

This Is A Day Of Compromise

by J.C. Philpot (1802 - 1869)

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This is a day of compromise.

The compromisers don't want to hurt anyone's feelings:

The sharp, salient edges of truth are mostly pared away with the nicest care, and rounded off with the greatest assiduity (attention), for fear, we suppose, lest any babe in grace should inadvertently run against them and get a sad hurt. Should such a distressing accident happen to any of the little ones who are just beginning to run alone, how the tender nurses catch him up at once in their arms to soothe his sorrows; and how they call out against that great, ugly table, or that naughty chair, which has so hurt the little dear.

The compromisers want to see happy Christians.

This is their perspective on preaching:

"It is this ever preaching election which does so much mischief; this telling the people that Christ died only for just a particular few, and not throwing wide open the arms of mercy; this always talking about a work of grace upon the heart; and how we must feel the curse of the law and convictions of sin before we can know the comforts of the gospel. This kind of preaching distresses the little ones, and puts a stumbling-block in the way of those who are being drawn by love. Our way is to preach Christ at once, and offer him, without exception, to all who will accept him, and that immediately, without all this unnecessary bondage and distress. No wonder there are so few rejoicing Christians. No wonder there is so much moping, so much groaning and sighing, and hanging the head down like a bulrush. What we like to see is, happy Christians; and the religion which we think the best of is, cheerful piety, taking God at his word, believing the promises, and living above doubts and fears."

The compromisers don't want to blow the trumpet or sound the alarm.

Now is not this just the language of the day the in staple of scores of books and tracts, and the cry of hundreds of popular pulpits? Need we, then, be surprised that our amiable writers and our soft, mild, gentle preachers, with such views as these, are so afraid of giving pain to their susceptible readers and their tender-hearted hearers that, instead of blowing the trumpet in Zion,

and sounding an alarm in the holy mountain, they rather sing a perpetual lullaby. Nothing, they think, is worse, or more alarming to the people, than brandishing before their eyes a drawn sword; and the very idea of plunging it deep into the conscience of any of their decidedly pious and most consistent and respectable hearers fills them with the same feminine tenderness of blood and suffering as we may suppose a recruit feels when he first screws on the bayonet, and advances to the charge. Such writers and preachers are as tremblingly sensitive to the tears of suffering on Christian faces as any mother whose darling boy has fallen down and hurt himself.

An easier path is held forth

Deep distress of conscience, agonising fears of the wrath to come, powerful convictions of sin, putting away of all hope or comfort which does not come direct from the Lord, doubts, fears, and slavish bondage under the curse of the law and the apprehended wrath of the Almighty — such and similar experience is now almost universally set aside as unnecessary to the new birth; and an easier path is held forth as equally safe and far more comfortable. But, however plausible it may appear in theory, and however pleasing it may be to the flesh, especially when dressed up with eloquent language and enforced with strong appeals to the natural feelings, what is all this soft and gentle preaching and writing but doing the very thing which God has so denounced in his holy word? How he testifies against those prophets who prophesy smooth things; who prophesy deceits; who know not the way of the Lord, nor have walked in his counsel, but “prophesy a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought and the deceit of their heart.” (Jer. 14:14.) How, too, the prophet Ezekiel denounces the false prophets of his day, of whom one built up a wall, and others daubed it with untempered mortar. How he testifies against those foolish women that sew pillows to all armholes; and how he declares what the effect of all such smooth preaching is: “With lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life.” (Ezek. 13:10, 18, 22.)

The mark of false ministers

There is no greater mark of false ministers given in the word of truth than healing the hurt of the daughter of God’s people slightly, saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace. (Jer. 8:11.) If we carefully read the book of Jeremiah, we shall see that the great sin and the chief deception of all the false prophets who sprang up in scores during the period of his ministry was to build up the people in a false hope; to assure them that they had no reason to fear the judgments of God, for that the Lord would not execute against them what he threatened. They therefore hardened the people in sin and disobedience, took them off all repentance and forsaking of their sins, led them to trifle with and despise the judgments of God, and built them up in a false confidence that, because they were the people of God by external profession, they were his also by regenerating grace. Thus they took the very

doctrine of God's having a peculiar people, whom he loved and would never forsake, and abused it to the building up of an ungodly professing people upon the foundation of God's love and faithfulness to his own elect.

