

"THREE REASONS FOR BEING A CHRISTIAN"

Hebrews 13:8

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever. There is nothing more certain that impresses us than the nature of this earthly life. Things change. We change our calendars each week, or each month, or each year. We, ourselves, have changed. We glance around us and we find that there has been a change everywhere.

And change takes place - even though there are limitations placed upon us. We discover that there are some things that continue to change without stability.

Henry Francis Lyte wrote a hymn - Abide with me, fast falls the evening tide  
The darkness deepens, Lord, with me abide.  
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee  
Help of the helpless, oh, abide with me.

Swift to its close ebbs, out life's little day  
Earth's joys grow dim - it's glories pass away  
Change and decay, all around I see  
Oh, Thou, that changes not, abide with me.

Those lines express that man's experience. And he must have written it for all humanity. It is a rare hymn that captures the heart. And the man that wrote that hymn is a man that believed that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

It is not the person or the man, but it is the Christ. There is a story about a school boy that decided to enter the ministry. He said that he had come after hearing a sermon in the school chapel. Somebody asked him about the name of the Preacher. Really, he says, I cannot remember the man's name. All I know is, that the Preacher (showed me Christ). That is the duty of the man of God - to show nothing but Jesus Christ. And therein lies faith.

When we read this text, Jesus Christ - there were the usual names used in reference to our Lord. This simple name of Jesus was used. Which was a Hebrew name. There were hundreds of boys who bore that name in Galilee. But the Greek form of the Old Testament Hebrew name was Joshua. And that name was one that was coined by a man - the great Moses. And our Lord had that name and he is described as the son of God, the heir of all things, the logos.

The other name, is Christ. The Messianic title - this tells of his office, his work, his mission. But he was more than human - he was King and Priest. And when these two titles are brought together - we have the unchanging one. And it is understood that we consider that he is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

These three divisions of time offer us today three excellent reasons for accepting Jesus Christ. This expression has to do with him. For the reason that I have suggested. All things about us are changing. And therefore, to know that he changes not - is a great joy.

The Scripture in Revelation describes him as the Alpha and Omega. As if

he had started with the alphabet and had exhausted all words to describe him.

u An old man in his cottage was dying. And Lee Richmond visited him on his death bed. He had led this man to Christ. And as he sat near, he asked the person about the hope for eternity. And putting the wasted fingers upon the Bible - they said - Christ is here. And then they pointed upward and said - Christ is there.

Three times the expression, is used.

Rev. 1:8 - I am Alpha and Omega - the beginning and the end, saith the Lord. Which is, and which was, and which is to come - the Almighty. He is the Alpha and Omega of the book. He binds the Bible, the word of God, together. His story in prophesy runs through all the pages and makes the Bible one book.

Rev. 21:6 - And he said unto me - it is done. I am Alpha and Omega - the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is a thirst of the fountain of life freely. He is the Alpha and the Omega of the soul that is thirsty. If you drink of this world, you must drink again. If you try to quench your thirst with riches - the thirst will increase. If you try to satisfy it with honor - you will cry out again - oh, wretched man that I am. But if you drink of the living water, you will never thirst again.

Rev. 22:13 - I am the Alpha and the Omega - the beginning and the end. The first and the last. He is the Alpha and the Omega of the homecoming. He journeys with us all the way. When our eyes are blinded by sin - we know that he is near. He is at our side. At the time of sickness, and in health, in sunshine, in shade - he is there with us until the last day's work is done.

When life's race is run, and we cross over - his presence will be with us - and we'll see him face to face.

Everything about Jesus is masterful. There is power in his presence. Devils fled away and they were glad to enter the swine and to drown in the waters of the sea.

His word or his voice was powerful. The waves that rocked the boat - even the trained fishermen were afraid. But at the sound of his voice - the waves hushed. The storm was over and the sea was calm.

There was power in his hand. He had to but touch a sightless eye with his finger or to lay his hand upon a pain wracked body - and stretch forth his arms to the wicked and bring peace to those who had distress. Indeed, he is powerful in every way. The Scriptures talk about his miracles, the Devils, the disease, death - he conquered all. And he is described in this text. The same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

The revised version - there is little word - yea. Adding to the reading. It says, Jesus Christ is the same today. That he was yesterday. Now that is a truth that is filled with sweetness and comfort.

