one point, showing the equity of its condemnation. What was the condemnation and punishment a guilty world deserved? Behold the Lamb of God; and if these things were done in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry? If the pains of death encompassed Him and the sorrows of hell took hold on Him—if Jehovah said, “Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my Fellow, smite the Shepherd,” and He had done no iniquity, neither was any deceit found in His mouth—what is the estimate of sin now in what Jesus endured? Behold the judgment of this world! Behold what He endured! Behold how, by the endurance of which all saved are saved, because He endured it! What is the estimate of sin now, taking into view that they rejected all that when presented to

them as the ground of a new hope and gracious acceptance?

And now, the world rises up against the Son of God. "Many bulls compass him, strong bulls of Bashan." "There be many that do fight against me, O thou most High." "My strong foes and they that hate me are too many for me." "Verily, against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together." The world, the world, what hath it done? Ah, there are some crimes such that they would efface almost all minor criminality! Such, says God, were the transgressions of the apostate ten tribes compared with the sin of Jerusalem. Put now Adam's transgression and the whole mass of the transgressions committed since the world was, and what are they? They all meet, they all strike at the life of God inferentially, but this directly. God, as Divinity, cannot die. If man who

is a deicide in heart, is to get opportunity, God must have a mortal nature, and God takes the mortal nature, and in that nature is put to death. *That's* the world. The world that was, and the world that is. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." "Now is the judgment of this world."

II. But Jesus says next, "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out. This he said, signifying what death he should die." This present world is an evil world and has an evil prince, "the prince of the power of the air," "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." This world is Satan's world—God's world, for He made it; but Satan's world, for he has usurped it; and men made in the image of God have sold themselves for nothing to his thralls, and he rules

and lords it over them. Men talk much of their own free will and independence. Men scoff at spiritual influence, but every man is under it. Every man's body is either a temple of the Holy Spirit or of Satan, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience; and Satan especially exercises his power, if he possibly can, in keeping men from Christ. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine upon them." "Lest"—Satan is not satisfied with the corruption of man's nature; although he well might be, yet he is not. He knows the gospel has a mighty power; though it never converts a soul but by the effectual operation of the Holy Spirit, yet it has a mighty power. Even as a moral means, it has a mighty power of adaptation, which Satan trembles at, lest, notwithstanding all that he knows of the

desperate wickedness of the heart, the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, the image of God, should shine unto them; therefore *lest* it should shine, he blinds their minds. Every man then into whose heart God has not shined the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ, every man unto whom the gospel yet is hid, is devil-led and devil-bound. He has a prince, the prince of this world, ruling and reigning, and under promise of liberty makes him the slave of corruption. "Now," says Christ, "shall the prince of this world be cast out. This he said, signifying what death he should die."

He came that "by death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Satan had the power—the power of the jailer and executioner. Jesus died. The jailer's power was gone. Jesus died, but the foundation

of Satan's kingdom was destroyed. Death snapped asunder the union which held together soul and body. It could not snap asunder the union which bound soul and body to Godhead. It was still Immanuel in the grave and Immanuel in Paradise! The body of Christ was not separated from the Godhead; the soul of Christ was not separated from the Godhead. Death had put in his iron teeth as far as they could penetrate. Through the external they had penetrated to the separating of the soul and body of Jesus; his iron teeth found a hard, adamantine union that could not be dissolved, and soon the body and soul of the Lord Jesus—never either of them separated from the Godhead—were speedily united to one another, God "loosing the bonds of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." "He destroyed death, and him that had the power of death." And now He appears living—a living Savior, dead and alive again, free and powerful

to come as the strong man and snatch and legally take His own redeemed and purchased. He comes to open blind eyes, to turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them which are sanctified through faith that is in Him. And now the Spirit testifies of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

III. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he spake, signifying what death he should die." The prince of this world held men in his thrall, but, by His death, Jesus judged the prince of this world. "Lifted up," He says, "I will draw all men to another prince. I will draw all men unto Me." The crucified Savior draws men from the prince of this world. Oh, Satan is sadly foiled! Crucified in weakness and hanging on a tree, the buffeted, derided, spit upon, despised of men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted

with grief, despised and not esteemed; but He endured the cross, despising the shame, and draws all men to Him.

