

THE PULPIT.

Why Christ Failed.

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Ye will not come to me, that ye may have life. John 5:40.

God had a plan of salvation in his mind, and an object in view in sending his son into the world. It was to save man from sin, death, and hell. John 3:16-17; Luke 19:10; 1 Tim. 1:15.

Christ realized the importance of the work committed to his hands, and was intensely in earnest. Isa. 53:11; Luke 19:41.

Christ did not succeed in saving all with whom he came in contact. John 1:10-11. Those whom he came to save murdered him.

Why was this? Christ gives the answer in our text. "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."

Why was it that men did not accept Christ as their Lord and Saviour? Let us take three representative characters that Christ sought but failed to save, and learn the reason of his failure. The cause of the failure was not in himself. Heb. 6:25; Matt. 28:18.

The first man that I call your attention to is Judas. He was intimately associated with Christ, enjoyed his teaching, witnessed his miracles, and had many manifestations of his loving interest in him. Christ sought to save him even when he was in the act of betraying him. Matt. 26:14-22.

The cause of Christ's failure to save Judas was his covetousness. Judas loved money. This was stronger than his love of justice and truth, or his sense of gratitude. It was the master passion of his soul.

The sin of the world is essentially the sin of Judas. Men do not disbelieve in Christ, but they will sell him. Riches may increase and not injure a man if his heart is not set on them. Matt. 19:16-26. George Peabody commenced life without a penny, but he accumulated a princely fortune. He was a Christian man, and knew his danger. He said that he made it his daily prayer to his Heavenly Father that he would enable him by his wealth to render some benefit to his fellow creatures, and he did. But alas! how rare are such examples as his! The master passion of this day is money getting; but is this worthy of man, his nature and destiny?

When we run over the world's list of great and good men, men who have made the world better, and life richer to all who come after them,

we find that they were not rich in this world's goods. Was Christ rich? Were the apostles rich? Wesley, the great religious reformer, when he died left an estate of two silver spoons.

"Michael Faraday said he had no time to make money and so also did the noble Agassiz. Poor John Bunyan, the Bedford tinker, did far more for his fellow-men than did Jay Gould. Many a poor Christian woman, some Sister of Charity, is doing infinitely more to bless and help her fellow creatures than the woman of wealth who spends season after season in the mere exhibition of jewelry and finery. And yet there are thousands of young men in this city who are altogether neglecting the claim of Christ and religion upon them, because they feel, and rightly, that they can't serve Him and Mammon too. They are ruling Him out of their lives, because they are bound to be rich at any and every hazard.

"Alas! the pity and the insanity of it. Make out your list of what money can do for a man and I will make out one of what Christ can do, and we will compare. You write houses, lands, wine, purple, and fine linen, equipage, servants, and 'so forth', and I write truth, purity, manhood, kindness, unselfishness, self abnegation, and instead of your 'so forth' I will write eternal life.

Men in the pursuit of wealth stifle conscience, and crush out conviction of duty to God and their own souls. Mark 10:17-22.

The second failure that I will mention is Pontius Pilate.

He came into close quarters with Christ, and Christ powerfully influenced him. They were alone together in the inner chamber and all that had passed between them, we do not know. But the magnet drew tremendously on Pilate. But it didn't draw him fully to Christ: it failed in the end. Pilate fell wholly, and why? Because of Pilate's moral cowardice. He hadn't the courage of his convictions. He wasn't man enough to do his duty when he knew it. He could not make up his mind to do anything which might jeopardize his political ambition. So he stifles conscience, and crowds back his convictions, and gives up Christ.

How many Pilate's there are in the world today? How many there are in this house now: How many men who have not the courage of their convictions, with reference to Christ, who if they acted upon them would turn to Christ at once. Christ cannot do much for such a man. He is not man enough to go forward in the path of duty where it is plainly set before him. This is why Christ failed to save Pilate.

There was a crisis in the life of Pilate, but his moral courage failed him

in that hour. He was not like Moses in the court of Egypt.

