

Concerning Coming to God in Faith

- 1 Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!
- 2 Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot;
To Thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!
- 3 Just as I am, though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt;
Fightings within, and fears without,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!
- 4 Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind;
Sight, riches, healing of the mind;
Yes, all I need, in Thee to find,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!
- 5 Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because Thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!
- 6 Just as I am, Thy love unknown
Has broken every barrier down;
Now, to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come! (*Hymns, #1048*)

This hymn, written by Charlotte Elliott, begins with the ultimate surrender of a tormented soul to a loving Savior: “Just as I am without one plea, / But that Thy blood was shed for me.” Unable to find any way to deliver herself, she comes in simple faith. She cannot discover any means to present herself justified before a righteous God. She is bereft of any possibility of improvement—every effort has resulted in failure. All hope of acceptance based upon good works or even good intentions is abandoned. There remains only one faint glimmer of hope: “Thy blood was shed for me,” and one tentative whisper of consolation: “Thou bid'st me come to Thee.”

God's salvation is profoundly simple. Justification before God and forgiveness of sins cannot be earned. It is based absolutely upon the shed blood of the Lamb of God. The blood of Jesus is the mysterious means by which all flesh can be reconciled to God. Jesus Christ “is the propitiation

for our sins, and not for ours only but also for those of the whole world” (1 John 2:2). The Bible tells us clearly that God in Christ has become the unique means of accomplishing our redemption and of satisfying His righteous demands. The sacrifice of God's anointed Son is efficacious for every human, for every time, and for every circumstance. The only limit to the effectiveness of His blood is unbelief.

Unbelief is a part of the mystery of lawlessness that is now operating in this present age and will be fully manifested at the end of the age (2 Thes. 2:7). *Mystery* indicates a hidden operation. In another place Paul describes the effect that this lawless operation has on unbelievers before their salvation:

And you, though dead in your offenses and sins, in which you once walked according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, of the spirit which is now operating in the sons of disobedience; among whom we also all conducted ourselves once in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the thoughts, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. (Eph. 2:1-3)

The mystery of lawlessness operating in the sons of disobedience is a real and substantial force that causes all of humanity to be subject to its pernicious influence. These verses indicate that in our state of unbelief we were enslaved to three evil influences within us and outside of us, which kept us in a blinded condition of ignorance. First, the lusts of the flesh within are a constraining influence over all of our conduct, demanding that we satisfy their inward cravings. Next, the age of this world, a system that lies under the evil one, Satan (1 John 5:19), is an arrangement of choices designed to fully control, direct, and usurp all of humankind. All around there are myriads of subtle suggestions governing our choices and keeping us in the darkness of unbelief while we treasure the vain thought that we are the masters of our own destinies. Finally, the ruler of the authority of the air, Satan himself as the power within our flesh, captivates and directs our living and conduct, demanding our submission. As such an authority, he directs the course of the age in which we live. He is the god of this age who has blinded the thoughts of the unbelievers in order that the illumination

of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, might not shine on them (2 Cor. 4:4). In such a condition, we were all relegated to the status of being sons of disobedience and children of wrath.

Thus, it is so wonderful and releasing when we hear the call of the Lamb of God who bids us to come to Him in abject shame, yet with the faith that His mercy can reach us. There, at a place of absolute hopelessness concerning our own virtues or intentions, we experience a glorious deliverance from the darkness of unbelief: “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in offenses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)” (Eph. 2:4-5). This is the testimony of the profound effect of God’s shining into our hearts to give the light of the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:6). We are rescued from the despotic control issuing from the realm of death and darkness, and we are lifted into the glorious freedom of the kingdom of the Son of God, a realm of life and light. Our exit from darkness and transfer into light is through the transcending passageway of simply responding to the beckoning Lamb of God: “Thou bid’st me come to Thee.”

