

# COMMUNION SERMONS.

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*Action Sermon, Simprin, February 2, 1707.*

CHRIST'S PEOPLE, A WILLING PEOPLE.

## SERMON I.

PSALM cx. 3,

*Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.*

OUR Lord Jesus Christ is this day erecting his standard in this place, requiring us to submit ourselves to him. But, Oh! how averse are sinners to submit to him; were it left to their own will, he should be a head without a body, and though he travailed long and sore, yet should have no issue; but God hath otherwise secured it. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power."

This is spoken to Christ, by David, in the spirit of prophecy. That it belongs to Christ, no Christian can doubt; for here David in spirit calls him Lord. The Jews, denying the divinity of the Messiah, could not extricate themselves from that difficulty. "If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?" But to us it is easy, for as he was man, he was the son of David, and came after him, but he was more than man, being God he was David's Lord, and so was before him. He is in this Psalm held forth as a priest having an everlasting priesthood; and as a king, who hath Jehovah for his confederate, who sets him at his right hand, even on his throne, after he had overcome death, Rev. iii. 21. He is placed upon his throne, with a promise that his enemies shall be made his footstool; which imports his absolute victory over them, and the eternal disgrace that shall lie upon them. The footstool is a piece of state, that both raiseth and easeth him that sitteth upon the throne.

In the second verse it is plain David speaks, and so continues; "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength," that is, the gospel in power, "out of Zion," Micah iv. 2. Thy kingdom shall begin

there, but it shall extend itself to the nations. But how shall he reign that hath so many enemies? He shall set up his kingdom in the midst of them. But shall he have no kindly subjects? Yes he shall. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power."

There is here, 1. Something supposed. Namely, that Christ hath a people in the world where he erects his standard, that he hath a special relation to, and interest in. Thy people, even his people, Matth. i. 21. The elect who are his, by gift from the Father, John xvii. 9, and by purchase, he hath bought them with his blood, John x. 15. It is supposed also, that he finds these unwilling to submit to him, as well as the rest of the world. The corruption of the will, is common to them with others. They are not only as infants who do not know their Father; but as rebellious children, who yield no obedience to him.

2. There is something here ensured to the mediator, respecting this people of his; namely, that these unwilling people shall be willing, Hebrew, *willingnesses*; which imports that they shall submit to him, and give away themselves to him; acknowledge the right which Christ hath to them, and be his people by their own consent. It imports that they shall do this cordially, with all their heart; it shall not be a lying to him, as hypocrites do; it shall not be a forced pretext only, but their wills shall be cast into the mould of his will, and in point of practice conformed to the will of his commandments. See Isaiah xlix. 18, and lv. 5.

3. There is the time when, and the way how this shall be done. "In the day of thy power." That is, in a day of the gospel's coming with power. "For the gospel is the power of God unto salvation." There is a power which is Christ's that makes them willing, that is the power of Christ's spirit, different from moral suasion, 1 Thess. i. 5. This power opens the heart, dissolves the stone in it, melts down the old will and renovates it. Nothing less can do it, nor break the iron sinew in their necks. Then there is a day for this power, a time appointed from eternity, at which everlasting love that was under a cloud, shall flash out on the faces of these children of darkness, and bring them forth to marvellous light. The gospel sometimes it is but like wild fire, that gives light, but does not burn up that on which it falls, but in this day it is big with power, and so brings forth children to God.

What follows, is diversely rendered, and interpreted too. It seems to me to point at these things: 1. The beauty: the spiritual beauty of those that are thus made willing; they shall stand before him in the beautiful garments of holiness, as so many priests unto God. 2. The suddenness of this change, as if that beauty of

theirs had fallen from the womb of the morning as the dew, Micah v. 7. And 3, the multitude of converts who are Christ's youth, or young men being born again.

DOCTRINE. That Christ hath a people in the world that shall be willing in the day of his power, cordially submitting to him. I shall,

I. Touch at that corruption of the will, with which Christ finds his people, as well as others possessed.

II. Speak of the willingness of the soul submitting to Christ.

III. I will touch a little at the day of power.

I. I am to touch at that corruption of the will, with which Christ finds his people, as well as others possessed, when he comes in a day of power.

