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"AND I, IF I BE LIFTED UP..."

BY: C. D. COLE

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me," John 1:32.

"Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him? The officers answered, Never man spake like this man," John 7:45-46. The great claims He made and the boldness of His assertions at once mark Him as more than man or else a very bad man. He was either the Son of God or an arrogant boaster. Just think of such sayings as these: "I am the light of the world," John 8:12. "I am the bread of life," John 6:35. "I am the living bread," John 6:51. "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved," John 10:9. "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep," John 10:11. "I am the resurrection, and the life," John 11:25. "Behold, a greater than Solomon is here," Matthew 12:42. "Before Abraham was, I am," John 8:58.

We do not usually take boasters seriously and their great claims are usually met with a sneer and scorn. But the claims of Jesus Christ go unchallenged, even by those who have not trusted Him as their Savior. Napoleon and others have given Him unstinted praise, acknowledging Him as unique in every respect, and yet did not trust Him as Savior. In this they reveal their lack of straight thinking, for if Jesus of Nazareth is what He claimed to be, He surely is a safe object of trust. I accept Him as my Savior because I accept the claims He made for Himself. Believing Him to be the light of the world, I turn from all other ideas and ways of salvation to Him as only Savior. Believing Him to be the bread of life, I let my soul feed on Him as the only hope of living forever before God without dread of divine justice. Believing Him to

be the resurrection and the life, I shall go into the grave in hope of immortality for this body.

Jesus Christ never made a more startling utterance than when He spoke the words of our text: *"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."* John says that He made this statement to indicate what kind of death He would die. And the kind of death He died is a very important matter. It is not enough that He died. His death is a historical fact denied by few. And this message has to do primarily with the kind of death He died.

Three times in His short ministry, He spoke of His death as a being lifted up. Early in His ministry He said, *"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life,"* John 3:14. About the middle of His ministry, He said to His cavilling opponents: *"When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am,"* John 8:28. And towards the end, He uttered the words of our text: *"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."*

1. Jesus Christ selected the manner of His death. He chose the way He would die, and even the hour He was to die. The time and manner of His death were not left to chance or to the whims of men. He controlled empires and directed kings, and made the wrath of man to praise Him in bringing about His death as He had eternally planned. This is why the Roman method of capital punishment was by crucifixion rather than by stoning or some other method. This is why Jesus Christ did not live and die here in America in this 20th Century. Had He waited until now to come and had been born and

reared in America, He would have been put to death by electrocution or hanging instead of by crucifixion.

2. Jesus Christ chose this way to die because it indicated the curse of God.

"And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree: His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance," Deuteronomy 21:22-23. For his death to mean anything to sinners, it must represent the curse of God. Sinners are under the curse of God's holy law and whoever saves them must bear the curse. If Jesus had died as an example or if the moral influence theory of the atonement were true, the manner of His death would not have been important. God's Word had declared centuries before that when you see a man hanging on a tree, you can know that man is accursed of God.

"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree," Galatians 3:13.

3. This means that Jesus Christ died as a substitute for sinners. He died instead of sinners. Somebody has to die for sin. *"For the wages of sin is death."* Romans 6:23. And the only way any sinner can miss condemnation and punishment is to have another bear it for him. If Jesus was punished for me, I will not have to be punished for my sins.

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THE FORGOTTEN COMMANDMENT: "And Be Ye Thankful"

BY: C.D. COLE

"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful."
Colossians 3:15.

If you were to ask some people how many commandments there are, they would promptly reply that there are ten, and would refer you to the decalogue in the 20th chapter of Exodus. Others would reply that there are eleven commandments, and call your attention to the words of Christ when He said, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another," John 13:34. But I call your attention to still another commandment which says, "Be ye thankful." This is, perhaps, the most disregarded and ignored of all the commandments. It is said of the heathen "That, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened," Romans 1:21.

The first thanksgiving service, of which we have any record, was at the laying of creation's corner stone, "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" Job 38:7. Another notable day of thanksgiving was when Israel had crossed the Red Sea, leaving their enemies in its depths. Standing there on the shores of sweet deliverance, they sang as one man: "The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him," Exodus 15:2.