The testimony of the hymnist continues in stanza 2: “Just as I am, and waiting not / To rid my soul of one dark blot.” The threefold influence of the flesh, the world, and Satan weighs heavily on us, demanding our continuing submission to their dominion or alternatively insisting that we cannot go forward to God until we have done something to make ourselves ready by cleansing our soul of this or that soiled condition. But the shackles on the imprisoned soul fall helplessly away only from the one who comes to the waiting Lamb of God with the simple confession “just as I am.” The blood of the Lamb is the all-sufficient means of cleansing each spot. “O Lamb of God, I come!”

Coming forward to God in faith is simple but not always easy. Hence, stanza 3 chronicles another aspect of the repentant soul as he turns toward the waiting Lamb. “Just as I am, though tossed about / With many a conflict, many a doubt; / Fightings within, and fears without.” The conflicts are the result of the continuing struggle of the god of this age to distract those who would hear the word of God and believe. This inner battle often takes the form of thoughts that suggest that one’s turning in faith is not sincere, is hypocritical, or is just the action of a fool. An erroneous concept prevails with both unbelievers and Christians concerning the relationship between God and His people. Thoughts of God nearly always evoke the notion that there must be a requirement to do good things to please Him. Although this is absolutely false, it causes us to shrink back from God. “How can I face God,” we may muse, “since I am so wrong in my doings,

so hopelessly lost in my loose ways of living?” The inner battle can become fierce. At the same time there are fears without, thoughts of being rejected by friends, of being despised by relatives, or of suffering persecution from the world. How fortunate is the one who presses ahead in spite of these hindrances: “O Lamb of God, I come.”

And when faith follows the word of Christ, the heart of the seeking one is soon assured that her every need is found in the wonderful Lamb of God: “Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind; / Sight, riches, healing of the mind; / Yes, all I need, in Thee to find.” The utterance is reminiscent of that in the epistle to Laodicea in which the Savior utters a harsh rebuke to the lukewarm believers, “[You] do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked” (Rev. 3:17) followed by His entreating supplication in verse 18, “I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined by fire that you may be rich, and white garments that you may be clothed and that the shame of your nakedness may not be manifested, and eyesalve to anoint your eyes that you may see.” Sight, riches, healing of the mind are real experiences of the one who lays his head on the Savior’s breast in unqualified surrender, admitting his utter dependence on the living God who can be seen in the wonderful Lamb.

Stanza 5 is the triumphant exclamation of simple faith that has evoked the response of the inner witness of the Spirit with the spirit of the believer (cf. Rom. 8:16; Heb. 11:6; 10:23): “Just as I am, Thou wilt receive, / Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve; / Because Thy promise I believe.” It is the testimony of every Christian that when at last we have yielded to the prompting of the calling Lamb, we have found that all our fears and doubts were swallowed up in the absorbing grace of the Lord. We found that we were accepted just as we are—no hidden requirements were suddenly placed upon us. There was only the incredible relief—we are welcomed into the Savior’s love, we are pardoned of all our transgressions, we are cleansed of all our sins, and we are relieved of all our guilt. We are no longer outside the sphere and realm of the divine life; we have been given an abundant entrance into His loving presence to enjoy the riches of His grace.

Hence, the final stanza is the confession of a bride who consecrates her entire being to her dear Bridegroom: “Just as I am, Thy love unknown / Has broken every barrier down; / Now, to be Thine, yea, Thine alone, / O Lamb of God, I come, I come!” The final consequence of turning the heart to our waiting Lord is the setting of our heart on fire in love for Him. We hunger for His continuing presence. We can never be satisfied with merely the objective result of pardon and cleansing. Now our hearts ever cry for the subjective experience of living in personal and affectionate, daily contact with the Lord. Our hearts echo the enraptured appeal of the maiden in the Song of

Songs, “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! / For your love is better than wine” (1:2).