1. There is a weakness in their will, they cannot will what is spiritually good and acceptable to God. They cannot produce one act of the will that is holy, till grace change their wills, no more than a dead man can produce his own resurrection. For we are by nature without strength. "It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." They may with the foolish virgins, Matt. xxv. will grace, but they do but desire it in a carnal manner.

2. An aversion to good. We are naturally backward, and therefore must be drawn. How unwilling is the fish to be drawn out of its element into another, so are we to leave our own ways. "Ye will not come to me," saith Jesus, "that ye might have life."

3. There is a proneness to evil, a woful bent of the will carrying it to sin. "My people," says God, "are bent to backsliding from me." Hence they are mad upon their idols. Place Christ and the devil, life and death, duty and sin, before them, leave the will to itself, it will naturally run to the evil, as the water runs down a steep place.

4. There is a contrariety in the will, to the will of God. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Hence it is enough for us in this state to will any thing, that God forbids it. Even the heathen confessed that men were disposed to desire unlawful things, and to rush upon things forbidden. Strip sin naked of all profit and pleasure that may attend it, yet the sinner will court sin for its own sake.

5. There is contumacy in it, the will is wilful or obstinate in evil. The man will not be turned, though he should run upon the sword point of vengeance. "Cast away from you all your trans-

gressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel." Unrenewed sinners, like the Leviathan, "count darts as stubble, and laugh at the shaking of the spear." Yea, they say, in opposition to the curse, "we shall have peace, though we walk in the imagination of our heart, to add drunkenness to thirst."

This is that corruption which we have derived from Adam, by whose fall all the faculties of our souls were corrupted and distorted: and our will in particular made wholly the devil's captive, not to be delivered but by a day of power.

We now proceed:

II. To speak of the willingness of the soul submitting to Christ. "Thy people shall be willing." What a wonderful change is this! The same soul that was unwilling before, is now willing. What makes the change? They are made, they do not make themselves willing. The Lord changes their wills, takes away the evil qualities of their will, and gives new qualities. "A new heart also," says he, "will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh; and I will give you an heart of flesh." Thus the power of God infallibly determines their wills; yet not blindly, but so as they see what most reasonably should turn the balance in their choice. For, in every step God deals with them as rational creatures, giving them a peculiar illumination to proceed. We shall particularize and illustrate this, by shewing what they are now willing to do, and how this willingness in every step is produced. 1. They are willing to part with sin. "Ephraim shall say, what have I any more to do with idols." They were never more willing to swallow the sweet morsel, than now they are to part with it. Their hearts were glued to their idols, now a day of power melts the glue, and the soul is content to part with sin, cursing the day that ever they met. The soul that held fast sin and refused to let it go, would give a world to be quit of it. Never was there a man that had drunk a cup of poison, that would more willingly have vomited it, than such a soul would now part with sin.

Now, how comes this wonderful change? Surely the man is made willing. There must needs be a power there, to make the man loath above all things, what before he loved above all things. This is plain, if you consider that the man was joined to his idols, and unable to turn from them. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil. His sin was so rooted in his heart before, that no threatenings, no promises could separate him and it. Surely it must

the strong wind that rends the rocks, and lays the tall cedars upon the ground; and since he is willing to part with sin, surely he hath seen and felt something, which he did not see nor feel before. Yes,

He hath felt an uneasiness of conscience rising from the guilt of his sin. Sin hath become uneasy to him, and begun to work and sting him. Like Peter's hearers, he is now pricked in his heart. Unless the soul were ript up, how would it thus as it were cast forth its bowels. This uneasiness hath become intolerable. "A wounded spirit who can bear." His bosom beloved has been very troublesome, or why would he cast it out?

He hath also seen something in God, which he never saw before. The man would never have been willing to have parted with sin, unless he had seen happiness locked up in the enjoyment of God, and that sin separates him from that God, and will separate him from him for evermore if retained. But the soul sees itself lost and undone without God, and he is sure that he is liable to his wrath and curse for it, and is not able to abide with everlasting burning, or dwell in devouring flames.

2. They are willing to go out of themselves, to be divorced from their first husband the law; to cast off all confidence in their attainments and duties; to come to Christ stript naked and empty, with nothing in them or on them to recommend them to him but misery. Their language is, "For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great."

