

TO BE AS HE IS

DARREN OLSON

I have often thought about how differently people respond to the words of Jesus. Some are comforted, others are unsettled, and many are left with an inner conflict they cannot resolve. His words expose the wounds people carry from religion. Some were crushed under a message of perfection they could never reach. Others believe their past choices have marked them forever, leaving them disqualified from being saved and hidden in Christ. For some, what should bring hope instead stirs despair, leaving them feeling unworthy of salvation.

But the gospels show something deeper. Jesus embraced sinners but never condoned sin. He loved mankind, even in rebellion against God. Since the fall of Adam, we have been born into sin and bound by selfishness, corruption, and blindness. Yet God loved us anyway. His compassion was not indulgence, but mercy reaching into ruined humanity to restore what was lost. At the same time, His words pierce with clarity about the cost of discipleship. Both truths stand together. His mercy opens the door, His call defines the way.

This is not an easy message. If you are looking for Jesus to bless your comfort, you will not find it. If you expect Him to turn you away because of your failures, you will not find that either. What you will find is a Shepherd who calls you as you are, but who loves you too much to leave you unchanged.

When Jesus invited people to follow Him, His words were not softened to avoid offense. He told one man that foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man had nowhere to rest His head (Luke 9:58). To another who asked for time to bury his father, He said the call of the kingdom must take precedence (Luke 9:60). And when a third wished to follow after saying farewell to his family, Jesus answered that no one who puts a hand to the plow and looks

back is fit for service in the kingdom of God (Luke 9:62). These words confront us with the demand that the kingdom be placed above all else, even family.

Such words strike us as severe. They seem to pull us out of the ordinary duties of life and press us into something impossible. Yet what Jesus reveals is not cruelty but clarity. He is not calling for admirers who balance Him alongside everything else. He is calling for men and women who will enter into His own way of life. The invitation is not simply to follow Him at a distance, but to be as He is.

The life of Jesus was marked by surrender to the Father's will. He owned no property and sought no position of power. He gave freely to those who came to Him, whether through teaching, healing, or mercy. In the end He gave His life itself, saying, “*The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep*” (John 10:11). To be His disciple is to walk the same path of self-giving love.

This raises a question many feel but do not voice. How does such a holy call meet the realities of ordinary life? Most of us work jobs, raise families, care for homes, and live in communities where there are bills to pay and duties to meet. Surely Jesus does not intend His people to abandon all of this. The answer lies not in retreating from life but in reordering it.

The call of God begins with allegiance. Jesus said, “*Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness*” (Matthew 6:33). This is the decisive step. The kingdom becomes the center, and work, family, and community are understood as places where that kingdom is lived out. A person may still labor in a trade, raise children, or serve neighbors, but now all is done for God rather than for self.

This leads naturally to simplicity. Jesus warned that the adoration of wealth chokes out the life of the Spirit (Mark 4:19). The earliest Christians often sold possessions and shared with those in need (Acts 2:44–45). This was not poverty for its own sake but freedom from slavery to wealth. In an ordinary life, this might mean living within one's means, refusing to measure success by possessions, and choosing generosity over accumulation.

Sacrifice also takes the form of daily obedience. It is rarely grand or dramatic. More often it looks like telling the truth when lying would be easier, forgiving someone who does not deserve it, or showing patience when provoked. Jesus said, *"Whoever is faithful with little will also be faithful with much"* (Luke 16:10). The cross is carried step by step, often in the quiet places of life.

Prayer and Scripture are the anchors that keep this life from becoming toil. Jesus, Himself, often withdrew to pray, even in the busiest seasons: *"So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed"* (Luke 5:16). Without communion with the Father, His sacrifice would have been drudgery. Prayer gave Him strength and confidence in the Father's plan. The same is true for His disciples. Daily prayer and time in the Word align the heart with Him and give strength for obedience.

The sacrificial life is not solitary. The church was formed as a community where believers bore one another's burdens: *"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ"* (Galatians 6:2). They shared meals, prayed together, and cared for each other's needs. Even today, it is within the Christian community that the call of Jesus becomes joyful rather than heavy. Service shared together guards us from turning sacrifice into lonely martyrdom.

