

THE REFUSALS OF CHRIST

This message is on the **Refusals of Christ**, a title borrowed from Dr. George Morrison, about whom I will have more to say later.

The first time I brought this message in this church was on June 10, 1990. Then ten years later on September 24, 2000, and now on February 3, 2010. It looks like I am on a ten-year rotation plan.

Back in July 2000 I attended the Samford Pastors' School at Beeson Divinity School and enjoyed some of the best instruction and preaching that I have ever heard.

The key speaker was Dr. Alec Motyer, from Ireland, who preached four messages from the first three chapters of Ezekiel. Dr. Motyer is a professor of Old Testament Hebrew and he brought out many excellent thoughts in his exposition of the text.

Ironically, I had just finished teaching Ezekiel to our Sunday School and he made me feel like I had not done the book justice.

After he preached his last sermon I had the opportunity to speak with Dr. Motyer and told him that I didn't know what he thought was the reason that he came over here from England, but that I believed that the Lord had sent him over here to preach those messages to me! I will explain that in a few minutes.

Find the Book of Ezekiel in your Bible.

The Book of Ezekiel can be very difficult to interpret and yet there are some straightforward lessons to be learned. Ezekiel was trained to serve as a priest in the temple in Jerusalem but now he was one of the captives in Babylon by the River Chebar where he saw "visions of God."

Ezekiel 1:1

Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth *month*, on the fifth *day* of the month, as I *was* among the captives by the River Chebar, *that* the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God.

The men who served as priests began their service at age 30. It is no coincidence that Jesus of Nazareth was 30 years old when He stepped out of a carpenter's shop and as it were said: "I am God!"

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So Ezekiel was distressed that he could not serve God as a priest in the temple. But God regenerated him and called him to be a prophet.

Ezekiel 2:2

Then the Spirit entered me when He spoke to me, and set me on my feet; and I heard Him who spoke to me.

Without trying to explain all that happened to Ezekiel, notice that the Spirit of God took him away in his bitterness and anger, and carried him to the captives at the River Chebar! But Ezekiel was already by the River Chebar! God took him up and put him where he already was!

Ezekiel 3:14-15

¹⁴ So the Spirit lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me. ¹⁵ Then I came to the captives at Tel Abib, who dwelt by the River Chebar; and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days.

But now Ezekiel knows **why** he is where he is!

What has that got to do with you, Jim Gunn?

Most of you know the hard times we experienced in this church in the late 1990s. Most of our members left the church and for good cause. About a dozen of us who remained wanted to go somewhere else but to me there was nowhere to go. Cora was really ready to go but I refused to leave this church. Cora is a biblically submissive wife as I try to be a biblical head of our family.

What happened next in this church was a revival of the Spirit. Cora and I have been here now for over 34 years; some of you have been here even longer than that. In January 2000 this church called me to serve as one of your elders.

What am I saying?

When I heard Dr. Motyer preach that the Holy Spirit took Ezekiel up and put him back where he already was it was as though he was speaking about me. I felt that, like Ezekiel, I have been revived, and carried by the Spirit back to where I already was. I was ready to leave but I was still here; but then I knew **why** I was here!

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This message is called **THE REFUSALS OF CHRIST**. The title and part of the outline for this message was “stolen” from George Morrison who was the pastor of Wellington Free Church in Glasgow, Scotland, from 1902 until his death in 1928.

While I borrowed the title and outline from Dr. Morrison, the idea for this line of thought has been with me for a long while. Some day I intend to write a book on the seeming contradictions of Christ. By that I do not mean that Jesus, who is Truth personified, ever actually contradicted Himself.

By “contradictions,” I mean that sometimes Jesus seemed not to answer directly what was asked of Him. Yet, upon reflection, you will find that He did indeed answer; except not in the way that was expected.

By way of further introduction, let me give you an example:
Turn to John 3

John 3:1-8

There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

² The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

³ Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

⁴ Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

⁵ Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

⁷ Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye **must** be born again.

⁸ The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

KJV

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That **must** is my main point of contention with the majority of what passes for evangelism today. What is the Gospel? Where in the Bible do you find, an appeal to the will of man, where you are to plead for a man to “make a decision,” and in that act of the will of man, it is assumed that Jesus is under an obligation to respond and save the man?