Now surely there must be power here. Naturally we take the spider's motto, each, saying, I am indebted to myself alone. The covenant of works is engrained in our natures. Work and gain, do and live, is the first principle of all Adam's posterity. They were bred merchants, and they are ashamed to beg: and though their stock is gone, yet they will rather drive a trade of small wares than none at all. Coming out of our own righteousness is a death, a dying to a husband. "My brethren," says Paul, "ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him that is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." Does the spider sweep away its own web, which it spins out of its own bowels? Does a mother cast out the fruit of her own womb? or will a loving wife put herself to death, that she may be free of her husband. And so we are made dead to the law, as it is in the original. And therefore the willing soul sees that the best of their duties cannot procure the favour of God. Is. lxiv. 6, 7; Phil. iii. They see the emptiness and worthlessness of all they do. Hence they cannot but loath themselves as for their sins, so for their duties.

They see and feel an absolute need of the Lord Jesus Christ and his righteousness. The person finds he is sick, and therefore needs a physician ; that he is naked, his fig leaves will not cover him, and therefore the Lord God must make him a garment, " even a white raiment that he may be clothed, and the shame of his nakedness not appear."

He sees also, that he hath nothing in him, or about him to recommend him to Christ. Many spoil all, by thinking they have something that cannot but engage Christ to take their cause in hand, as their tears, prayers, repentance, deeds of charity. But the truly willing soul takes David's plea, Ps. xxv. 11. And comes as he is invited, without money, that he may take the water of life freely ; lest he should meet with the entertainment of Simon Magus, and hear it said, " thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money."

He sees, moreover, that God and Christ should do him no wrong, though he should not be accepted, but be suffered to perish. He will say with the centurion, " I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof." He will justify God come of himself what will, Ps. li. 4. And thus if the soul should meet with a disappointment it will leave its complaint upon itself. And upon the back of any refusal will say, " true and righteous are thy judgments, O Lord."

3. They are willing to take Christ as their Saviour, and to submit to his righteousness. God proposeth in the gospel a spiritual marriage betwixt his Son and sinners, Matth. xxii. Most men refuse the offer, but the willing soul heartily consents to the bargain and makes Christ its choice for all, instead of all, and above all ; and takes him for a husband, as the captive woman marries the conqueror. The soul is well content to venture its salvation upon this bottom alone, Phil. iii. 9. To appear before God in the garment of his righteousness, to seek life in his death, and healing only in his wounds.

Now there must be a power to make the soul thus willing. Every man naturally is an enemy to Christ, and therefore as long as the soul can make any shift it will not come ; there must be a drawing power ; yea, such a power as wrought in Christ, when God by his mighty power raised him from the dead. The soul being thus willing it follows,

That such a soul hath seen a transcendant excellency in the Lord Jesus Christ. It hath seen him to be the pearl of great price. Sometimes like others, they said to the Christian, what is thy beloved more than another beloved ? But surely now they see a beauty in him that captivates their hearts and makes their souls love him.

The veil covering, or face covering is taken away, and their eyes see the king in his beauty; a beauty that dazzles their eyes, that darkens all created glory, as the rising sun makes the stars disappear.

They have got also a satisfying view and discovery of the continuance of salvation through a crucified Saviour, else their souls could not acquiesce in it. The mystery of Christ is folly to the natural man when he comes near to look on it, but the willing soul gets another sort of a discovery of it, "determines to know nothing, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." You know the world's opinion of the mystery of Christ crucified. "It was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness." And that still remains true. "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Christ." Two things made the world stumble at the gospel way of salvation. Its supposed unsuitableness to the divine perfections, this is the bane of the Jews, Socinians and others. Its supposed unsuitableness to the case of men, this stumbled the heathens. To expect life from one crucified seemed a most gross absurdity to them. All natural men are in the dark as to this still, therefore they reject him. And therefore I conclude that the man that is made willing has got a view of the suitableness of this contrivance to the divine perfections. They have seen in it the manifold wisdom of God. Men that are not careful about their souls will venture them on they know not what; but a man that is in earnest about salvation, will never venture it on that bottom that is not made of God for that end. The man sees he hath to do with a God that is wise, just, and powerful, as well as merciful: therefore as no man will venture to sea in a ship that cannot hold out water, so the soul in earnest cannot venture unless it see the plan suitable to the wisdom, justice, and power of God. To such "Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