At the heart of it all is love. Jesus said, *"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another"* (John 13:35). The love of God is made visible in simple, tangible acts: hospitality, listening, kindness, forgiveness. These are not spectacular gestures, but they make the kingdom visible in daily life. When plagues struck Roman cities in the second century, many fled. Christians stayed behind to care for the sick, often at the cost of their own lives. Outsiders noticed and said of them, *"See how they love one another."* It was not power or prestige that spread the gospel, but love embodied in sacrifice.

This is the higher purpose of the Christian life. We are not called merely to admire Jesus or attach His name to our pursuits. We are called to be like Him, reflecting His humility, obedience, and love. This does not remove us from the world but sends us deeper into it, carrying His light into homes, workplaces, and neighborhoods. Paul expressed it clearly: *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service"* (Romans 12:1).

The call of God is not to withdraw from the daily grind or to parade suffering as if it were an achievement. It is to live faithfully in the ordinary, shaped by allegiance to Christ, grounded in prayer, freed from the love of riches, and marked by love. This is how the command to take up the cross becomes real. It is not the life of a zealot chasing suffering. It is the life of a disciple who has discovered that in surrendering to Christ, one finds a life that can never be taken away. †

CRY OUT TO GOD

MARKUS HANSEN

"Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage" (Exodus 2:23, NKJV).

This verse describes the situation the Israelites found themselves in while they were enslaved in Egypt. They had grown in number since the time of Joseph and became a threat to the Egyptians, which resulted in being forced into slavery. Finding themselves under bondage, pressed into forced labourers by the Egyptians, they cried out to God for His help.

There is a lesson in this scripture for us today. Consider your human body. It is comprised of many distinct and unique parts. When our human body is physically healthy, all the individual parts of our body are functioning in complete harmony according to what they

have been designed to do. Watching top-ranked athletes, we see that they are able to perform amazing feats because every part of their body is doing what it is meant to do.

The Apostle Paul uses the human body as an object lesson to help us understand the body of Christ. Paul writes in Romans 12:4–5: *"For as we (humans) have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we (God's chosen people), being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another."* In 1 Corinthians 12:27 Paul continues: *"Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually."* **We**, you and I, as members of the church of God, are the **body of Christ**. We are Christ's body here on this earth, this planet. Therefore, can we not conclude that if we are **all** functioning according to the gifts and ministries bestowed upon us when we were prophesied over by a presbytery, and there is no discord, enmity, or ill feelings among

us and all other individual members, then the Body of Christ should be healthy both spiritually and physically?

Looking over the body of Christ today, what do we see? Are we spiritually healthy? Is there a lack of unity because of strife or disagreement between members? Are we seeing Christ in each member of the body of Christ, or are there still irksome personality quirks which annoy us and stand in the way of us functioning in our ministry?

Also, are we physically healthy? Through prophecy at the beginning of this move of the Holy Spirit, God promised us: “**divine health and divine life.**” Looking over the church in this present day, we see many individuals suffering with various physical ailments and diseases: cancer, diabetes, weakening eyesight and even blindness, loss of hearing, memory loss, mobility issues—to mention a few. This raises the question: “Are we in bondage?”

If we agree that we, as the body of Christ, are unhealthy and in bondage to the ravages of this age and time, then have faith—there is a solution. The solution is to repent of our shortcomings and sins, cry out to God as a corporate body, and ask the Holy Spirit to come to our rescue. God heard the Israelites cry out to Him when they were in bondage in Egypt, and He delivered them. Glory to God! God even promised to: “*take away from you all sickness, and will afflict you with none of the terrible diseases of Egypt which you have known*” (Deuteronomy 7:15). And after wandering in the desert for 40 years, God reminded them, “*Your garments did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years*” (Deuteronomy 8:4). When Moses finished his tenure here on this earth, consider his health: “*And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated*” (Deuteronomy 34:7). Clearly, the ravages of time and old age did not negatively **affect** Moses physically!

Reading further through the Old Testament, we read over and over

again that when the Israelites were in trouble or had turned their back on God, when they repented and cried out to God, He came to their rescue.

Is not God able in this day and this hour to answer our prayers if we cry out to Him? It may seem to our natural human thinking that divine health is beyond the realm of possibility, but the Apostle Paul wrote: “*For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us*” (2 Corinthians 1:20). And Jesus said: “*With God all things are possible*” (Matthew 19:26). Also, in Hebrews 13:8 we read: “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*”

Jesus proved beyond doubt that we serve a living God that is able and willing to heal. “*And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people*” (Matthew 9:35).

