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Without Christ

By The Late: C. D. Cole

"That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12).

I have a short text—only two words—but these two words speak of a poverty that is indescribably awful. To be without friends or money or position or home is painful, particularly to the flesh, but to be without these things does not mean to be eternally ruined. The Lazarus of Scripture story appears to have been without every one of these things, in this life, but after this life was over we find him rich in all that was essential to supreme happiness. On the other hand, we find the rich man in possession of all these things in this life, but later on we find him in the place of direst poverty, where there was not even a drop of water to cool his burning tongue.

There is a lot of material poverty in this world in spite of the many schemes to end it. Nations, institutions, and individuals are ceaselessly grappling with the problem of poverty. Sinclair had his EPIC program for California's economic ills. The late Huey Long had his "Share the wealth" program with its goal of "every man a king." The Federal government has its Social Security plan in operation, and opposing political parties are bidding and begging for the suffrage of the people with the claim and promise to improve the economic condition of the country.

But old man Depression is hard to knock out.

He has more lives than the proverbial cat of nine lives. He has had what the experts have declared would be knock-out blows, but he takes it on the chin and comes back for more. Our Lord might have been speaking to our day as well as His own when He said, "For ye have the poor always with you."

In a West Kentucky town a few years ago, the old man Depression was buried in effigy. His death was officially announced and his image was publicly interred. His death was celebrated with music and shouting. This was a very singular way to express a false optimism. They were trying the Christian Science method of treating the patient. They were saying: "There is no depression—everybody is prosperous—we have been suffering from the delusions of mortal mind—the way to get rid of the depression is to deny its existence, for poverty is unreal." But in spite of the false and foolish optimism, the depression survives, and several business firms have failed and multitudes are still on the relief roll.

Speaking of poverty, none of us knows how soon he may be reduced to such dire poverty as to wonder where the next meal is coming from. There are many examples of sudden poverty coming upon people. Empires of wealth have collapsed overnight. Colossal fortunes have been swept away in a day. The rich are warned not to "be highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Tim. 6:17).

But the deepest of all poverty is to be without Christ. This is far worse than to be without friends or money or work. Without Christ, every material possession will ultimately come to nought. The day is coming when all human creeds and conduct, and the value of all talents and possessions are to be tried in the crucible of divine truth. The man without Christ in that day will be doomed to ignoble failure and eternal despair.

I may be talking to someone who is without Christ, and you feel that you are getting along very well without Him. You look about you and you see Christians who do not appear to be as fortunate as you are. They do not have the friends and comforts that you enjoy. You see those who live the most godly lives facing persecution; the milk of human kindness fills your heart and you feel sorry for them. You think of the millions of Christian martyrs, and in your judgment there is no value in being a Christian. Well, if there is not a place beyond this vale of tears where the people of God are rewarded and the wicked are punished, you are right and the Christian is of all men most miserable. The Christian, who knows his Bible, is not surprised at his sufferings. Christ told His people that they should have tribulation in this world. And Paul wrote that all who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. Paul, the greatest sufferer of his day, was also the greatest Christian.

Now, let me reason with you out of the Scriptures, showing what it means to be without Christ:

1. To be without Christ is to be without a mediator between one's self and God. "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (I Tim. 2:5). A mediator is one who comes in between two warring parties to avert the consequences of their conflict. He is a peace-maker, a go-between to settle differences. There is war between God and men. Man started this war in the Garden of Eden by rebelling against God's authority. And every man, in his natural state, is carrying on this war; for the carnal mind is enmity against God. Romans 8:7. Without a mediator or peace-maker, somebody is going to get seriously and eternally hurt. Who is in danger in this war? Certainly, God is in no danger of being injured by man whose breath is in his nostrils. Can impotent man destroy the well-being of Omnipotence? Can the creature dethrone the Creator and take the reins of government? Can the human army of rebellion scale the battlements of glory and drive the Almighty from His throne? The answer to these questions is obvious. God is in no danger from men, but men are in danger from God.

