

WHOSOEVER WILL

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And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say. Come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. Rev. 22:17

[Note: Once - and only once in the Holy Scriptures is the term "*whosoever will*" used. It is found in the verse above only. We affirm that all who are athirst may come and take of the water of life freely - but who are these? It is the willing and they alone, as this article expounds correctly, may come. - Leon King].

This portion of the inspired record is often cited as sustaining the doctrine of the freedom of the sinner to accept or reject the grace of God; which according to that system only offers conditions of salvation which are not effective without the consent of the sinner who must at least accept the offered favor. If this theory is sustained by even one passage of that testimony which God has given, then it is true, and all opposing doctrines are overthrown. But if it is not thus supported, then no sophistry of men can make it true. It can be of no advantage to hold any false sentiment, for it will not become true by age; nor yet can skillful argument and devoted zeal remedy its falsehood. Therefore, let the text be considered in its connections as written by the immediate direction of the Holy Spirit, and may the grace of God enable us and every reader to hear with submissive reverence what the Lord speaks; and in the discussion of this subject *Let God be true, but every man a liar.*

It must not be forgotten that all this wonderful revelation which is written by John is the testimony of Jesus Christ, which is the spirit of

prophecy. (Rev.1:1 and 19:10) Then it has its proper application to the body of Christ, which is the church, redeemed out of every nation; and any interpretation of its figurative language must be erroneous if it is not consistent with the plain record of divine truth in the Bible. But it will only be necessary at present to candidly consider the immediate context to see the error of the application of the expression in the text as appealing to dead sinners to come, either to the church or to any other *place*. Twice in the preceding portion of this chapter the Lord announces (vs. 7 & 12) that He comes quickly. Then in verse 16 He gives the seal of His own name, Jesus, to signify the genuineness of the message. To this the Spirit and the bride respond in the words of the text.

There is always perfect harmony with the will of God in the prayer indicted by the Spirit; therefore, the Spirit says Come. There is nothing which can afford to the church (which is the bride in this text) such fullness of joy as the coming of her Lord. Hence, she always responds as here written, and repeated in verse 20, *Even so, come, Lord Jesus*. It is worthy of special observation that the Spirit and the bride speak with one voice in saying Come. There is no discord, and no argument is necessary to convince the bride that His coming is desirable. In all the fervor of glowing love she responds to His word with the rapture of His Holy Spirit, Come. This is the language which peculiarly characterizes the bride, the Lamb's wife. (See chapter 21:2, 9)

And let him that heareth say, Come. In this expression the Spirit and the bride agree. The liberty is freely accorded to every one that *heareth* to unite in this fervent prayer. Throughout this book a very special peculiarity of those addressed is stated in the fact that an ear to hear is given them, and only he that hath an ear is commanded to hear the message of the Spirit to the churches. As none can hear but such as are made alive by the quickening power of the Spirit of God, only they who are led by that Spirit are included in this expression. In a natural application this language would not include one but such as are alive, so the distinction is

clearly marked in the spiritual application; none but such as hear are authorized or permitted to say, Come.

It is God that worketh in every one that hath an ear, not only to will, but also to do of His good pleasure. Every one who hears the voice of the Son of God, in that hearing is made alive; for He is the Lord from heaven, a quickening Spirit; and the words which Jesus speaks are spirit and they are life. Only such as are thus made alive have that eternal life which Jesus gives to His sheep; and they alone have the will to pray for the coming of the Lord. Hence, it is evident that the Spirit of Christ dwells in any one who really desires His coming. This is in harmony also with the assurance given in Hebrews 9:28; *Unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.* It is enjoined upon him that heareth to say, Come; and every hearer feels that all his salvation and all his desire is embraced in that prayer for the manifest coming of the Lord, because, *when Jesus, who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory. (Col. 3:4)*

They who hear the life-giving word of God are all made thus to unite in the longing and urgent petition of the bride, the whole church of the redeemed, in praying the Lord to come. They have learned by sore experience that they cannot come to Jesus in their own strength or by will. Their only gleam of hope is that Jesus will come to them, as the Samaritan in the parable came to the half-dead sufferer. (Luke 10:33) It would have been cruel mockery to exhort this poor man to come to a hospital which was at Jerusalem. He could not get there. But his benefactor came where he was, and brought relief.

So Jesus came to the poor and needy and saved them when they were yet without strength. Then when life and power have been given to the dead sinner, he has the will to unite in earnest praying to come in the fullness of sovereign grace and evermore abide in his heart. In this expression of the text there is not only liberty given to every hearer to say, Come, but it is

enjoined as the duty of all such thus to pray. If that desire is in the heart of any one, it is because he hears the voice of Jesus; and all such have received life. (Jn.5:25)

And let him that is athirst come. Here, again, a specific character is expressly defined, and it is precisely the same whom Jesus called in the last day of the feast of tabernacles, *If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.* (John 7:37) The thirsting is certainly a living one, for the dead do not thirst. But this direction discriminates still more closely; for there are none even of the living included in its address but such as thirst. In a literal sense it would be manifest folly to claim that any one can control thirst by his own will.