The proud run to Him who is meek and lowly in His humility and crucifixion. Those who sought honor one of another and seek not the honor that comes from God only run to the taunted, the condemned, vilified, dying the malefactor's death on the accursed tree, and glory in the cross of the Lord Jesus. He draws. The worldling looks from all this world in which his heart was bound up to the One not of this world, lifted up above the world on a piece of wood, a poor, despised, dying man. He leaves all and runs to Him. The votary of sinful pleasure looks on this aspect of deepest pain, of holiest pain, and he quits his lusts and runs to the holy Sufferer. He draws. He draws the miser from his hoards, draws the sensualist from his pleasures, draws the self-righteous from his efforts, draws

the abandoned from his vices, draws the proud from his arrogance.

The dying One has a drawing power. "I will draw all men unto me. This he spake, signifying what death he should die." Christ is all attraction. The world does not know that; it thinks and feels Him repulsive, but He is all attraction. He does not repel; He draws. "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." He is all attraction; but lifted up on the cross He is most of all attractive. All His drawing power is concentrated there. We might think there was more attractive power when He was lifted up on the Mount of Transfiguration — when He was lifted up and set on the right hand of the Majesty on high, far above all principalities and powers and every name that is named; and there *is* attractive power; but until the cross draws, this draws not. The heart may go out selfishly after these things, but it goes not out after Him. But in the Crucified, if you see not Him, you

see nothing to attract. It's not a crown of glory that attracts; it's a crown of thorns. These are not robes of heavenly splendor; it is but a mock robe. These are not all the angels of God worshiping Him; they are knees bent in derision. That is not a mighty hand which is nailed to the cross; He is crucified in weakness. There's no honor there, no splendor there. Nothing that all the world likes—everything that all the world hates; and now, unless there be attraction in Himself, in His heart, and in His work, there can be none extrinsic—indeed, not at all. If there is, it must be all intrinsic.

What do those say who have been drawn by it? What account do they give? Some of them possibly can give very little account of it at all, for a man may feel rightly and deeply, and not be very good at explaining, and those who can give some account may give an inadequate account. Woe for the man who can tell all he sees in Christ to draw him! Woe for

the man who has not experienced more drawing than he is able to give account of in words; he sees only a measured degree of excellence in Christ. But surely the drawn can give some account: grace, grace, and now, in connection with grace, holiness. Until drawn, He was despised and we esteemed Him not. When drawn, "surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." What did one drawn man say about it? "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." "The Son of God loved me, and gave Himself for me." "He is derided to save me who deserved it from eternal ignominy and confusion of face. He endures the malice of devils and men that I might be free from everlasting torment. He receives the sword of God, which was about to pierce into my heart. He is taking and drinking that cup of sorrow, the red wine of the wrath and

indignation of Almighty God, which was my portion, and which, but for Him, to eternal ages I should have been drinking, ever unexhausted—He has emptied it. He has drunk it empty of curse, full of blessing, into my hands. What have I to do anymore with idols! God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." "Ah! now," saith the sensualist, "there is a bitter cup for Christ—a sweet cup for me of holy joy." "There," saith the ambitious man, "there is an awful degradation for that glorious one. It humbles me in the dust to think of it. Oh, there His crowned head is encircled with the mock crown of thorns that I may wear the crown of life that fades not away!" "And there, then," saith the covetous man, "is He who was rich emptied. Though He was rich, yet for my sake He became poor—and what's the vile trash to me?—that I through His poverty might be rich with a treasure which fades not away, eternal in the heavens."

He draws: "I will draw all men unto me." And "who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?" He has drawn Jews, Romans, Greeks; distant lands and isles have heard and, hearing, submitted themselves unto Him, and the strange gods have faded out of the strong places. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He has drawing power. Lifted up once on the cross, His crucifixion in one sense is perpetual; in the proclamation of it, and in the power of it, and in the remembrance of it, He draws still.

Has He drawn me? Has He drawn you? From what and to what? From what has He drawn? Has He drawn from this world and from its prince? All that He draws, He draws from that quarter—all fuel for the eternal burnings, and He draws to make pillars in the temple of His God. He draws, turning men "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may re-

ceive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified." Has He drawn you out of darkness into light, out of Satan's kingdom into His own kingdom; drawn you from the present evil world, from all its sentiments, likings and dislikings, wishes, efforts; drawn you, not grudgingly, out of its society? A man may be drawn away out of the world into a convent and carry the world with him in the shape of the love of it—his body drawn, his unwilling soul held back by the beloved world, to whose godless sentiments, selfish ways, and vain honors he is not crucified. Has He drawn you from yourself? That requires the most drawing force of any, to draw man from himself. Has He drawn you from your own will, from all your virtues, and from all your sins, from your religions and irreligions, from your fancied good and real evil—drawn you away from all? Have you nothing now but Him? "God forbid that I should glory,

