

When Men Go to Hell Crying for Mercy

By Henry Mahan

Bible Text: Proverbs 1:28

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There are three outstanding reasons for preaching the gospel. There are three outstanding reasons for preaching the Word of God, the Word of redemption, the Word of salvation.

Number one—and this is of greatest importance—to declare and promote the glory of God, to declare and promote the glory of God's grace. The gospel is called, by the apostle of Paul, the gospel of God's glory. And then in Exodus chapter 33 Moses said, "Lord, show me your glory. I want to see your glory."

And the Lord said, "Moses, I will cause my goodness," which is God's glory, "to pass before you. I will be merciful to whom I will be merciful. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious."

We preach the gospel to declare and to promote the glory of God, the glory of God's grace.

And then I want you to turn to the book of Ephesians because I want you to read with me beginning in verse...in chapter one with verse six, why we are saved, why we are redeemed. He says in Ephesians one, verse six, that we are saved, "To the praise of the glory of his grace." He has been talking about God blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus according as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before him in love having predestinated us unto the adoption of children to the praise of the glory of his grace." That's why he saved us.

And look also at verse 12 if you will. He said that we should be—and he has been talking about making known unto us the mystery of his will—"In whom we have obtained an inheritance that we should be to the praise of his glory." That's why he revealed the gospel to you. That's why he gave you an inheritance reserved, in corruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away, "that you might be to the praise of his glory," not to the praise of the glory of some preacher or some denomination or some special evangelistic crusade, but that you might be to the praise of his glory.

And then on further in verse 12 he talks about us trusting in Christ, verse 13, "Hearing the Word of truth." Verse 13, "being sealed with the promise, the Holy Spirit of promise

and giving us a pledge of that inheritance, a token of that inheritance.” Verse 14, the last line, “unto the praise of his glory.”

So we preach the gospel of Christ to promote the glory of God. We preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to declare the glory of God almighty. If God saves people tonight it will be the praise of the glory of his grace. If he takes you to glory it will be to the praise of the glory of his grace. If you are a joint heir with the Lord Jesus Christ throughout the endless ages of eternity it will be to the praise of the glory of his grace. And if nobody is saved here tonight we will still preach the gospel to the praise of the glory of his grace.

God’s mercy is going to be glorified and God’s justice is going to be glorified.

And then the second reason why we preach the gospel, if you will turn to Romans chapter 10, we preach the gospel not only to declare and promote God’s glory, God’s glory. And any gospel that does not promote God’s glory is not the gospel of God. Any gospel that does not promote God’s glory and praise his grace is not of God. It is not the gospel of God. But, secondly, we preach the gospel to bring men to a knowledge of Christ and eternal salvation. This is the way God saves sinners, through the preaching of the gospel.

Paul said, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”

And our Lord Jesus Christ told his disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel and he that believeth...he that believes what you preach and is baptized shall be saved. And he who does not believe what you preach shall be damned.

And in Romans chapter 10, verse 13, it says, “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” If a man feels himself to be a sinner, he feels himself to be without hope, without help, without God, without Christ, he feels himself to be in need of a savior, in need of a mediator, in need of an atonement, a helpless, hopeless creature and sees Christ as the only hope of the sinner and can see his blood making atonement on the mercy seat of glory for his sin and calls upon God for mercy shall be saved.

But look at the next verse. “How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?” A man can’t call on an unrevealed Savior. A man can’t trust an unrevealed redeemer. How is a man going to call on someone in whom he doesn’t believe? And how is he going to believe in someone of whom he has never heard? And how are they going to hear without a preacher?

In 1 Corinthians chapter one, verse 21, the apostle Paul says, “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” That believe what? That believe what’s preached.

And then the third reason for preaching the gospel—number one is to declare and promote the glory of God. We declare and promote the glory of God in the day of famine and in the day of plenty, in the day of revival and in the day of darkness. And we preach

the gospel to bring men to a knowledge of Christ. And then, thirdly, we preach the gospel to leave all men without excuse and deliver our souls' responsibility.