How gladly would the fainting wanderer in the burning desert refrain from thirsting if he could. And it is equally impossible for one to be thirsty when he has taken a full supply of water. Just so it is only the living one who can be subject to this thirst; - and the fact that he feels thirst is positive proof that he is alive. His thirsting does not give life, but only makes it manifest. This hungering and thirsting character needs not the terrors of torment to drive him to the throne of divine grace; it is the longing desire of his heart that he might have liberty to come.

That permission is included in this commandment of our Lord, and the assurance of its certain fulfillment is found in the words of Jesus, *All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.* (John 6:37) This is that fountain of which the Alpha and Omega says He will give freely to him that is athirst (Rev. 21:6). It is in strict accordance with this promise that the thirsty are commanded to come; and they are brought by the almighty power of that Word. While no other can even desire to come, all of His redeemed are made willing in the day of His power. (Psa. 110:5) They who are not athirst are not called to this fountain; but

**Poor, hungry, thirsty, fainting souls
Are freely welcome here;
Salvation like a river rolls
Abundant, free and clear.
Come then, with all your wants and wounds,
Your every burden bring;
Here love, unchanging love, abounds,
A deep celestial spring.**

And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely. It would seem needless to call attention to the particular character here described as authorized to take freely of the water of life; but many who boast of their intelligence insist that this language includes those who have not the will, which is here specifically presented as identifying those to whom the command applies. For such as have not the love of God in their hearts, there is no liberty here given to take of the water of life. Having only that carnal mind which is enmity against God and cannot be subject to His law, they are as destitute of will as they are of power to come freely and take of this living water. Our Lord Jesus says, *No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.* (Jn. 6:44) This one declaration settles the fact that the will of God is sovereign in the display of His amazing grace unto the salvation of sinners who were lost. Again He says to the unbelieving Jews, *And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.* (John 5:40) This positive assertion of the enmity of the natural man against the sovereign grace of God not only proves the utter falsehood of every form of doctrine which presents the will of the sinner as the cause of his salvation, but it establishes beyond the possibility of mistake the truth that every one who has desire (or will) to take freely of

the water of life is led by the Spirit of God; and all such are born of God as living children, and are joint heirs with Christ.

They who have the seal of the holy Spirit of promise being the only ones who have this will, it is certain that all who have this will are so sealed. If the tried and tempted child could rest in this assurance, it would lift him above the darkness of many hours of doubt; for however conscious unworthiness may involve him in fears, he cannot be deceived in his will to take freely of the water of life. Knowing his utter destitution of merit in himself, his only hope for salvation must be in that grace which is freely extended to the chief of sinners.

The heart of man has never conceived of such a gracious salvation as that which is given in Christ Jesus. That conviction which causes the sinner to hunger and thirst after righteousness is the assurance that the divine blessing rests upon his broken and contrite heart; that trembling desire which longs for the water of life is the will by which every one is identified whose right it is to take of that water freely. All others wish to purchase their interest in that living water by their own righteousness. Only the destitute have the will to take of that water freely. Hence there is strong consolation to the afflicted and poor people of God not only in the abundant supply of this living water, but also that in the will wrought in them by the grace of God they are accurately described in this text as the very people who are authorized to freely take of the water of life.

The illustration here used does not represent the *offer* of life to the dead, for they can have no will to authorize them to take. The figure implies that the willing character is *already* alive. None but the living can thirst. Then the very thirst by which a sinner is made to desire this water of life gives assurances of life already existing in the willing one. The dead have no thirst, and consequently they have not the will to take of the water of life freely. The efforts of carnal idolaters to persuade or drive dead sinners to have this will, are manifestly inconsistent with the literal figure. One who is

not thirsty might say that he wants water, but that would not change the fact. So it is not true when those who trust in their own righteousness profess to thirst after this water of life.

The psalmist sung of this wonderful water. *There is a river, the streams thereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High.* (Psa. 46:4) These living streams are all found in the city of God, and they flow nowhere else. Therefore, none but *they that do His commandments, and they which are written in the Lamb's book of life*, have access to this water, since no others enter into the city. (See Rev. 21:27; 22:14) To every one of them the water of life is freely given, not offered; and they are the only people that know the voice of Jesus as the joyful sound. These living subjects of the grace of God have need of the water of life to sustain them in the weary desert of this world of sorrow; and to every one of them it is freely given. It would be useless to offer it to those who do not feel the need of it. The awfully impressive testimony of Jesus which immediately follows this text must cause deep and heart-searching self-examination in every reader who fears the Lord.

If the Spirit of Christ dwells in any one, his desire is expressed in the text, both in regard to the coming of the Lord and the welcoming of every thirsting and willing one to come to this fountain which is opened in the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And every one is a subject of salvation who feels to respond to the announcement of the Lord's coming in the language of the Spirit and the bride, *Even so, come, Lord Jesus.*

--Messenger of Peace, 1958