This is the mystery of godliness—God manifested in the flesh—consummating in the great mystery—Christ and the church as the universal couple (1 Tim. 3:16; Eph. 5:32). It is the astonishing intention of God for humanity that has never come up in the human heart; it is the unimaginable purpose of God, the things God has prepared for those who love Him (1 Cor. 2:9). God, in the person of His Son, came into His creation, becoming a genuine part of it, a perfect man; His goal was not only to redeem His chosen, but to bring His redeemed and regenerated

people into an intimate joining, a marriage relationship with Him for eternity. He has come seeking and courting His bride! Now His seeker has been brought from being an unattractive, vile, and wretched sinner to being the beloved of her Lord, a holy member blended into the corporate bride, as the angel unveiled to John: “Come here; I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb” (Rev. 21:9). There are no more fightings and fears, no more plaguing doubts, no more blindness and wretchedness. Now she can speak with intimate boldness, “Thy love unknown / Has broken every barrier down; / Now, to be Thine, yea, Thine alone, / O Lamb of God, I come, I come!”

Concerning Living by the Indwelling Christ

- 1 Live Thyself, Lord Jesus, through me,
For my very life art Thou;
Thee I take to all my problems
As the full solution now.
Live Thyself, Lord Jesus, through me,
In all things Thy will be done;
I but a transparent vessel
To make visible the Son.
- 2 Consecrated is Thy temple,
Purged from every stain and sin;
Make Thy flame of glory now be
Manifested from within.
Let the earth in solemn wonder
See my body willingly
Offered as Thy slave obedient,
Energized alone by Thee.
- 3 Every moment, every member,
Girded, waiting Thy command;
Underneath the yoke to labor
Or be laid aside as planned.
When restricted in pursuing,
No disquiet will beset;
Underneath Thy faithful dealing
Not a murmur or regret.
- 4 Ever tender, quiet, restful,
Inclinations put away,
That Thou may for me choose freely
As Thy finger points the way.
Live Thyself, Lord Jesus, through me,
For my very life art Thou;
Thee I take to all my problems
As the full solution now. (*Hymns*, #403)

Many spiritual songs of modern Christianity purport to be love songs to the Lord, but though they are filled with glowing terms of endearment, they are bereft of any genuine depth of commitment. Love is nothing if it does not require the dedication of the lover to the loved one—not an outward demand but an inner constraint generated out of a heart of love. This hymn, written by Watchman Nee, stands in stark contrast to the offerings in many modern Christian songs. The writer deeply experienced the constraining power of the lovely person of the Lord Jesus, and he expressed his profound devotion and allegiance as one who had been smitten with the attractiveness of the Savior. The feeling of the hymn is similar to the thought expressed by the apostle Paul in his second Epistle to the Corinthian believers: “For the love of Christ constrains us because we have judged this, that One died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all that those who live may no longer live to themselves but to Him who died for them and has been raised” (5:14-15). Based on his attraction to the Lord Jesus, the writer of this hymn prays with intense longing, “Live Thyself, Lord Jesus, through me, / For my very life art Thou.”

In God’s economy it is a mysterious reality that we have been crucified with Christ and, as a result, no longer live; rather, Christ, who loved us and gave Himself up for us, now lives in us (Gal. 2:20). Our crucifixion with Christ and our living with Him are the provision and the goal of the divine life that is within us as believers. By this divine life, we live the life of God here on the earth. One may protest that it is impossible for anyone to live the life that Jesus lived—a perfect human life that is not only without sin, but a life that is the expression of divinity lived out through humanity. Only Christ can live such a life, but we must allow Him to live Himself

through us. We are Christ's increase on the earth. We can live such a life by Christ Himself as the Spirit entering into our human spirit to be our life and living through us.

The next two lines of stanza 1 appear to be incongruent with the remainder of the hymn: "Thee I take to all my problems / As the full solution now." What is the connection between taking Christ as the full solution to all of our problems and living a life of absolute commitment in full surrender to the Lord? Our difficulty in making this connection is rooted in the fact that we usually view the Lord as our great "problem solver" in a way that is disconnected from the fact that He is the Lord who as our very life is living through us. After we have mused over the balance of the hymn, however, we can begin to understand the unique sense in which the author takes the Lord as the full solution to all of his problems.