The observance of Thanksgiving Day in America had its beginning with the Pilgrims who came from England on the Mayflower in the winter of 1620. Of the 102 persons in the party, about half of them were dead by the close of the winter. But the following year, they were more prosperous. After a bountiful harvest had been reaped, they observed three days of thanksgiving. Following the first Thanksgiving at Plymouth the custom spread to other colonies. During the Revolutionary War, eight special

days of Thanksgiving were observed after signal victories on the field of battle. In 1789, President Washington issued a general Thanksgiving Day proclamation. Some of the other presidents followed the example of Washington, but there was no regular day for Thanksgiving until 1864 when President Lincoln, at the close of the Civil War, appointed the last Thursday of November as Thanksgiving Day. From that time, the same day has been formally set apart as Thanksgiving Day.

1. Thankfulness should be a habit. "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," Ephesians 5:20. "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you," I Thessalonians 5:18. "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name," Hebrews 13:15. "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God," Philippians 4:6.

It is not enough to be thankful one day of the year. He who saves his thanksgiving for the last Thursday in November does not have a thankful spirit. We are perpetually indebted to God, from Whom all blessings flow, and thanksgiving should be continually given.

2. Thankfulness is a spirit born of the grace of God. Nobody but a child of God can have such a spirit. Others may think they are thankful when they are enjoying prosperity in material things, but let the wind of providence begin to blow contrary to their wishes, and they begin to fret and fume and complain.

The spirit of thankfulness was exemplified in the life of our Lord. We find Him thanking God under the strangest circumstances. In the very shadow of the cross, He instituted the Lord's Supper, giving thanks for the cup and saying, "This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me," I Corinthians 11:25. On another occasion, we see Him thanking God for His distinguishing grace. "At

that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight," Matthew 11:25-26.

One of the greatest of the early Christian preachers was Chrysostom. His motto was "Glory to God for all things." In every thing he gave thanks and praised God. It might seem easy for him to say. "Glory to God for all things," when he was growing up in Antioch, petted and pampered by his widowed mother, with ample means, and the best instructors of his day. It would seem easy for him to say, "Glory to God for all things," when he was a famous preacher in Antioch and afterwards in Constantinople, as thousands crowded the churches to hear him. But Chrysostom continued to praise God when the court at Constantinople turned against him, when the wicked empress became his bitter enemy and banished him from her realm. When his friends would go to far off Armenia, and visit him in exile, he would say to them, "Glory to God for all things." And when he was banished to more distant regions, out of reach of his brethren, his letters were apt to end with his motto, "Glory to God for all things." And when the cruel soldiers were dragging him through winter snows; utterly worn out, he begged to be taken to a little wayside chapel that he might die. His last words, as he lay there on the cold stone floor, were "Glory to God for all things." Such a spirit is not native to the human heart and carnal mind, but it is born of the grace of God, and is a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

We also see the spirit of thankfulness exemplified in the life of the Apostle Paul. He was a great sufferer, but he was also great in the spirit of thankfulness. He could praise God in the darkest hours. His prison letter to the Philippians was an epistle of joy. He was not only happy in the Lord himself, but he wanted others to "rejoice in the Lord

always: and again I say, Rejoice," Philippians 4:4. Paul had a spirit of thankfulness that could not be chilled by the wintry blasts of adversity. He had learned to be content in all circumstances. *"For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content,"* Philippians 4:11.

A thankful spirit is the nightingale of the soul. Its voice can be heard in night's sorrow, saying, *"the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord,"* Job 1:21. In the midst of trying circumstances, *"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"* Romans 11:33. The thankful heart can be heard to say: *"Even so Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight,"* Matthew. 11:26.

The story is told of a man who had some terrible skin disease, like eczema, going to a magician for advice about a remedy. He described his feelings and told of his inability to sleep. He was told to go in search of a happy man, secure his shirt and wear it. He was assured this would effect a cure. So he set out to find a happy man, and after much searching, he found his man, but he was without a shirt. This fable illustrates the truth that happiness is not in possessions.

3. Thankfulness can be cultivated. Every one of us can become more thankful than we are. And we are commanded to be thankful. We can cultivate a thankful spirit by being more thoughtful. A young man, without noticing his pronunciation, used to pray for the Lord to make His people more "thankful." His teacher was reluctant to correct him, because he realized if we were "thankful" we would be "thankful." We must treasure certain facts in our memory.

