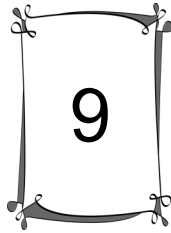


The background of the cover is a photograph of a scenic landscape. A paved road curves through a valley, flanked by trees with autumn foliage in shades of yellow, orange, and green. To the left of the road, a railway track with overhead power lines runs parallel to it. In the distance, a large, rugged mountain peak rises under a cloudy, overcast sky. The entire scene is framed by a green border with decorative, rounded corners.

Sermons of Robert Murray M'Cheyne

**9. The Good Way of
Coming before the Lord**

Sermons
of
Robert Murray
M'Cheyne



The Good Way of
Coming before the Lord

“Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” Micah 6:6-8.

Doctrine — The good way of coming before the Lord.

The question of an awakened soul. — “Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?” An unawakened man never puts that question. A natural man has no desire to come before God, or to bow himself before the High God. He does not like to think of God. He would rather think of any other subject. He easily forgets what he is told about God. A natural man has no memory for divine things, because he has no heart for them. He has no desire to come before God in prayer. There is nothing a natural man hates more than prayer. He would far rather spend half an hour every morning in bodily exercise or in hard labour, than in the presence of God. He has no desire to come before God when he dies. He knows that he must appear before God, but it gives him no joy. He had rather sink into nothing; he had rather never see the face of God. Ah! my friends, is this your condition? How surely you may know that you have “the carnal mind which is enmity against God.” You are like Pharaoh — “Who is the Lord, that I should obey Him?” You say to God, “Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of Thy ways.” What an awful state it is to be in to have no desire after Him who is the fountain of living waters!

I. Here is the piercing question of every awakened soul.

1. An awakened soul feels that his chief happiness is in coming before God. This was *unfallen Adam's* happiness. He felt like a child under a loving Father's eye. It was his chief joy to come before God — to be loved by Him — to be like a mote in the

sunbeam — to be continually basked in the sunshine of His love — no cloud or veil coming between. This is *the joy of holy angels*, to come before the Lord, and bow before the High God. In His presence is fullness of joy. “The angels do always behold the face of My Father.” On whatever errand of love they fly, they still feel that His eye of love is on them — this is their daily, hourly joy. This is the true happiness of a believer. Hear David (Psalm 42),

“As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God: my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?”

He panteth not after the gifts of God — not His favours or comforts — but after Himself. A believer longs after God — to come into His presence — to feel His love — to feel near to Him in secret — to feel in the crowd that he is nearer than all the creatures. Ah! dear brethren, have you ever tasted this blessedness? There is greater rest and solace to be found in the presence of God for one hour, than in an eternity of the presence of man. To be in His presence — under His love — under His eye — is heaven, wherever it be. God can make you happy in any circumstances. Without Him, nothing can.

2. An awakened soul feels difficulties in the way. “Wherewith,” etc. There are two great difficulties.

First, *The nature of the sinner*. — “Wherewith shall I,” etc. When God really awakens a soul, He shows the vileness and hatefulness of himself. He directs the eye within. He shows him that every imagination of his heart has only been evil continually; that every member of his body he has used in the service of sin; that he has treated Christ in a shameful manner; that he has sinned both against the law and love; that he has kept the door of his heart barred against the Lord Jesus, till his head was filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night. O brethren, if God has ever discovered yourself to you, you would wonder that such a lump of hell and sin should have been permitted to live and breathe so long; that God should have had patience with you till this day. Your cry will be, “Wherewith shall I come before the

Lord?” Though all the world should come before Him, how can I?

Second, *The nature of God*. — “The High God.” When God really awakens a soul, He generally reveals to him something of His own holiness and majesty. Thus He dealt with Isaiah (chapter 6), “I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim; one cried to another, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is filled with His glory. Then said I, Woe is me, for I am undone.” When Isaiah saw that God was so great a God, and so holy, he felt himself undone. He felt that he could not stand in the presence of so great a God. O brethren! Have you ever had a discovery of the highness and holiness of God, so as to lay you low at His feet? O pray for such a discovery of God as Job had,

“I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

Alas! I fear that most of you will never know that God with whom you have to do, till you stand guilty and speechless before His great white throne. O that you would pray for a discovery of Him now, that you may cry, “Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God!”

Third, *The anxiety of the awakened soul leads to the question, “Wherewith?”* — Ah! it is a piercing question. It is the question of one who has been made to feel that “one thing is needful.” Anything he has he would give up to get peace with God. If he had a thousand rams, or ten thousand rivers of oil, he would gladly give them. If the life of his children, the dearest objects on this earth, would attain it, he would give them up. If he had ten thousand worlds, he would give all for an interest in Christ. Woe to you that are at ease in Zion. Woe to those of you that never asked this question, Wherewith shall I come before the Lord? Ah! foolish triflers with eternal things! Poor butterflies, that flutter on from flower to flower, and consider not the dark eternity that is before you! Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel! Ye are hastening on to death and judgment, yet never ask, What garment shall

cover me, when I stand before the great white throne? If you were going to appear before an earthly monarch, you would ask beforehand, Wherewith shall I be attired? If you were to be tried at an earthly bar, you would make sure of an advocate. How is it you press on so swiftly to the bar of God, and never ask the question, Wherewith shall I appear? “If the righteous scarcely are saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?”