In addition, the disciples were given the power to deliver and heal: “*And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease*” (Matthew 10:1).

Saints of God, let us ask the Holy Spirit to help us set aside the cares of life (Luke 10:38–42) and overcome our shortcomings of living a Christlike life. Let us cry out and seek God with all our hearts for the fulfillment of His promises for divine health and healing, and that His kingdom will come in its fullness here on this earth. “*If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land*” (2 Chronicles 7:14).

Oh Lord, let “*Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven*” (Matthew 6:10). Amen. †

SOVEREIGNTY

BRIAN HANNIGAN

Greetings to the children of the Church!

With the help of your dads and moms, I would like you to learn more about God, about how wonderful He is, about how much he loves us. Today I would like us to talk about an important part of God’s nature, namely: God’s sovereignty.

God Is Sovereign

God is sovereign. This means that God is in charge. God does

what He wants. From ChatGPT the word ‘sovereign’ refers to God’s authority. God rules over everything in the heavens and on earth. His plans and His purposes have always and will always be accomplished.

We sing these words in the song, “Holy Forever”; ‘*Jesus, Your Name is the highest, ...All thrones and dominions, all powers and positions, Your name stands above them all.*’ God is **sovereign**. He rules over everything.

Jesus is Sovereign

Read together with your parents from Colossians 1:15-20 and see how God's power is also in His Son, Jesus Christ. Can you recognize that Jesus is also sovereign, because Jesus is also God?

The Will of God

The Bible often refers to *'the will of God.'* The Psalmist, David, said: *"I delight to do Your will, Oh Lord"* (Psalm 40:8). God has plans and purposes. What God wants to do, that's what He does. These things are *'the will of God.'* Because He is God, He does whatever He plans and purposes to do.

Whatever God Does is GOOD!

The most wonderful part of God is His love! Everything done by God comes from His love. So, we need not be afraid of God having all power and dominion and authority, because He only uses His love to be helpful. We can trust that the most powerful Being in the universe is devoted to helping us.

Did You Know That All Humans are Sovereign?

You children also have a measure of *sovereignty!* When God made Adam and Eve in His image as recorded in Genesis chapter 1, God says He made us in **His** image. We all have some of God's nature. He gave you and me *sovereignty!* That means we can, like God, make plans and have purposes to do what is possible for humans.

One Big Problem With Us Humans

There is one major, huge, gigantic difference between us and God! **Sin!**

We are not pure and holy like God is.

When humans try to live without having Jesus in their hearts, they make lots of bad decisions. The problems facing the world today are not caused by God, but by a lack of God!

Sometimes we demand our own way for all the wrong reasons. We disobey our parents. We use words that we know are wrong. Sometimes we even hate and hurt other people. Sin! It is in all of us from the time we were born. Sin makes us stubborn. Sin even causes us to refuse to obey. We refuse to apologize. We refuse to forgive.

Open your Bibles and read Jeremiah 17:9-10 Can you see in this scripture how sin deceives us so that we don't know the condition of our own heart? Can you see that the only way we can understand the condition of our heart is to have God help us?

Remedy

Do you see how God has given us sovereignty? He has given us the right to do what we want? But, we cannot make good choices without God's help.

Here are a couple of questions that you already know the answers to:

- Is Jesus God? Yes! When Jesus was on earth He was both God and man.
- Is Jesus sovereign? Does He have all power and dominion to do what He wants? Yes!
- Did Jesus lay down His sovereignty to His Father? Did He give up His privilege and His rights to do what He wanted? Yes! Read Mark 14:36

God helps children through their dad and mom. *"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right"* (Ephesians 6:1). Children learn to obey God by obeying their parents. *"Obedience is the very best way to show that you believe and by doing exactly what the Lord commands and doing it happily."*

Prayer

Dear Lord, help me to lay down my sovereignty, my will. I'm sorry for demanding to have my way, Forgive my sins. Jesus, come into my heart today. Lord Jesus, You will always be holy. Help me to become more like You by having your obedient heart.

Amen. †

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