REMEMBER THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

Things do not happen by chance or by fate, but they come to pass according to the will of God. Webster defines an accident as an undesigned, sudden, and unexpected event. We can properly speak of accidents from our point of view, but with God, nothing comes to pass "undesigned, sudden, or unexpected." His positive will brings good things to pass, and when evil comes, it is by His permissive will. But nothing comes to pass independent of God, not ever the falling of a sparrow. God has His

plans and purposes and they cannot be overthrown. He is supreme and *"worketh all things after the counsel of his own will,"* Ephesians 1:11. This is why He is to be thanked for all things. *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose,"* Romans 8:28. If things happen by chance, or fate, or impersonal fixed law, then we have no personal Being to thank for all things. To be sure, providence is mysterious to us. We cannot understand His ways, but we can trust His wisdom, enjoy His love, and rejoice in His power.

REMEMBER THAT GOD IS YOUR FATHER

"Our Father which art in heaven," Matthew 6:9. This comfort is for believers only. None other are His children. As our Father, God is interested in us. He gave His Son as an expression of His love, and having given us His Son, He will freely give us all things we need. And our Father is able to control all things in the interest of His children. Earthly fathers cannot control earthly things for the good of their children. But our heavenly Father is supreme in all places, and is in all things for His children's good.

REMEMBER TO PRAY

"Pray without ceasing," II Thessalonians 5:17. Hold communion with God. There are two sources from which human gladness may come; the one is circumstances of a pleasant and gladdening nature, the other is communion with God. It is like some river that is composed of two tributaries, one of which rises away up in the mountains, and is fed by the eternal snows; the other springs on the plain, and is but the drainage of the surface water. When hot weather comes, and drought covers the land, the one tributary is dried up. But this does not cause the river to go dry. The heat that dried the surface stream has only loosened the treasures of the snows on the mountain peak and poured water more abundantly into that stream that fed the river. The stream of circumstances that pours joy and gladness into our hearts is fed from the surface waters of earth and often goes dry. We cannot always thank God for national peace, for war may come and our country may be bathed in blood. We cannot always thank God for material prosperity, for frost and wind and rain may destroy our crops. We cannot always thank God

for a happy home, because death or other things far worse may come. But he who holds communion with God can thank Him for what does come. There are streams of mercy that never run dry.

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"If Christ has my discharge procured and safely in my place endured the whole of wrath divine; payment God cannot twice demand; first at my bleeding Surety's hand and then again at mine."

4. If Christ died for sinners of all periods of time, if His death had the same value to Abel and Noah and Abraham and David as it does to me, then it could only be substitutionary in its nature. *"And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance,"* Hebrews 9:15. This means that He died for those who lived before He came. His death was retroactive. It had the same value to Old Testament saints as it has to us. His death could not be an example to the dead, it could have no moral influence on people who had lived and died hundreds of years before He came.

5. The death of Jesus Christ justifies both God and men. *"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus,"* Romans 3:25, 26. This portion of scripture says that the death of Christ was a present revelation of God's justice in passing over the sins of Old Testament believers. God's justice could not be seen in the salvation of Abel and Abraham and David. They were saved before their sins had been atoned for. And the death of Christ was demonstration of His

justice. If Christ had not died under the curse of the law they had broken, God would have been unjust in saving them. The death of Christ takes care of the honor of God as well as the safety of men.

6. The results of His death. Our text says that all men will be drawn to Him. At first sight this seems to teach universalism, the salvation of every individual. But this cannot be true for several reasons:

(a) It is contrary to known facts. It is a well-known fact that many individuals have not been drawn to Christ. Nobody could be drawn to Him who have never heard about Him, and millions upon millions have died without ever hearing the name of Jesus.

(b) There is no word for man in the original text. It simply says that He will draw all unto Himself. *"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out,"* John 6:37. *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me,"* John 10:27. *"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd,"* John 10:16. *"As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him,"* John 17:2.

(c) How does Christ draw men to Himself? It is not a physical drawing. There is no physical approach to Jesus. He does the drawing by working on the minds and hearts of men. It is by the miracle of the new birth. It is by giving men a change of mind towards God, and by working faith in Him as their only hope. And this involves our witnessing and preaching and praying.

Conclusion: In this text, we have the way of salvation made plain. Men are saved by being drawn to Christ. When they are drawn to Christ they come to Christ. Have you come to Christ for salvation? Men are not saved by living a good life; they are saved by coming to Christ. They are not saved by coming into the church; they are saved by coming to Christ. To be saved by what we do would be self-salvation. To be saved by faith in Christ is salvation by grace. *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God,"* Eph. 2:8.