It is just here that the yea comes in - which is literally Amen. And it is as if the angels in the skies were giving ascent to the statement. If he is the same now as he was when he blessed little children - and forgave sinful women. And

comforted broken-hearted people, then I must receive him with my heart.

I want to present to you three reasons for being a Christian. Now doubtless today - we could think of a thousand reasons why we ought to be Christians. And maybe you have some things that you know as to why people ought to be Christians.

### I. YESTERDAY

Your yesterday and the day before that, and the day before that, reaching back to the beginning of your earthly pilgrimage is a real reason for accepting Christ.

You have lost sight of yesterday - of the sin. If you broke God's law, you cannot ignore it. It is a fact, if you have spoken unkindly or falsely against someone, you cannot let that matter slip and expect somehow it will be alright.

Boys flying kites haul in their white winged birds

But you cannot do that when you are flying words.

Therefore, I am not speaking in generalities - but this has to do with sin and reformation cannot cure that trouble. There is no outside application that can be made that will avail. A year or so ago, there was a well up on Eastern Shore, in which someone had put some poison. In some unaccountable way as to the reason - we do not know. But it was dangerous to drink that water - or to allow cattle to drink it. If you had gone to those people and said, let me build you a new well *Sweep* - let me give you a new bucket to use. And the water would be purified. Now that

would be wide of the truth. That sort of reformation would not bring any cure.

And a man doing his best would not panic - for if your best from today on, was sin which you had committed in the past, the laws which you have broken of God, of yesterday - reaching back from today, back to the early days of your experience. Then remember, your sin is against God. And certainly that man needs a divine prepared atonement.

The Bible says the wages of sin is death. Plainly it says, the soul that sinneth - it shall die. And do not forget - we are likewise told, he was made sin for us. Who knew no sin = that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. And the Scripture states that Christ died for our sins.

Isa. 40:2 - "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, for she hath received of the Lord's hand double of all of her sins."

A man once said that this did not mean that she was to receive double punishment. For that would be unjust. But he said in the old Jewish days, when one was in debt and gave his note as a promise for payment, he gave it on a perforation piece of parchment. He wrote the obligation across this paper in such a way that it would witness and was originally used. The debtor took one part of the parchment while the creditor took the other part. Now when the debt was paid, the portion held by the creditor was given to the debtor and was nailed to the door as a sign of payment. So remember, that in our debt of sin, he hath taken the hand-writing which was against us - and has nailed it to his cross.

And we are free from the law - that is a happy condition - and the best solution to the sin problem is found in Christ - the redeemer. As described "the lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

Henry Ostrom described an African prince visiting the settlement at the St. Louis exposition. He was clad in citizen's clothes - the people from Africa appeared in their native costumes. When this stranger proclaimed himself as a prince, why they ridiculed him. An aged man said, I can tell whether you are a prince of the royal blood. He ran his fingers down the back of the neck of the one who claimed to be a prince - and he found the scar that was there - the mark of his royalty. And he fell on his knees and all of the others worshipped him.

And he stands before us as the lamb that was slain - scars on his hands and his feet. And in his side and back - as he blessed us with even scars on his brow. He is our Redeemer. Jesus paid it all - all to him I owe.

## II. TODAY

If we were set free from the penalty of sin, and that is a reason for becoming a Christian. And if we expect to (stand in our own strength) - we would fail. Now that is not the hope of the Christian, nor is it the doctrine taught in the New Testament.

We have a Redeemer who is a great high priest. Who works at the right hand of God. And we have an indwelling Christ. Dr. Goldman says, we have a two-fold Christian experience - there is life and life more abundant. Regeneration and renewal.

Conversion and consecration. Sonship and communion. Righteousness and holiness. Peace with God and peace of God. And we cannot live as we ought - except we be united with Christ. He is the truth, the way, and the light. ~~Without him, as the way--there is nothing but wandering.~~ Without the truth, there is nothing but error. And without him as life, there is nothing but death. If I could live to God for just one day, one blessed day from rosey dawn of light, until purple twilight deepened into night, a day of faith unfaltering, trust complete. Of love unfeigned and perfect charity. Of Heavenly peace and patient humility. No hint of duty to constrain my feet, no dream of ease to lull to listlessness. Within my heart, no root of bitterness. No yielding of temptations subtle sway. We think in that one day, would so expand, my soul to meet such high and holy demand, that never never more would hold me down. This shriveling husk of self that wraps me around. So might I henceforth live in God always. ]

Such a life as this is possible if we unite with Christ in faith.

