

The Godly Man's Portion & Sanctuary

Lesson 9: Calling the Ungodly into the Godly Man's Sanctuary, Part 2

- I. To the ungodly who are *near* to the Kingdom of God. *How long will you be an almost Christian?*
 - A. You're like Ephraim, *cakes half-turned* (Hos 7.8), and like Agrippa, *almost Christians* (Acts 26.29).
 - B. You've come to the threshold of saving faith, within a step of sincere godliness. You've been professing, praying, hoping, and wishing yourselves in, and are yet short of it. You've set out after Christ, left many sins, taken up many duties, have a name among the saints, have suffered many things for the name of Christ, and notwithstanding all this, here you stick: you can't give yourselves up fully to Christ. Something or another, either your friends, the world, your pleasures, your ease, or your sloth, has such a hold on you that you cannot unreservedly, resolvedly, give yourselves up to the Lordship of Christ. You can say, *I would be the Lord's*, but you cannot say, *I will be the Lord's*.
 - C. There are some who are *almost Christians* and are *pressing forward*. Their state's not yet safe, but it is hopeful. But there are others who are *almost Christians* and *rest in an almost*, mistaking *almost* for *altogether*.
 - D. I fear there are more of these *almost Christians* in our midst than we're aware of. For it would make our hearts tremble to consider how far many go, to what degree of resignation, resolution, affection, action, and submission they attain, and yet fall short at last and thereby show that they were still short of Christ, Heb 6.4-8; 10.26-27; 1Jn 2.19.
 - E. I pity those who are *almost saved*. For to be but *almost saved* is to be *altogether damned*. Oh friends, what do you mean staying where you are? Will you lose all the ground you've gained? Will you come so far and turn back? Will you come to full term and then miscarry at the last? Will you come so near the shore only to drown in the harbor? Will you come within view of the Promised Land and never cross the Jordan?
 - F. You've prayed, pray a little more. You've labored, labor a little more and prevail. Oh that I might shoot one arrow more, that might strike home into your heart! Oh that I might use one argument more that might convince you, awaken you, and win your heart! Oh that I might see you safely landed before I depart from you! Oh think what a dreadful disappointment it will be for you, who came so near to godliness only to be weighed in the balance and found to be wicked at last!
- II. I leave you with a few words and pray they might bring you from *almost* to *altogether* a Christian.
 - A. Don't lose both worlds. You've lost so much of this world already by your coming so near to Christianity; don't lose the world to come as well because you traveled no farther into it. Either go back or come on the rest of the way. You can't hang forever between heaven and hell.
 - B. Don't mistake *almost* for *altogether*, because that's a *mortal* mistake. Don't think the little you've taken from Christianity to be *all*, because that all is *nothing* since it's not saving. God, glory, eternity, and your own soul are all at stake. Never stop suspecting your estate until you put it beyond suspicion that you are an altogether Christian. The least mistake in this matter is as wide as the gulf between heaven and hell.
 - C. Beware of thinking "at one time or another I'll make sure of it." It's a *now or never* matter. Labor each day to bring the matter to a present decision with as much earnestness as if this day were your final opportunity.

- D. Don't let a small matter separate Christ and you. Heaven may not cost you half so much more as it's cost you already in your *almost* condition. Have you come within one penny of the Lord's price and will you break the bargain?
- E. Don't let all the blessings you've enjoyed only serve as fuel for the fires of your eternal judgment. Don't let your common graces be good for nothing but to increase your eternal misery. Don't be more miserable hereafter because you were less wicked here.
- F. Lastly, be all or nothing. In particular:
1. *Give Christ your all.* Seek nothing but Him. Resolve against reserves and limits. Give up all and keep back nothing. Don't say, "*I can spare this, but no more. I can go thus far, but no farther.*" Don't divide your self, your love, your care, your aims between Christ and anything else. Let your whole soul run in one channel to Christ. Don't rest until you're fully resigned to be all Christ's.
 2. *Take Christ for your all.* Don't say, "*I must have my possessions too, my friends too, my pleasures too, my ease too.*" Let Christ be enough and all to you.
 3. *Let all Christ be accepted and improved by you.* Don't think your all too much to give, nor Christ's all too much to embrace. Your half will not satisfy Christ, nor will half of Christ satisfy you. Resolve to give and take all or none.
 - a) The merit of His blood. Renounce your own righteousness and rely only on His. As God has done, so you must do: lay all your sins on Him. Say to God, "*What I owe you, put it on His account. My Christ must answer for me.*"
 - b) The light and authority of His law. Don't think that Christ is your Priest with God unless He's also your Prophet to teach you His ways and your King to rule over you by His laws. Don't say of anything He requires of you, "*This is too much to do for you,*" since He never said to you, "*It's too much to die for you.*" Don't count yourself a Christian unless you're willing to receive the utmost of His teaching and submit to the utmost of His laws.
 - c) The power of His Spirit. Don't think yourself a Christian unless you find the power of His Spirit working the obedience of faith in you. For though you are weak to obey and to do, yet His Spirit makes His people willing in the day of His power, Ps 110.3; Ezk 36.27. Since grace has more in it than *wishings* and *wouldings*, more in it than *attempts* and *overtures*. For He is a Spirit of life, causing us to obey, Phil 2.13; a Spirit of power, causing us to follow through so that our wishes and desires become works and deeds. Don't rest in an assurance of salvation until you find this power at work in you. Prove your saving union with Christ by the acts and works of His saving, sanctifying Spirit in you, 1Jn 3.7.
 4. Once your all is surrendered to Christ and His all is believably embraced by you, once you're resting only on His righteousness, and submitted to His law, and find in yourself the workings of His Holy Spirit, then you're *safe*. Your *almost* has become an *altogether*.
 - a) You've gotten into the sanctuary of the godly, and whatever afflictions and trials and troubles you encounter, they'll all be the evidence of His fatherly love.
 - b) Though you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, you can sit down under the shadow of His wings in safety, for He is with you, Ps 23.
 - c) Though trial and hardship be your lot, the God of peace will be with you and all will be well with you, both in the trial and in the outcome, Rom 8.28.
 - d) Be sure of your faith in God today and He'll be sure of His presence with you forever, Phil 4.9.