Can anyone show me that method of “evangelism” in the Bible?

Did those well-meaning but mistaken men never read:

John 1:10-13

¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. ¹¹ He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

¹² But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

¹³ Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

KJV

Where in the bible do you find that the Gospel is inviting Jesus to “come into your heart?” Especially when there is no call for repentance; just ask Jesus to come into your heart.

The Gospel that I find in the Bible involves a man who is “dead in trespasses and sins,” a man who Jesus Himself says cannot, “come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him...” a man of whom Jesus said, “...you will die in your sins; for you do not believe that I am He...” A man that cries out from Holy Spirit conviction of sin: “Lord, what must I do to be saved?”

That is a cry from a man who has been convicted of his sin and guilt and has been born again!

Jesus is not the helpless bystander, desiring to save, but unable to do so unless “mighty” man makes his “decision.”

The Jesus of the Bible is the one who said, “I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep.”

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The Jesus of the Bible said, “But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you, My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”

Is this too difficult a concept to understand? What concept? That Jesus is Lord and that He is the Sovereign who reveals Himself to whom He pleases.

Matthew 11:25-30

²⁵ At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. ²⁶ Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. ²⁷ All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and *the one* to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*. ²⁸ Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light."

The Father has chosen a people in Christ from before the foundation of the world; the Son came into the world to save sinners; the Holy Spirit gives the new birth. The sinner who is dead in his spirit; hears the Gospel of the sinless Jesus Christ dying on the cross as the only acceptable sacrifice for sinners, being buried, and rising from the grave on the third day, according to the Scriptures, ascending into heaven, and who is at this very moment praying for His church.

This not about a “helpless” Jesus; this is about the Lord Jesus of the Bible. He has you and me on His hands and He will either save us or send us to hell. It is not your “decision” that will determine your eternal destiny. And you, sinner, like me, must come to Jesus Christ on His terms.

This misguided emphasis on man is why church membership lists are filled with people who “made a decision,” and then they “decided” they didn’t need to keep meeting with the church. They “decided” that they can stay home and sleep, or go to the river and play, or to go shopping, but they don’t believe they need to come to church! The greatest field of evangelism today is the membership lists of most Baptist churches!

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That is my introduction to a message that is designed to teach us something about the **majesty** of Jesus Christ. I want to tell you about the Jesus who is Lord! This is the Jesus you must believe in. This Jesus is the very Son of God; the Second Person of the Godhead. See His power! He is Mighty to save! And, **yes**, He is our Judge and able to condemn!

The title of this message is, **The Refusals of Christ**.

It is not very difficult to read a book and note what it says. It is much more difficult to note what is not said. For example, it is easy to see who is here today; but it takes some thought to note who is not here.

The Four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, contain so much that is positive. The Gospels are four different perspectives on the same Person and sometimes they seem to not agree.

But, of course, they do agree, if we have the correct understanding.

In the Four Gospels, it is especially difficult to find the negatives. And by negatives, I also mean OMISSIONS. We are most familiar with what Jesus said and what He did. Did you ever think about what **He refused** to say and do?

There is a royal lesson in The Refusals of Christ.

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Sometimes He refused to work a miracle.

He began His ministry by **refusing** to perform a miracle.

Luke 4:1-13

And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, ² Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.

³ And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. ⁴ And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

⁵ And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. ⁶ And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.

⁷ If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.

⁸ And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

⁹ And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence:

¹⁰ For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee:

¹¹ And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. ¹² And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

¹³ And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.

KJV

Why did Jesus refuse to perform a miracle? For one thing Satan already knew that Jesus was the Son of God! But the main reason is because He never used His divine power for His personal ease and comfort. Could He have turned the stones into bread? He fed over 5000 men with five loaves of bread and two small fishes! But after fasting 40 days, He refused to feed Himself. He could have called 12 legions of angels to save Himself from Judas and his rabble. Even on the cross He could have called on the Father to save Him. But Christ is our Kinsman-Redeemer because He refused in ways like that to ease or avoid His suffering.

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Sometimes He refused to answer prayer.

Luke 8:26-40

²⁶ And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee. ²⁷ And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs.

²⁸ When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not. ²⁹ (For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.)

³⁰ And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him. ³¹ And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep.

³² And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them.

³³ Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked.

³⁴ When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country.

³⁵ Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.