I want you to turn to the book of Ezekiel, Ezekiel chapter 33. Ezekiel 33, verse eight. Now you listen carefully to this. We, as ministers of Christ have a responsibility to deliver our souls' responsibility. It is a responsibility of God's people to preach the gospel, to witness. Christ said, "Ye shall be my witnesses." We have a responsibility. We are debtors to all men to declare unto them the gospel. In Ezekiel 33, verse eight, God says, "When I say to the wicked, 'Oh wicked man, thou shalt surely die,' if thou doest not speak to warn the wicked from his way that wicked man shall die in his iniquity but his blood will I require at thine hand."

You say, "That's Old Testament Scripture."

That's all right. Paul quoted it in the New Testament. He said, "I have not ceased to warn you and preach the gospel from house to house and my hands are free from the blood of all men." That's what Paul said. He felt that he had a responsibility to warn them and after warning them he said, "Your blood is not on my hands." That is what he is talking about.

Look at verse nine. "Nevertheless, if you warn the wicked of his ways, to turn from it, and he does not turn from his way, he will die in his iniquity, he will die in his sins." And Christ said, "If you die in your sins you can't come where I am, but you have delivered your soul."

The man who has done the preaching, the man who has witnessed, the man who has prayed, the man who has been faithful to his friend, the man dies in his sins, but you have delivered your soul because you have warned him.

Turn to 2 Corinthians chapter two. Now, this is an important Scripture. In 2 Corinthians chapter two, verse 14, 2 Corinthians 2:14. It says here, "Now thanks be unto God which always causes us to triumph in Christ and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place." Everywhere I go God makes known the gospel. Where I preach Christ and his crucifixion and his death and his substitutionary work we always triumph in Christ "and God makes known the savor of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are under God a sweet savor of Christ. In them that are saved," and we've got something for them that perish, too. We've got something for those that believe and something for those that don't. We've got a ministry to the saved and a ministry to the lost.

There is nobody neutral in this matter. Watch it. "To the one, to the lost, to the unbelieving, to the perishing one we are the savor of death unto death, death upon death." We add to their condemnation. The gospel which we preach adds to their condemnation. They will never forget we were there. They will never forget what we said. They will never forget the invitation we extended. They will never forget the warning which we sounded. We add to their condemnation.

“And to the other, and to the believer, we are the savor of life unto life.” Everybody here tonight is going to remember this message. Those who go to heaven will thank God for it. And those who go to hell will curse God for the day they heard it. We are going to add to their condemnation.

And he says, “Who is sufficient for these things?” Whose shoulders are broad enough to carry this kind of responsibility? Who on earth is sufficient for these things? Our sufficiency is Christ. None of us are. It’s too great, too weighty, too vast, too important. We take it too lightly. That’s one reason why it distresses a sincere God called minister to stand up before people with the weight of the Word of God, the burden of God’s Word on his heart and see people laughing or turning through a song book of passing notes or chewing gum or doing some foolish thing when we are dealing with the souls of hell bound sinners. That’s what distresses a real minister of God when people find other things to do instead of attending the house of God on the Lord’s Day. We are the savor of life unto life to some and death unto death unto others.

Now, look back at Proverbs one. “And who is sufficient for these things?” I am not. “But our sufficiency is Christ. We are ambassadors for Christ. We beseech you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.”

But there is nobody going to leave from the presence of a spirit filled message unaffected. You will be affected for glory or affected for hell. But everybody is going to be affected.

Now, number one, Proverbs chapter one, verse 24. God says, “I’ve called you. I’ve called you because I have called you.” No man will ever be able to stand at the judgment and lay the blame for his condemnation on God almighty because every son of Adam has been sufficiently warned and sufficiently called.

If you will follow with me through the Word of God I will show you some of the ways that God warns sinners, that God calls sinners.

First of all, in the book of Amos, in the little book of Amos. It’s right before Jonah and it is right after Joel, one of the minor prophets. First of all, God warns men, God calls sinners, God warns sinners by acts of judgment and providence. God’s voice is heard in sickness. God’s voice is heard in death. God’s voice is heard in famine. God’s voice is heard in war. God’s voice is heard in flood and earthquake and all manner of things that we term accidents. God’s voice is heard.