II. The answer of peace to the awakened soul.

“He hath showed thee, O man, what is good.” Nothing that man can bring with him will justify him before God. The natural heart is always striving to bring something to be a robe of righteousness before God. There is nothing a man would not do — nothing he would not suffer — if he might only cover himself before God. Tears, prayers, duties, reformations, devotions — the heart will do anything to be righteous before God. But all this righteousness is filthy rags. For,

1. The heart remains an awful depth of corruption. Every thing in which that heart has any share is polluted and vile. Their very tears and prayers would need to be washed.

2. Supposing this righteousness perfect, it cannot cover the past. It answers only for the time in which it was done. Old sins, and the sins of youth, still remain uncovered.

Oh! dear brethren, if Jesus is to justify you, He must do as He did for Joshua, “Take away the filthy garments from him;” and “I will clothe thee with change of raiment” Zech. 3:4. The hand of Jesus alone can clothe you with change of raiment.

Christ is the good way. — “He hath showed thee,” etc. “Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.” Christ is the good way to the Father.

First, Because He is so suitable. He just answers the case of the sinner; for every sin of the sinner He has a wound, for every nakedness He has a covering, for every emptiness He has a supply. There is no fear but that He will receive the sinner, for He

came into the world on purpose to save sinners. There is no fear but the father will be well pleased with us in Him, for the father sent Him, laid our iniquity upon Him, raised him from the dead, and points you to Him. “He hath showed thee, O man, what is good.”

Second, He is so free. — “As by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” As far as the curse of Adam extends, so far does the offer of pardon by Jesus extend. Here is good news to the vilest of men. You may be covered just as completely and as freely as those that have never sinned as you have done. “He hath showed thee, O man, what is good.”

Third, He is so God-glorifying. — All other ways of salvation are man-glorifying, but this way is God-glorifying; therefore it is good. That way is good and best which gives glory to the Lamb. The way of righteousness by Jesus is good, on this account, that Jesus gets all the praise. To Him be glory. It is of faith, that it might be by grace. If a man could justify himself, or if he could believe of himself and draw the righteousness of Christ over his soul, that man would glory. But when a man lies dead at the feet of Jesus, and Jesus spreads His white robe over him, out of free sovereign mercy, then Jesus gets all the praise.

Have you chosen the good way of being justified? This is the way which God has been showing from the foundation of the world. He showed it in Abel’s lamb, and in all the sacrifices, and by all the prophets. He shows it by His Spirit to the heart. Has this good way been revealed to you? If it has, you will count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of it. Oh, sweet, divine way of justifying a sinner! Oh, that all the world but knew it! Oh, that we saw more of it! Oh, that you could make use of it! “Walk therein and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”

III. God’s requirement of the justified.

When Jesus healed the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, he said to him, “behold, thou art made whole, sin no more, lest a worse thing happen unto thee.” And again, when He covered the

sin of the adulteress, he said “Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more” John 8. So here, when He shows the good way of righteousness, He adds, “And what doth the Lord require of thee?”

1. *God requires His redeemed ones to be holy.* — If you are His brethren, He will have you righteous, holy men.

First, He requires you to do justly — to be just in your dealings between man and man. This is one of His own glorious features. He is a just God. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” “He is my Rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.” Are you come to Him by Jesus? — He requires you to reflect His image. Are you His child? — you must be like Him. O brethren, be exact in your dealings. Be like your God. Take care of dishonesty; take care of trickery in business. Take care of crying up your goods when selling them, and crying them down when buying them. “It is nought, it is nought, sayeth the buyer, but when he is gone his way, he boasteth.” It shall not be so among you. God requires you to do justly.

Second, He requires you to love mercy. — This is the brightest feature in the character of Christ. If you are in Christ, drink deep of His Spirit; God requires you to be merciful. The world is selfish, unmerciful. An unconverted mother has no mercy on the soul of her own child. She can see it dropping into hell without mercy. O the hellish cruelty of unconverted men. It shall not be so with you. Be merciful, as your Father in heaven is merciful.

Third, He requires you to walk humbly with thy God. — Christ says, “Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart.” If God has covered all your black sins — rebellions — backslidings — out-breakings; then never open your mouth except in humble praise. God requires this at your hand. Walk with God, and walk humbly.

2. *Remember this is God’s end in justifying you.* — He loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify it and cleanse it. This was His great end, to raise up a peculiar people to serve Him, and bear His likeness, in this world and in eternity. For this He left heaven — for this He groaned, bled, died, to make

you holy. If you are not made holy, Christ died in vain for you.

3. *Whatever He requires, He gives grace to perform.* — Christ is not only good as our way to the Father, but He is our fountain of living waters. Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. There is enough in Christ to supply the need of all His people. An old minister says, a child can carry little water from the sea in its two hands, and so it is little we can get out of Christ. There are unsearchable riches in Him.

Be strong in the grace that is in Him. Live out of yourself, and live upon Him, Go and tell Him, that since He requires all this of thee, He must give thee grace according to your need. My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. He hath showed you one that is good — even the fair Immanuel; now lean upon Him — get life from Him that shall never dry up. Let his hand hold you up amid the billows of this tempestuous sea. Let His shoulder carry you over the thorns of this wilderness. Look as much to Him for sanctification as for justification.

*So will your walk be close with God,
Calm and serene your frame;
So purer light shall mark the road
That leads you to the Lamb.*