"Moses, when 40 years old, experienced a crisis in his life. He made a choice, and he embraced the religion of the Lord Jesus. There was a royal feast in Pharaoh's magnificent palace. The kingly robes of bright purple were bedecked with gold and silver and jewels, and gems of the richest luster and sparkled from the regal diadems. There was wine and frankincense and bewitching music and gathering of captains, courtiers and princes of the realm. In the midst of the nobility reclining on easy couches of blue and gold and scarlet and tapestry and fine twined linen stood the supposed grandson of Pharaoh, the King of Egypt.

"One of the courtiers who stood near him, emboldened with wine, inquired of him, 'Who was that Egyptian you killed the other day and hid him in the sand? Truly you can do as you like because you are the son of Pharaoh's daughter.'

"A bright light suddenly flashed across the conscience stricken Moses. 'Shall my whole life be founded upon a lie?' he inquires within him, and he determinedly reaches the decision which is the turning point in his career. 'I am not the son of Pharaoh's daughter.'

He quits the palace with all its glittering allurements and hurries away to his room. There he casts aside his princely robes, tramples the richest jewels of royalty beneath his feet and leaves the palace in beggarly simplicity. It requires a man to make that choice, to throw off the royal dignity, only to be clothed in the rags of a Hebrew slave. He publicly disclaimed the lie upon which his life was based. He was true to himself and his God.

Every thing that is worth having costs something. Thus it is with the religion of Christ.

"I would not give the snap of my finger for a man's religion which has not cost him anything. 'Give and it shall be given unto you.' God measures unto you happiness, health, hope, pleasures, and blessings of every kind just in the proportion to which you have given Him.

"Religion with you should be a matter of careful calculation. Not emotional, not a surmise; not brought about by any sensational pulpit oratory; but it should be a question of careful calculation with the nicest exactness. The Lord said, 'Count the cost.' A true disciple must deny himself of many things. There must be no rush or gush in your religion. It does not mean a regular occupying of your seat each Sunday, nor merely a respectable outside.

Are you willing to persevere as Moses did in the wilderness for forty

years? You must make your choice. You must sacrifice and persevere in the work until God calls you to great success. To be a success in life you must be a religious man of the right sort. Remember the divine truth: 'Godliness is profitable in all things, a promise of life that now is, as well as the life to come.'

"God saw Moses in the fiery bush. He saw him at the head of over half a million of His people proudly marching out of Egypt and Pharaoh and his army swept over by the sea. The Lord God says: 'Prove Me and I will open the window of Heaven and let down a blessing.'

The third signal failure to which I will refer was those who were about the bar of Pilate, who chose Barrabas instead of Christ. Barrabas was a robber. Christ had lived a noble and useful life in their midst, but they cared nothing for this when they came to choose. The robber and the benefactor were standing together, the robber and the benefactor, and they prefer the robber. Why? Because the benefactor told them the truth—told them that they were sinful men, and needed the Saviour, and that he had come to save them.

"But they didn't want a Saviour, they wanted a temporal prince. They wanted show and glitter, not salvation. Christ became their enemy because He told them the truth? How many of us can bear the truth? How many of us are turning away from Christ because He tells us that we are lost sinners to be saved only by His precious blood, instead of our own righteousness?

Notice in each of these three cases the terrible Nemesis. Judas rejected Christ for gold, and what were the results? What did he gain? In a few hours his conscience was quickened, and the gold burned his soul so that that he flings it at the feet of the High Priest, and went out and hanged himself. He could not endure the fire of remorse that burned hotter than the fires of Tophet in his soul. How many who have sold Christ for gold suffered the same dreadful anguish of soul. A rich landlord, ordered his steward to turn out a poor widow with four children, one of them too sick to be removed, because she could not pay the rent. They were driven out, and the sick child perished in the woods. The landlord lay down to rest in his summer-house; but the murmuring of a brook that flowed near by seemed to him to imitate the crying of the poor children. Then he heard distant thunder that sounded to him as the voice of justice. His gardens and his wealth became hateful to him. He became delirious. Every sound was an accusing voice. So he died.