God is there. He says in verse six of Amos four, “I have given you cleanness of teeth.” That’s famine. “I have given you famine in your cities and want of bread in your places and yet you have not returned unto me saith the Lord.”

“You ought to have heard God’s voice in that famine,” he said, “But you didn’t. You ought to have seen God’s hand.”

When he goes on down he says in verse seven, “I have withholden the rain from you when it was yet three months to the harvest.” And you know what that did to the fields, don’t you? They planted the seed. Harvest was three months away. The seed was just little bitty things growing out of the ground and it didn’t rain and they died and there was no harvest. And God said, “Yet you did not return unto me.” Verse eight.

And then he said, “I have smitten you,” in verse nine, “with blasting and mildew.”

In verse 10 he said, “I sent among you pestilence after the manner of Egypt. I have killed your young men with the sword.”

Verse 10, “Yet you have not returned unto me. I have overthrown some of you like I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. And you have been like a firebrand plucked out of the burning.”

How many of you can say, “Oh, one time I had an awful close call, an awful close call?” And God said, “You were like firebrand plucked out of the burning and yet you didn’t return to me. You didn’t call on God.”

And then he says in verse 12, “Therefore I have warned you, I have spoken to you, I have called you by every act of providence. Therefore, thus will I do unto thee: Prepare to meet thy God and not a God of mercy, but a God of wrath, not a God of salvation, but a God of judgment. You get ready to meet God.”

There is another way that God calls men. Turn to Romans chapter one. Leaving all men without excuse. In the first chapter of Romans, verse 20, it says here, “Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them. For God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things from the creation, the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead so they are without excuse.”

The sun in the sky, the stars, the moon, the trees, the plants, the animals, the birds, the rivers, all of these things are testimonies of God’s wisdom and God’s power and God’s creation. And God says, “People see these things. The heavens declare the glory of God. The firmament showeth his handiwork and yet they don’t believe.” And God says they are without excuse.

I’ll tell you another way that God warns sinners. Turn to Romans chapter two. In the second chapter of Romans, verse 14. Here is another way that God warns sinners. Here is another way that God speaks to men. The voice of God is heard in acts of judgment, in acts of providence. The voice of God is heard in the things that are made. And the voice of God is heard in the conscience. In Romans chapter two, verse 14, listen: “When the Gentiles, that is the heathen, which have not the law.” They don’t have a written law. They don’t have the 10 Commandments. “And yet they do by nature the things contained in the law.” They know it is wrong to kill. They know it is wrong to steal. “And when they do by nature these things written in the law, these having not the law are a law unto

themselves which shows the work of God, the work of the law written in their hearts.”
There is a light that lighteth every man that cometh into this world. There is conscience.

Read on. “Their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.”

Another way that God speaks to me is by his law. Another way that God speaks to men is by his gospel.

So there are many ways. God says, “I have called. I have spoken to you. I have spoken to you with the voice of judgment. I have spoken to you with the voice of providence. I have spoken to you with the voice of conscience. I have spoken to you with the voice of nature and yet you haven’t returned unto me.”

Look at the next verse, the next line, “And you refused.”

Now, men can and do refuse the voice of God. I believe in invincible grace. I believe in irresistible grace. I believe that when God sets his love and affection upon a sinner and calls him by his grace with an effectual call that he shall be willing in the die of God’s power. But I also believe that God calls many, many people. “Many are called and few are chosen.” I believe that man can and refuse God’s call. They can and do refuse God’s call.

Moses stood with the people of Israel. He was on his way to the Promised Land and he had married this young woman and he was talking to her father, his father-in-law. And he told his father-in-law how that God had dealt in grace with the people of Israel and how that God had dealt in mercy with the people of Israel and how that God had promised them a kingdom and God had promised them a place of rest and God had promised them a place of mercy and how that God’s hand was leading them through the wilderness, to this place of beauty. And he turned to his father-in-law and he said, “Come on and go with us. It will do thee good.”