Do you remember the old Grandfather clocks - they are a little different from the modern workmanship. And the family watches them and admires them, as the pendulum moves and time is there presented. A man bought one - he hooked it up - but it always (stopped) And he discovered, that there was a little hook that he had not slipped the pendulum rod in, so he fixed it - and (it kept time to the satisfaction of all) And that is the way it is. That we must unite our life with Christ - we must be hooked up with him. Now these are times that men must be grafted in Christ. In these days of greed and graft, and awful sin - where nothing counts for holiness.

A Japanese Col. who was captured within the Russian lines - condemned as a spy



took a package of large bills from his pocket and said - give these to the Russian Red Cross. I am a Christian - and I wish to follow Christ in forgiving the enemies.

The Rev. Thomas Waugh, of Liverpool, lost his eldest son in a railway accident. The signal man was to blame. Now that man was broken-hearted. He was crushed by the sorrow that he brought as well as the man who had lost his son. And Rev. Waugh wrote him a sympathetic letter, to this stricken signal man.

### III. TOMORROW

Eternity forever. It will be light or darkness. This is the third reason that we should become a Christian. Yesterday our past needs atonement. Today we need an abiding Saviour. Tomorrow we need the duration of eternity.

Here are a few lines that were found in a man's pocketbook after his death.

How long sometimes a day appears.

And weeks how long are they.

Months moved as if the years would never pass away.

And days and weeks pass by.

And soon, must all be gone.

For day by day, as moments fly,

Eternity comes on.

Days, months, and years must have an end.

Eternity has none.

T'will always have as long to spend  
As when it first begun.

We would be careless if we <sup>did not</sup> realized eternity. And if we understood it. That there was just (one heartbeat) between us and the future. Between us and death. Between us and an unending eternity.

How long art thou eternity. A little bird with fretting beak might wear to naught the loftiest peak. Thou, but each thousand years it came. Yet, thou were then as now the same. Ponder, old man, eternity.

There are two experiences for us - each of which we must have as we pass out of this world.

First, there is (darkness) - this means to be away from God. And we were made for God. And without God we are going to be most miserable.

There is doom - the book shall be opened and we shall stand face to face with the Judge. Years ago a man was driving a (pair of horses) and he lost control of the team and they dashed through the streets of the village. And the (Judge) sprang out and caught the bridle, and at the risk of his own life - saved the man who was driving. By a strange turn of events - that same man was on trial for his life some time later. And he came up before the Judge who had rescued him. When the trial was over, the Judge addressed the man. (Have) you anything to say - why a sentence should not pronounced.

The prisoner said, your Honor, don't you know me? And when he told him he must speak, not address the Judge. He added again, but your Honor, don't you know me. I am the man you saved. Have mercy on me!

Now the (Judge) replied, I do remember you - but then I was your Saviour. And today I am your Judge and must pass sentence. And (if) you have sinned against the Saviour of men, one day, you must face him in judgement.

The second there is the land of light. It is a place of many mansions of beauty. It is also a place of reunion. There are streets of gold. There is the gold of purity. The pure in heart shall walk there. And there are gates of pearl. And the thought of the pearl is suffering. And if it is through the sufferings of Jesus - that we are to enter that city. And then we come into the presence of Christ.

The light of Heaven is the face of Jesus. The joy of Heaven is the presence of Jesus. The melody of Heaven is the name of Jesus. The theme of Heaven is the work of Jesus. The fullness of Heaven is Jesus himself.

And no text could describe the glory of that city. A little (boy) was operated on for his eyesight. And the Physician was able to help him. When the bandages were removed, he saw his Mother's face, he saw the beauty of the world - and he said to his Mother, (why) didn't you tell me of this beauty. She said, "I did try, my son - but I failed."

It is going to be the same way when we come to Heaven. God has a plan for our

lives - it includes the future. And if we do not take advantage - we shall be most miserable.