The effect of the false teaching

If our eyes were fully open to see the effect of the false teaching of our day, we should see it equally dishonouring to God, and pregnant with equally awful consequences. We should see hundreds of dead professors built up without a foundation ever having been laid in their consciences of repentance toward God. We should see sin made a little matter of, the awful anger of the Almighty against it, and his terrible indignation against transgressors passed by as a thing of little moment. We should see the strait and narrow path widened out in all directions; the promises and invitations torn away from their connexion; the distinguishing truths of the gospel beaten down into, and amalgamated with, the grossest errors; the precepts of the word dislocated and distorted; and the clear revelation of God's mind and will given in the New Testament softened and accommodated to the reasoning mind, and the proud self-righteousness of man. And it needs must be so; for the word of grace is such a consistent and harmonious whole that, unless it is held by the teaching of the Spirit in the hand of a living faith, all attempts to interpret it must issue in confusion.

Is gospel preaching just a matter of a simple invitation?

But to show more clearly the emptiness and inconsistency of the current ministry of the day, let us take one familiar instance. There is, then, as it appears to us, no greater or more widely-spread delusive teaching both in town and country than the constant cry both from pulpit and press, addressed to all, without explanation or exception, "Come to Jesus." We shall therefore, attempt briefly to show the real nature and tendency of this ever-recurring invitation.

That which is the peculiar, the sole privilege of the sheep of Christ; that which our Lord expressly tells us no man can do except he be specially taught and drawn of the Father; that which is the particular act of a living faith, such as is given to none but the elect; that which is intended for, and addressed to the hungry, the thirsty, the weary and heavy-laden, the outcast and ready to perish, is now made to be the duty of all men, an easy and simple act which everybody is bound to do, and which anybody can do if he likes. "Come to Jesus" is spread abroad in tracts by thousands; is printed in all types, sets, and sizes; is thrown down area steps, spread about broad-cast at fairs, horseraces, and executions; and is the standing stock-in-trade of every beardless youth who, on a Sunday afternoon, can get round him a knot of idlers to preach to in the parks. We may seem to be severe on this point; but to show the fallacy and deceptiveness of this universal call to come to Jesus, at first sight so scriptural and evangelical, let us assume that it is listened to and

acted upon. Step into that crowded chapel where, amidst the blaze of gas and warmed with his subject, the fervid preacher is calling on his hearers to come to Jesus, and to come at once.

Assume that, wrought upon by his ardent eloquence and his urgent appeals, the whole congregation, as if moved by an uncontrollable impulse, at once started upon their feet, and cried aloud, as with a universal shout, "Sir, we will do what you bid us, and we will do it now. We will and do all of us come to Christ this very moment." Now would this determination of theirs, or this act of coming, following upon their determination, bring them one step nearer to heaven? If all of them, men, women, and children, were to come to Christ in the feelings of their mind, as well as the expression of their lips, without any divine breathing upon their soul, without any teaching or drawing of God, without any descent of the Holy Ghost upon their heart, as at the day of Pentecost, what would all this coming to Christ be but an act of the natural mind, an emotion of and in the flesh, and therefore neither pleasing to God, (Rom. 8:8,) nor of any profit to them? (John 6:63.)

Inviting man to be his own savior

Where, in all this mere mental, natural, carnal coming to Christ, would be the new birth, without which there is neither seeing nor entering into the kingdom of God? Where repentance unto life? Where any translation from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son? Where any divine light, life, or power? Where any teaching or testimony, work or witness of the Holy Ghost? Where any one of his heavenly graces or spiritual fruits? It is, in fact, man's substitute for the work of God, an insidious way of throwing over the new birth, and of trampling down the strait gate and the narrow way.

It is putting the special prerogative of Christ, ("The Son quickeneth whom he will,") into the hands of every man to do for himself, and thus, in fact, make man his own saviour.

All such preaching and all such coming begin and end in the flesh. It is at best, therefore, but a kindling a fire and walking in the sparks of it, of which the end at God's hand, if grace prevent not, will be to lie down in sorrow.