And his father-in-law stood there for a few moments and thought. And then he said, “No thank you. I’ll stay where I am.”

And God calls men. And God sends his messenger. And God sends his minister. And God sends your friends and they tell you what great things God has done for them and that through Christ they have been redeemed and they have been forgiven and they have been delivered and they have been saved. And how that God leads them day by day by his grace and they are recipients of his mercy and they are on their way to a kingdom of glory eternally to live with Christ. And they say to you, “Come and go with us.”

And the majority of them answer, “No thank you. I’ll stay where I am.”

God says, “I have called, but you have refused.”

Now, look at the next statement. God says, “I stretched out my hand and you haven’t regarded it. You set at naught my counsel. You wouldn’t listen to my warnings. You wouldn’t listen to my reproof.

Now then, verse 26, one of these days God is going to cease to call and God is going to withdraw his mercy. That’s Bible. He says, “I will also laugh at your calamity. I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you. There was a day when you had called I would have heard you. If you had sought me you would have been found. But now you are going to call and I will not answer. I have withdrawn my mercy.”

Now, my friends, I don’t know a great deal about spiritual deadlines. But I do know two or three things and I will give them to you briefly. First of all, I don’t have one single scriptural example of God dealing at great length over a period of a number of years with any individual and that person finally coming to a saving knowledge of God. Now, I have never found one scriptural example of God dealing over a period...over a long period of time, over a number of years. Most everybody whom God saves in his Word have come face to face with the gospel of Christ and they have either received it or refused it almost right there, almost right there.

The second thing I know is this. Most examples in the Word of God the man is confronted with a day of decisions. The man is confronted with a personal commitment. It is like Moses stood that day and Joshua and cried, “Who is on the Lord’s side? Let him step out right now.” And the rest of them went to hell.

And then I’ll give you something else. The Word of God seems to imply that there are three deadlines that men can cross. Number one, the unpardonable sin. Christ spoke of that himself. He said one day he cast out demons and the people said he cast out devils by the power of Beelzebub. He cast out devils by the prince of devils. And Christ said, “Now you listen to me. You can speak against me. But whosoever shall speak against the Holy Ghost it will not be forgiven him in this world nor in the world to come.”

That’s pretty clear, isn’t it? When you speak against the Holy Spirit it will not be forgiven you in this world nor in the world to come. That’s a deadline. That’s a deadline.

The second deadline over in the book of 1 or 2 John it talks about a sin unto death, a sin unto death. Christ tells us to pray for one another when we sin. But he said there is a sin unto death.

I do not...I do not command you to pray for the forgiveness of that sin, implying that the person who is in that sin will be physically destroyed and his soul will be saved. We have examples of that in the book of Corinthians. A young man was committing incest and God almighty had him killed that his soul might be saved in the day of judgment.

And then the third deadline that the Scripture talks about—and I have several examples of this—is sinning away the day of grace.

You say, "Do you believe a man can sin away a day of grace?"

This is a day of grace. And if you don't receive Christ today, if you don't bow to Christ today, if you don't fall in love with Christ today then you have sinned away this day. And this is a day of grace. It is not a day of judgment. You're not now in hell. You're not now without God in eternity. So it must be a day of grace. And tomorrow you may be dead. Tomorrow you may be in the grave. Tomorrow you may be in hell. So if you don't take Christ today you have sinned away this day of grace.

But there are people who went on living after sinning away their day of grace. Listen to a few examples. There was Ephraim. God said of Ephraim, "Leave him alone. Don't talk to him anymore. Ephraim has turned to his idols. Just leave him alone."

God says to the Holy Spirit, "Leave him alone."

God says to the prophets, "Leave him alone."

God says to the apostles, "Leave him alone."

God says to all of his people, "Leave him alone."

He said of the Pharisees, the disciples came to him and they said, "The Pharisees, the religious leaders were angry because of what you said."

He turned to them, the master, the Lord of glory and said, "Leave them alone. Leave them alone."

"The religious leaders don't like what you preach, Lord. They don't like your sovereign message. They don't like your substitutionary work. They don't like these things and they are talking about them."