save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." The apostle did not say, "God forbid that I should glory"—leaving out the cross of Christ from the causes of his glory—but "God forbid that I should glory, *save* in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Do not mistake that. "By whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." I was not crucified. Christ crucified is the object drawing. It draws to it and away from all that is not Christ. It draws you to Christ in His person, covenant, work, gospel, law, grace, authority—draws you to Him as your Prophet, and Priest, and King, as all your salvation and all your desire. Are you being drawn more and more? If Christ has begun drawing you, I am sure that He has not finished drawing you. We are not so near Jesus as we should be, as we must be, as we shall be, if we are under His drawing. All who have been drawn are being drawn still; and all who are being drawn are coming to Christ. They have heard Him who says

“Come!” and they have set out to go to Him; He is always saying “Come, come!” and they’re coming and getting nearer.

What steps of progress are we making as the results of this drawing? Surely, if we are not coming, He is not drawing. He is drawing in one sense, in His sweet and powerful invitations, but we feel able to resist them all still. Surely there is another drawing than that, a drawing not to be resisted. Are we drawn by that drawing—sweet affections, different from all constraints and contraries, but stronger than all constraints, more powerful than all necessity, the constraint of love? What stumbling blocks are you getting over? What other attractions are being loosed to allow you on? What bands untied? What swiftness is given to your feet, making them like hinds’ feet? What kindling up of the love strong as death and the jealousy cruel as the grave? What sacrifices, what accounting of all things but loss for the excellency of Jesus

Christ? What suffering for His sake of the loss of all things, and counting them but dung if we may win Christ and be found in Him? Do you ever feel His attractive power coming and drawing hard away from detentions? When you are slow and He goes away, putting His hand at the hole of the door and leaving the smell of the sweet myrrh; when you open for the absent Beloved and He is not found, what rising and going about the city? What drawing to a crucified Savior? Oh, the world likes a crowned Savior tolerably well, if it is a crown without a cross, but not a crucified Savior to draw men to be crucified! Jesus is drawing you to the cross. Do you love His cross on which He was crucified and which He gives to you, that you may have some conformity in this too to the image of God's Son, being crucified with Him? Has the cross grown sweet yet? Can you rejoice to be counted worthy to suffer shame and reproach for the name of Jesus—to do good and to

suffer for it, like Him who, when He was reviled, reviled not again, and when He suffered, threatened not, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously? Is death becoming more pleasant? Are you getting any nearer the mind of being willing to depart and to be with Christ? I do not give this as a mark essential to the being of grace, but as a mark of its progress, of God's drawing—a point to which even the beginner is to be looking forward. Although the beginner may be more pleased that Christ should come and be with Him here, and may think that better than to depart and to be with Christ, yet let him be drawn a little closer and he will change his mind and think that, though good—how unspeakably good it is to have Christ here, it is better far to depart and be with Christ.

What zeal do you feel and exercise toward counter-drawing? What revenge? Take a good vengeance on the flesh, the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the

eye, and the pride of life. What revenge do they stir up in the man who is drawn and counter-drawn? If he is led by the Spirit, then what a real distaste of the hindrances and what determination in the strength of divine grace to have all these bonds cut through, that the soul may escape as a bird out of the snare of the fowler, and rise singing, singing, "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made the heavens and the earth."

Undrawn sinners, you know nothing of this; you have not experienced it, and so the words remain to be fulfilled about you. He has not ceased drawing. But how can we persuade you? We know we cannot, because we cannot do God's work to open your eyes and shine in your hearts, to give you the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But if only one ray would shine in there, you would not stay away; the devil could not keep you! That one ray would draw. Truly, light is sweet to the eyes. Oh,

that you but knew how sweet light is and what sweet blessings Jesus bestows! If you but knew the treasures of loveliness and of love that are in Him—the riches of the One who, though rich, yet for your sakes became poor, that you through His poverty might be rich, you couldn't hate Him. You are bad enough to do it, but the attraction that is in Him wouldn't let you. Be persuaded, if we cannot give you sight. Oh, that the Lord would enable us to persuade you that you are blind, that the darkness is passed away and the true light now shines, and it is only that the darkness has blinded your eyes! Then would be heard the cry to Jesus, "Lord, that I might receive my sight!" Oh, that we could persuade you that there is an unknown attractiveness in Jesus Christ! Then you would come and say, "Lord, Thou hast told me about it, and that is all. Thou hast told me the doctrine; that is all man can do. Lord, draw me. I shall never know what drawing is until Thou draw."

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