We raise another question. Can the sinner appease the anger of God against his sin? Can the sinner make himself right with God? Can he settle all past accounts with God and thereafter live in such a way as to merit the favor

of God? The man who imagines he can do any of these things is guilty of the greatest stupidity. The sinner needs a mediator, a go-between, a daysman, a peace-maker; someone to settle his sin account with God. The sinner's only safety is in a mediator, one who can appease God's anger and, thus, bring peace. This is what Christ came to do. He made peace by the blood of His cross. "And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself: by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven" (Col. 1:20). "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). The sinner who rejects Christ can have no peace with God, and in the day of judgment, he will cry for the rocks and mountains to fall on him and hide him from the face of Him who sitteth on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. Rev. 6:16.

2. To be without Christ means that there is no way for the sinner to be delivered from the guilt of sin. Christ put away the guilt of sin by the sacrifice of Himself. "For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9:26). Without Christ, men will have to be responsible for their conduct before the law of God. They will have to face the judgment on their own record in a court where justice will be absolute and impartial. I give loving and faithful warning to everyone who hears, against a "holier than thou" spirit that would make him willing to face the thrice holy God on his own record.

A man was once asked to tell what Christ had done for him. He found a worm, placed it on the ground, and built a fence of straw around it and set fire to the miniature fence. When the worm began to feel the heat and was turning and twisting, he reached down and lifted it out of the fire. Yes, saved men are brands plucked from the burning.

3. Without Christ, men are without any Heavenly Father to take care of them. Out of Christ, God is a stern judge and not a loving Father. It is just like parents to shield their children from poverty. They delight to put themselves between their children and danger. And God is the best of all fathers. Nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. No one can pluck us out of His hand, for He holds us fast. He is able to make all things work together for good to them that love Him and are called according to His purpose. He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think (Eph. 3:20). He sees to it that no weapon formed against His children shall prosper. His children are His heirs, and this means eternal riches. The meek shall inherit the earth. Fear not little flock, for it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the

kingdom. But do not be deceived into thinking that one may be a child of God and never believe in Christ. Those who are without Christ are miserable orphans; nobody to care for them in this complex civilization—nobody to comfort them in the crises of life—nobody to sustain them in the hour of death—nobody to look after their interests in the day of judgment.

4. To be without Christ means to be without hope. Hope is the grace within us that looks forward to something better in the future. But the man without Christ has no hope of anything better in the future. He may have carnal security in creature righteousness, but in the solemn hour of death and in the awful day of judgment, this will fail him. The robe of self-righteousness will not shield him from the Judge whose eyes are as a flame of fire.

We are all like men standing on the seashore, looking out over the boundless ocean of eternity. Toward some of us, toward everyone of us who has Christ, there come gallant ships loaded with rich cargoes of eternal blessings, with every sail set, and borne toward us by the gentle breezes of God's providence. But toward those of you who are without Christ, those of you who imagine you can get along without Him, there come no vessels, but dismantled wrecks, with no cargoes of divine blessings, but with livid corpses of lost opportunities, over which the vultures of eternal despair hover; driven on by the winds of divine wrath.

I have a sister-in-law who has a way of saying, "When my ship comes in, I will get so and so." The family income has been small for several years, and they have had what they think is a hard time. But she is living in hope of a better day. She is looking for the ship of good fortune.

But my sinner friend, there is no ship coming in for you as long as you ignore the Lord Jesus Christ and refuse to trust Him as Saviour and Lord. **TRUST HIM NOW AND LIVE FOREVER!** Those who know Him can follow me as I quote these verses:

"O Paradise! O Paradise!
Who doth not crave for rest?
Who would not seek that happy land,
Where they that loved are blest?"

O Paradise! O Paradise!
'Tis weary waiting here;
I long to be where Jesus is,
To feel, to see Him near.

O Paradise! O Paradise!
I want to sin no more;
I want to be as pure on earth
As on thy spotless shore."

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