He says, "You leave them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And when the blind lead the blind they both fall in the ditch. You leave them alone."

And I'll show you two or three other examples over in the book of Romans where God has left people alone, living people, religious people. He has totally left them alone. You look in Romans one, verse 24. These are the people that changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image. They worship idols. They worship the creature rather than the Creator. And in verse 24 it says, "God gave them up."

Now, you talk about I might give up on you, but that won't influence you too much. The people of your family might give up on you and say, "Well, you'll never amount to a hill of beans." That won't influence you too much. They might not either. But I'll tell you, when God gives you up you're in trouble.

And then we go on here in verse 25. It says, “They turned the truth of God into a lie and they worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator.” Greedy, selfish, covetous, they worship the creature. They worship possessions and flesh and money and land and houses and all these things. They sold their soul for a morsel of meat.

Verse 26 says, “God gave them up unto vile affections.” They became homosexuals. They became perverted and God gave them up.

In verse 28 it says, “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind to do those things which are not convenient.”

So I have a number of Bible illustrations where men and women and young people were brought face to face, they were brought to grips with the gospel, they were brought face to face with the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of evil. They were brought face to face with whether to bow to Christ or bow to their own wills, whether to bow to Christ or bow to their own pride and flesh. And they said, “We’ll take our pride. We’ll take our wills. We’ll take our flesh.”

And God gave them up.

One day there was a young man by the name of Esau. And this young man was the oldest son of Isaac. And he was by the fact that he was the oldest son the heir to the father’s position. Back in Old Testament days the father was the priest of the home. The father was the spokesman for the home. The father was the leader of the home. The father was the controller of the finances of the home. He was a man whom his wife called, “Lord,” with respect and reverence and his children, with respect and reverence. God led the family through him. God blessed the family by him. When he died his first born son took his place. This was called the birthright.

His brothers looked to him. His sisters looked to him. He was the family leader. He was God’s man in that family.

And this boy Esau came in from a hunting trip and he was hungry and tired and thirsty and his brother was sitting there, Jacob, eating some bowl of beans or something. And he said, “I want some of that.”

And his brother said, “Give me your birthright and I’ll give it to you.”

“All right,” he said, “You can have it. As far as I’m concerned, you give me the bowl of beans and you can have the right to the birth right.”

And God said, “He sold his soul. For afterwards he sought repentance with tears,” but he never found it. He came to a day of decision. He came to a day of confrontation with God. He came to a day when he weighed the value of his soul and the value of his flesh.

He came to the day when he weighed God and the kingdom of evil. And he tossed God aside. And he never had the opportunity to ever weigh it again.

I think that occurs quite often and men and women go on through life just living a living death because God never again speaks to them. God never again calls for he says in verse 28, "Some day you will be in trouble."

He says, verse 27, "Your fear will come as desolation. Your destruction will come like a whirlwind."

Distress and anguish will come upon you. I don't know when it will be. It may be a day of great sorrow when God visits you like he visited Egypt at midnight. It may be a day of death when you are lying on a bed and a doctor stands above you and shakes his head and friends gather about your bed and the clock on the wall begins to tick louder and your breath begins to come harder. It may be, then, that you will turn your eyes to heaven and God won't be there.

And God says it may be a day of judgment. It may be in hell. But he said, "You'll call and I won't answer. I won't answer."

I don't know a great deal about hell. I do know there is more to hell than fire. Everybody I hear preaching on hell seems to emphasize the fact that there is fire in hell. I don't know. The Lord Jesus Christ called hell a furnace of fire. He called it an everlasting fire. The rich man in hell says, "I am tormented in this flame." But I know there is something about hell that is worse than fire. Christ said, "Fear not them which can kill your body and after that no more that they can do, but fear him who is able to cast you body and soul into hell."

So hell is not only bodily agony, but it is soul agony. And I know there are four things in hell that are never mentioned from the pulpit. There are four things that make up hell that are never mentioned from the pulpit.

Number one is memory, memory. When the rich man cried from hell, "Father Abraham, send Lazarus to dip his finger in water and touch my tongue. I am tormented in this flame." Abraham said, "Son, remember...remember."