He hath also got a view of its suitableness to his own case. Men that see the worth of their souls will not take a remedy at random for their perishing souls, lest it be found poison instead of medicine. Wherefore the soul looking about in the day of distress, and finding nothing in the world but miserable comforters, Christ discovers himself to that soul, and the soul seeing his suitableness resolves to venture here as upon one able to save, and every way fitted for their needs. Matth. xiii. 45, 46.

4. The soul is willing to take on the yoke of Christ's commandments. Its language is, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Having fled from the fiery law on Sinai, he is content to stand at Zion, and receive the same commands. He is willing to stoop and

take on Christ's burden, and is sorry he cannot bear it better. The ears that were shut before are now opened. "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Holiness is now the desire of his soul. Now,

There must be a power here, what else could break the iron sinews in their necks, and tame the bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. The wild ass could never be tamed till now, surely then the month is come. Hence it is evident the willing soul sees a beauty in holiness, a righteousness in the commandments of God, and a loathsomeness in sin. He considers all God's precepts concerning all things to be right; and he hates every false way. If sin be as sweet as before, if they see no beauty in holiness, surely they are not the willing people; and it is needless to them to pretend to the feeling of a power, unless they would make it appear that God makes men willing without reason.

5. The soul is willing to bear Christ's cross, to cleave to him and his ways, and to follow him through fire and water, Luke xiv. 25—33. All that he hath is at Christ's service, houses and lands, relations and life also. The smiles of the world cannot bribe him, nor the frowns of it drive him away. He is content to own Christ, when despised and rejected of men. Now there must needs be a power here to make a man thus willing, not only to suffer, but to suffer for him, for his glory, and to keep up his standard in the world; rather to suffer for him, than to sin against him. "Thus it is given to them in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him but also to suffer for his sake." Hence sin is more bitter to the willing soul than death, and all the sufferings to which they can be exposed, Eccles. vii. 26. Certainly both are bitter. Now, when both are laid before them, and they choose sufferings, this says, that sin to them is most bitter. Here is the ruin of many professors in a time of trial, sin was never the most bitter thing to them, though it hath been bitter; and therefore the Lord fits his people for suffering, by letting them experience the bitterness of sin.

Again, Christ is sweeter to the willing soul, than all the pleasures and profits of a world, else they could never be willing to forego these for Christ, Phil. iii. 8, 9. Alas! many never felt so much sweetness in Christ as in a lust, hence they let him go, and return to their lusts again. Some get half a view of Christ's preciousness, hence a half-willingness, a hankering after him. But still the world and their lusts are sweeter, and therefore like Orpha, they depart from him weeping.

*Lastly,* The willing soul is willing to go away with Christ, for altogether, home to his Father's house. I am not saying they are all absolutely willing to die. They perhaps want assurance of a safe

lodging place. But this I say, if Christ would carry them away to his Father's house, they would be content to bid farewell to all below, and go with him.

Now there must be power here, that reconciles a man to heaven, to everlasting communion with God. "Giving thanks unto the Father, who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Hence it is evident, the willing soul is one that hath a transcendent love to Christ, and a desire of communion with him; even of such a communion as may never be overclouded nor interrupted. They are unwilling to want it, and their souls long for it. We shall now,

### III. Touch a little at the day of power.

1. Though the gospel may be long preached unto a people, yet there are some special seasons that may be looked on as days of power. The same power doth not always accompany the word. Days when the gospel is new to a people, days of persecution, days when there is a spirit of prayer poured out, and times of sealing ordinances, these are more likely than others to be days of power.

2. There is an appointed time for the inbringing of all the elect of God, and that is the particular day of power to them. As it was to the Israelites, when at the end of the appointed time, "even the self-same day, it came to pass that all the host of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt." He that appointed the time of their natural birth, appoints also the time of their spiritual or new birth. There is a day and hour, in which everlasting love will dawn on the soul.