Stanza 1 concludes with the theme of the entire hymn: "Live Thyself, Lord Jesus, through me, / In all things Thy will be done; / I but a transparent vessel / To make visible the Son." The focus of the believer is on the will of our Savior God. When we have seen through the inner eyes of faith His fair beauty, we have the penetrating aspiration that His will be done and the burning ambition that we become transparent containers through which Christ is manifest. Through His shining into our hearts, God deposits a wonderful treasure into us, the Christ of glory, who as the embodiment of God comes into us to be our life and our everything. "But," Paul says, "we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not out of us" (2 Cor. 4:7). We are earthen vessels of little consequence in regard to our intrinsic worthiness before our righteous God. The priceless treasure we contain defines our value. Hence, our desire is to display the inestimable worth of the glory of the Son through a transparent living.

Stanza 2 presents a number of images from the Old Testament which unveil various aspects of our experience of cooperation with the Son by which He can fulfill His desire (and our wish) that He live His life through us. The "consecrated temple" refers to the tabernacle of God in the wilderness as a type of our own body made ready and presented to God for His filling. It has been purged of every stain and sin. We stand ready for the Lord of glory to descend upon us as His temple and fill us as He once filled the tabernacle in the wilderness after it had been fully constructed and furnished according to the instructions of Jehovah. At that juncture,

the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the Tent of Meeting, because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle....For the

cloud of Jehovah was upon the tabernacle by day, and there was fire in it by night. (Exo. 40:34-35, 38)

The tabernacle in the wilderness (and later the temple in the good land) constituted the house of God prepared as His dwelling place in the midst of His chosen people to make known His glory among them. Similarly, the New Testament makes clear to us that the body of each believer is a temple of the Holy Spirit, whom we have received from God (1 Cor. 6:19). Thus, as the hymn declares, the believer stands before God as His temple, cleansed from every stain and sin, awaiting His descent and inward filling with His glory. The believer anticipates the "flame of glory" to be manifested from within his very being. The Spirit of God in our human spirit (cf. John 3:6; 4:24; Rom. 8:16) is the reality of the glory of the Lord filling the tabernacle. For this permeating work of the Spirit to proceed, we need first the purging effect of the blood of Christ. Perhaps the reference to purging arose out of recalling David's supplication after his unthinkable sin with the wife of Uriah: "Purge my sin with hyssop, and I will be clean; / Wash me, and I will be whiter than snow" (Psa. 51:7). Or our thoughts may be turned to the event described by the prophet Malachi at the coming again of the Lord into His temple where "He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and purge them like gold and like silver" (3:2-3). Today the Lord is in His holy temple, individually within each believer and corporately in His living Body composed of all His believers, but each vessel must be purged so that the flame of God's glory can shine clearly through the transparent walls as one day He will shine through the crystal clear walls of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:10-11, 18).

Next, the hymn draws our attention to a scene in which "the earth in solemn wonder" is looking upon the believer willingly offering his body to be an obedient slave to the Lord. This vista suggests the cry raised by another prophet: "But Jehovah is in His holy temple: / Be silent before Him, all the earth!" (Hab. 2:20). In Exodus 21:2-6, the law provides that after a Hebrew has served as a slave for six years, in the seventh year he will be set free. However, if a slave decides out of love for his master that he will not go out free, the slave's master will take him to the doorpost and bore his ear through with an awl. Then the slave will serve him forever. We can be such slaves to the Lord, saying from our hearts, "I love my Master. I will not go out free." It is a rare phenomenon to find a person who voluntarily abandons his or her own interests to pick up the goals and purposes of another. Paul could find only one such person among all his fellow laborers: "For I have no one like-souled who will genuinely care for what concerns you; for all seek their own things, not the things of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:20-21). Hence, the world beholds the absolute obedience of a

committed believer in solemn wonder; the consecrated believer is a mystery to the unbelieving world.

The obedient slave of the Lord discovers a new and wonderful source of energy—the motivating, impelling, and directing power that is the Lord Himself: “Energized alone by Thee.” God operates in the believers both the willing and the working for His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13). As we willingly open our entire being to be an obedient slave, the Lord as the empowering, operating Spirit enters our spirit and becomes the “motor” and the “driver” to fulfill His good pleasure in us. The word *operates* in Philippians 2:13 is a translation of the Greek word *energēō*, which means “to act” or “to work effectually with power.” It expresses the energizing and productive power of God Himself as the active agent in us who makes us willing inwardly and who enables us to carry out His will.