All through the ages of hell men will remember. They will remember sermons. They will remember gospel meetings. They will remember prayers. They will remember hymns. They will remember verses of Scripture. They will remember the good things. They will remember the sunshine. They will remember the cool, fresh air. They will remember the green grass. They will remember the fallen leaves. They will remember. Remember.

I tell you something else about hell and that is: Hell is separation from God. If all there is to hell is separation from God that's hell enough. Separation from everything that is pure and everything that is holy and everything that is good and everything that is clean

and everything that is holy and love, separation from God for eternity never to hear his voice or see his face or come into his presence. That's hell.

And then I'll tell you something else about hell. Hell is unfulfilled lust, unfulfilled desire.

The Scripture says over in Revelation 22, "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still. He that is unholy, let him be unholy still." The drunkard has a taste for his whiskey and he satisfies that thirst and that desire within intemperate drinking. All of the gambler has a thirst to gamble away his money and he satisfies it in gambling. The adulterer and adulteress and the whoremonger has a thirst for lust and he satisfies it on the streets. Everybody has a desire and a thirst for evil, finds some fulfillment on this earth. The drug addict takes his drugs. But in hell there won't be any drink. In hell there won't be any drugs. In hell there won't be any pleasure. In hell there won't be any light. In hell there won't be any satisfaction. And all of these fleshly desires will be left there. The believer is going to be without those because he is going to lay aside this body of death. He is going to lay aside these desires that are contrary to perfect holiness. He is going to be just like Christ. But the unbeliever is going to take a natural body to hell. That's right. That's what this Bible teaches. And that is going to be hell. That is going to be hell.

You talk about the DTs on earth, the DTs in hell are something else. Never, never satisfied.

And I'll tell you something else about hell that's never mentioned and that is: Hell is truth realized too late. The rich man in hell said, "Father Abraham, I've got five brothers still on the earth. I don't want them to come here."

He has turned into a missionary. He wasn't a missionary on earth. He lived with those brothers all those years. He wasn't too much concerned about their spiritual condition. But now he is in hell. And there are no unbelievers in hell. There are no doubters in hell. There are no agnostics in hell. There are no infidels in hell. There are no unbelievers in hell. Everybody there knows that there is a hell. And everybody there knows there is a heaven. And everybody there knows that Christ is the way to heaven. And everybody knows that unbelief sends a man to hell. And everybody knows that the cross is the way of life. And everybody knows that people on earth without Christ are going to hell and hell is truth realized too late.

"I didn't know. I didn't know."

God says that day will dawn. "I've called you, but you refused. I stretched out a hand of mercy and I said, 'Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden. I'll give you rest. Thou your sins be as scarlet I will make them as white as snow. Though they be red like crimson they will be like wool.' Would you come to me? Would you kneel at the cross with all your sins and all your needs and all your doubts and all your despair and all your guilt? Will you come to the cross? Will you come for cleansing? Will you come?"

“Uh-uh.”

“All right,” he says, “All right. One of these days you are going to call. One of these days when your fear cometh like a whirlwind...you can’t stop a whirlwind. You can’t say, ‘Go away whirlwind.’ You can’t stop the whirlwind of God’s judgment. One of these days the whirlwind is coming and you are going to call. And you are going to say, ‘Oh, God have mercy.’” And God says, “It will be quiet as a tomb.”

“Oh, God have mercy.”

“I won’t answer you. You’re going to seek me, but you are not going to find me. For I have withdrawn my mercy. I have withdrawn my invitation. I have withdrawn my plea.”

The Scripture says, “Today if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart as in the provocation when your fathers sinned against me and died in their unbelief. Take heed, brethren, lest there be found in you an evil heart of unbelief.”

Our Father in heaven, make the warning like a sharp sword, piercing the heart to the deepest part of the heart. And let us fall upon our knees in contrition and repentance, in submission and on Jesus Christ as our Lord and our Savior, our Redeemer. Bring men to confess him, to publicly identify themselves with him. In his glorious, matchless name we pray. Amen.