3. A dark night usually goes before this day of power. The soul is led to the place of execution before the pardon be given out; they are cast down before they be lifted up; conscience is awakened, the heart pained, before peace and health be diffused through the soul.

4. Whenever this day of power comes, the soul is made willing, the fort of the heart is taken, and the King of glory enters in state, turns out the old inhabitants, and puts in new. And there are three things done in that day. 1. Christ gives the conquering stroke, and by an Almighty power opens the prison door, and so it is the day of the captives' deliverance. 2. The spirit of Christ is at work travelling to bring them forth, and so it is their birth-day. 3. Christ gains the bride's consent, and so it is their marriage day.

INFERENCE 1. Pray earnestly for a day of power. There are three things we much need, and which a day of power would do for us. 1. It would revive the graces of the spirit in the Lord's people among us, that are decayed and languishing. A marriage day is a feast day for the bridegroom's friends, in which the bridegroom

bestows gifts upon them. The Lord's people have need to be made more willing, to have the backwardness to duty taken off their spirits.

2. It would bring in many new friends to Christ, would bring many out of the devil's kingdom, into the kingdom of God's dear Son.
3. It would make enemies, that are none of Christ's purchase, to feign submission, and put a stop to the open profanity abounding in our day. Ps. lxxxix. 15.

INFERENCE 2. Show yourselves Christ's people, by submitting to him. This day he is erecting his standard in this place, and we invite you in his name, to stand out no longer against him, but come to him and receive him, and give up yourselves to him.

Motives,

1. Consider what you are, while you submit not to Christ. You are under strange lords. If you be not Christ's subjects, you are the devil's slaves; you are the servants of sin. And what is it you are so fond of, that you prefer it to Christ: is it pleasure or profit? "What is a man profited, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

2. Consider Christ is an exalted king. He is placed at the Father's right hand, on his throne. Will you deny him a lodging in your heart? The rejecting of Christ, in his humiliation, was grievously punished upon the Jews, what then shall become of the neglectors of an exalted Christ?

3. He is a priest as well as a king. It is only by virtue of his sacrifice and intercession, that you can get mercy. Finally, you must stoop to him sooner or later. "We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. To him every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess." If you submit not willingly, he will make you his footstool. He is a merciful king.

USE 3. Try whether you be really such as submit honestly to Christ. Especially you that are to sit down at the Lord's table, see if you be a willing people. Try your willingness.

1. Your willingness if right, will be a supernatural willingness, made by a day of power. Wild oats grow without labour, but bread corn requires labour and pains. Willingness lightly gained, lightly goes. So it was with the stoney ground hearers, and those who received the seed among thorns. The child that never found any bitter thing on the breast, easily returns to it; and the soul that is willing to take Christ, but never felt the bitterness of sin, it is like it will not long stay with him.

2. It is accompanied with understanding. The willing soul makes an understanding choice. An error in the person, (in marriage),

makes it null. Many in their pretended choice of Christ, make a blind choice, not knowing him, hence they run away from him again. Mal. iii. 1, 2.

3. It is deliberate. The soul sits down and counts the cost, but a rash consent will be retracted.

4. It is an absolute willingness. Philip said to the eunuch, "if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest be baptized. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." That is to believe with the whole heart, when the soul makes choice of Christ and his ways, because of their inward beauty, which they would do, were there no hell. But alas! many are willing to take Christ just to be a bridge, to carry them over the water of God's wrath.

*Lastly*, It is for the present. Real willingness will admit of no delay. Matth. viii. 21, 22.

OBJECTION 1. I fear I am none of Christ's people. ANSWER, If thou be one of the willing people, surely thou art one of his.

2. I fear Christ is not willing. ANSWER, That is a dreadful reflection on his veracity. Do you think that he mocks you while he invites you, and promises you a welcome reception. Nay, know if Christ had not been willing, thou hadst not been willing, "we love him, because he first loved us." It is he who hath made you willing.

3. But I cannot get my heart made willing. O how backward is it, and averse to stoop. ANSWER, Is that thy exercise and burden? It is a good sign. Art thou willing to be made willing? that is some degree of willingness. Dost thou see that beauty in Christ, that hatefulness in sin, that thou art grieved that thy soul cleaves so fast to it, thou art of that willing people. Amen.