Stanza 3 continues to describe the readiness of the obedient slave to perform his Master’s bidding: “Every moment, every member, / Girded, waiting Thy command.” Paul urged every believer to present his body as a living sacrifice that is holy and well pleasing to God (Rom. 12:1). Each member of our body is to be girded, poised to spring into action or alternatively to peacefully await the Lord’s behest. It is remarkable here that the author expresses his willingness to either labor under the yoke of the Master (cf. Matt. 11:28-29) or to be laid aside according to the Lord’s plan. Watchman Nee experienced both of these aspects of service in his walk with the Lord. For many years he labored tirelessly in the service of the Lord. But he also endured a setting aside for six years at the peak of his ministry, resuming his labor for some four years, only to spend his final twenty years in prison, unable to share any of his rich enjoyment of the

Lord except with a few fellow prisoners or perhaps an occasional guard. Yet at the end of his life he testified that he had kept his joy. It seems that he fulfilled the words he had earlier penned: “When restricted in pursuing, / No disquiet will beset; / Underneath Thy faithful dealing / Not a murmur or regret.” How marvelous that our brother followed the steps of his beloved Master who in that dark night of His betrayal bowed His knee to His Father and freely handed Himself over to His Father’s plan, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will” (Matt. 26:39).

The final stanza continues with the theme of restful submission to the Master. The hymnist is ever tender, quiet, and restful, putting away all of his inclinations. All his preferences, personal choices, and predispositions are renounced and relinquished into the loving hands of the Lord. He does not offer any trace of resistance to the Savior’s leading in anything. The fragrance of the hymn here is sweet, intimate, and tender, involving the emotions and the will as well as the human spirit. It reflects a genuine relationship in life with our loving God. Once again the obedient slave importunes, “Live Thyself, Lord Jesus, through me, / For my very life art Thou; / Thee I take to all my problems / As the full solution now.” Here at the conclusion of the hymn, we realize that to take the Savior as the full solution to all problems is not to appeal for the removal of difficulties, nor is it a desperate cry of a servant for relief from sufferings. It is the triumphant declaration of one who has discovered the secret of living by another person who is his life, a person who spontaneously lives out His purpose in him by becoming everything to him.

by Gary Kaiser

Footnotes from the Recovery Version of the New Testament on 2 Corinthians 4:7

“**But** we have this **treasure** in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not out of us.”

But: God’s shining in our hearts brings into us a treasure, the Christ of glory, who is the embodiment of God to be our life and our everything. But we who contain this treasure are earthen vessels, worthless and fragile. A priceless treasure is contained in worthless vessels! This has made the worthless vessels ministers of the new covenant with a priceless ministry. This has been accomplished by the divine power in resurrection. The excellency of the power is surely of God and not out of us. In the apostles’ speaking concerning their ministry for God’s new covenant, five very significant and expressive metaphors were used to illustrate how they, as the ministers of the new covenant, and their ministry were constituted, how they behaved and lived, and how their ministry was carried out:

(1) captives in a triumphal procession for the celebration of Christ’s victory (2:14a); (2) incense-bearers to scatter the fragrance of Christ (2:14b-16); (3) letters written with Christ as the content (3:1-3); (4) mirrors beholding and reflecting the glory of Christ in order to be transformed into His glorious image (3:18); (5) earthen vessels to contain the Christ of glory as the excellent treasure (v. 7). (Note 1)

Treasure: This treasure, the indwelling Christ, in us, the earthen vessels, is the divine source of the supply for the Christian life. It is by the excellent power of this treasure that the apostles as the ministers of the new covenant were capable of living a crucified life that the resurrection life of Christ, whom they ministered, might be manifested. Thus, they manifested the truth (v. 2) for the shining of the gospel. (Note 2)