Eph. 1:12 - That we should be to the praise of his glory who first trusted in Christ. The glory of the sun is in its shining. The glory of a diamond, is in its brilliance. The glory of a song is in its sweetness. But the glory of God ought to be in yourself as redeemed by Christ.

Eph. 1:18 - The eye of your understanding, being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of his glory of his inheritance in the saints.

One of the most pathetic pictures describes Christ as treading the winepress alone. But he has passed through all of these things into the majesty of Heaven. But remember, there will be streets of gold.

Eph. 2:7 - That in the ages to come - he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us, through Christ Jesus. God's plan does not end with death nor with the coming of Christ. We do not know that there are other worlds in Heaven. But we who have been redeemed by the precious blood, or to be sent on errands to proclaim the riches of his grace. And his kindness to us through Christ. And ten million years from today, we shall be fulfilling his will, and working out his plan.

Now this all settles so many difficulties. Some of you said, your prayer was not answered when your loved-one died. But God was just calling that loved one

to a better position on high. And he knows best.

You said, that the education of your child amounted to nothing - because the day after his graduation, an accident suddenly took him away. But God had the child in training here for a marvelous mission in the other world.

If life ended with the grave, then we might be disturbed. And we might be broken-hearted because of trial and every trial and every headache are but a touch of the Master's hand. To shape up tomorrow.

This is a warning and men think very little about tomorrow. We have the name to live and are dead. And the man who calls himself a Christian and is indifferent and inconsistent, and not generous ought to tremble at the thought of that.

*id* Some years ago a terrific accident on the railroad in Colorado happened. When a switchman was called into account. He said, I have nothing to say. I was asleep. This is the situation of many a Christian. Those who have not accepted Christ. Many who are not Christians. Who must go into the future - and will wake up with what they might have been. They will remember God's call. The preaching of the ministry. The prayers of the mother. The appeals of conscience. But look, this memory will profit nothing.

Goodbye, I said to my conscience

Goodbye, for *ay* and *aye*

And I put her hands off harshly

And turned my face away.

And conscience smitten sorely

Returned not from that day.

But the time came when my Spirit grew weary of its pace. And I cried  
come back to my conscience. I long to see thy face. But conscience cried,  
I cannot. Remorse sits in my place.

May God save you from such a day. There are some good reasons for you  
being a Christian. Your past, yesterday, needs an atonement. Your presence  
needs an abiding Saviour. Your tomorrow needs to fit into the plan of God.  
But if I am a child of God, I need not fear.

I know not when, I know not where

My time will come to pass away

And so I live by faith and prayer

As if, I knew it were today.

For watch, the Scriptures say to me

Thy Lord will come in grace and power

Be ready when he calls for Thee

Thou knowest not the day nor hour.

Why should I be appauled at death. By God's decree - man dies to live.  
Eternity hangs on a breath - which God alone can hold or give.

The Christian death something most beautiful. When the Rev. Chas. Spurgeon

died, and was buried, they sang his funeral hymn.

Sleep on beloved, sleep and take thy rest  
Lay down thy head upon the Saviour's breast  
We loved thee well, but Jesus loves thee best  
Goodnight.

Calm is thy slumber as an infant sleep  
But thou shalt wake no more to toil and weep  
Thine is a perfect rest, secure and deep  
Good night.

Only goodnight, beloved, not farewell  
A little while and all his saints shall dwell  
In hallowed union, indivisible, good night.

Until we meet again before his throne  
Clothed in the spotless robe he gives his own  
Until we know even as we are known  
Good night.

I am sure you feel that you would like for your last hour to be like his.  
And there will be - if you have Christ as your Saviour. If he abides in your  
life. You can look forward to the future in him. For he is the same yesterday,  
today, and forever.

This is a most forceful verb here - in this verse. And this word is - is something that conveys that he never leaves nor forsakes his own. He is our helper day by day. He who stood with his own in the past - will stand by their side today. He who walks with us today - will be the same forever. He is eternally stable. He is unchangeable.

And God said before all the world, he is the same. Today, as he will be tomorrow. And his work on earth yesterday, and his work tomorrow will be in Heaven. His eternal work. The unchangeable Jesus can perform what we have suggested.

I trust that you will heed this text today, and when the curtain comes down on the drama of your life, you will have found this truth.