³⁶ They also which saw it told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed.

³⁷ Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and he went up into the ship, and returned back again.

³⁸ Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought him that he might be with him: but Jesus sent him away, saying,

³⁹ Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him.

⁴⁰ And it came to pass, that, when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received him: for they were all waiting for him. KJV

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The devils got what they wanted and entered the swine; the Gadarene's asked Him to leave and by morning He was gone. But the demoniac- now free, now cured, now clothed, and now sane... Was refused...Why?

Because men are saved to serve, not to only to enjoy, and service like charity, begins at home. The mightiest preacher could have never told this man's story to his neighbors.

The lesson for us all is that **only you** can tell what Jesus has done for you!

The TV frauds like to boast of how God answers their prayers. It would seem as if they too, are gods. But perhaps the very thing that you think would make all the difference in the world to you--is not to be.

We are saved to serve where we are, that is the point.

No one is saved by the blood of Christ just to be happy. I trust that I have been accepted in the Beloved, but if I must be singing all the time to be a Christian, then I must be a long way from being a Christian.

It is not when you feel like singing all the time, it is when you feel like serving all the time, that you are touched by the resurrection power of Jesus. And the things that I craved for have often been refused to me that I may serve a little better.

The great Apostle Paul would, no doubt, have been overjoyed to have the "thorn in the flesh" removed. But the "thorn," whatever it was, remained. Jesus refused to answer Paul's' prayer in the way that Paul wanted. But Paul had the grace to accept the answer he did receive, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

Jesus not only refused to perform miracles and to answer prayer,
He also refused to explain Himself.

In Matthew 21:23, after Jesus had cast out the moneychangers in the temple.
"Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, 'By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?' "

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They could not deny His deeds; but they said, "Show us your credentials, where did you go to seminary? Show us your seminary degrees if you are going to teach us."

But instead of directly answering their question, Jesus asked them a question about John's baptism.

Matthew 21:24-27

²⁴ And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things.

²⁵ The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him?

²⁶ But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet.

²⁷ And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things. KJV

They refused to answer His question, and He simply refused to explain. And WHY?

If they had eyes to see, and ears to hear, and hearts to understand, they would have found in His very works, the authority of God. "There are none so blind as those who will not see." Had they been honest in their questioning, He would have, no doubt, explained everything. But the motive of their question was out of malice, it was meant to find fault, and not to follow Him. He is always willing to help, to guide, to save the prepared heart. He is not always willing to explain.

There are some things that Christ will not explain to man. We are like gnats trying to understand the sunbeams when we delve into the mysteries of eternity. There are many things that Christ will explain, and yet we don't know them. The fault is not in the brain, or intellect of man, but in the heart.

Christ is intolerant of idle curiosity.

When Peter asked Jesus about John, "*But Lord, what about this man?*" Jesus said to him, "*If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me.*"

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Our longsuffering Lord Jesus will teach the honest heart.

In the middle of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple and taught. And the Jews marveled, saying, ‘How does this Man know letters, having never studied?’ Jesus answered them and said, “My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me, If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority...” {John 7:14-17}

When a man comes to the Gospel of Grace; when a man is confronted with the Jesus Christ of the Bible; living a sinless life, suffering and dying and being raised to life again, as the Substitute for sinners; when a man comes to the true Gospel as if it is an intellectual problem, he will meet with a thousand unexplainable difficulties.

But let him come to the Gospel with the heart of a child, a heart prepared by the Holy Spirit, convicted of sin and guilt, agreeing with God on his just condemnation, and step by step that person will know the truth.

Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father except through Me.”

Come to this Jesus with a yielded heart and Jesus will explain His love. “You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.”

One last refusal of Christ:

On the cross He refused the drink. “*They gave Him wine mingled with myrrh, but He received it not.*” The cup was offered in mercy to ease His pain. And we will never know this side of glory who it was who mixed it and offered it. It was offered kindly and Christ refused it kindly. But He had come to suffer. He had come to die. But He would allow no amount of relief that would interfere with His purpose. He came into the world to save sinners.

We have seen the Jesus, who sometimes refused to perform miracles; to answer prayer; and to explain Himself. But this is the Jesus who has the power to save sinners.

You must be very dead indeed if you don’t love such a Christ.
Repent and believe the Gospel!