

God," and "the soul that sinneth shall die" (*Rom 3:10,23; 6:23; Ezek 18:4*). "Guilty as charged!" is the sentence passed upon every sinner. Christ declared that we're "condemned already" (*John 3:18*). But a free pardon from God with full forgiveness in Jesus is proclaimed in the gospel message. But like the story above, this is for none but those who honestly confess their guilt before God—those who admit their wickedness and rebellion, those who admit their sin is their own fault, that they deserve God's judgment.

If you still see yourself as a "pretty good person," God's pardon is not for you. If you're still blaming circumstances or someone else for your sinful dilemma, God's pardon is not for you. Jesus said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (*Matt 9:13*). Are you a sinner? Are you guilty? □

*His cross, his blood, his righteousness,
my hope, my only plea;
My sins deserve eternal death,
but Jesus died for me.*

MY SPIRIT SHALL NOT ALWAYS STRIVE

Genesis 6:3

There is a period in the life of man, to which, if he lives in a state of perverseness and impenitence, his cup of iniquity will be full: and to him "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation" (*Heb 10:26-27*). There is some one of a series of rebellious acts, which, when committed, constitutes a point beyond which no ray of mercy will ever reach him.

So perverse and so sinful is the heart of man, that, left to himself, perdition will follow. So bent is he on transgression; so alienated from God and holiness, that unless God induces him, by the aid of his Spirit, to forsake sin and repent, he will persist in iniquity, and perish. That soul, from whom the Spirit has taken his final fight, is lost.

This truth is taught explicitly in the Word of God. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man" (*Gen 6:3*). "My people would

not hearken to my voice...so I gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts; and they walked in their own counsels" (*Psalms 81:11-12*). "Though they cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them" (*Jer 11:11*). "Then God turned and gave them up to worship the host of heaven" (*Acts 7:42*). "For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections" (*Rom 1:26*). "For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (*2 Thess 2:11-12*). "Ephraim is joined to his idols; let him alone" (*Hosea 4:17*). "They rebelled, and vexed the Holy Spirit; therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and fought against them" (*Isaiah 63:10*).

Thus the Word of the Lord establishes the truth, that there is a period somewhere in the progress of man through this world, to which, if he live in rebellion against his Maker, God's forbearance and mercy will be extended to him no longer, beyond which, the Spirit of the Lord is "turned to be his enemy, and fights against him," beyond which his damnation is sealed.

All the consequences of sin, and the intimate connection between each particular sin and the eternal death of the sinner, are clearly known to God. But though he has revealed the fact, that at some one period of life, some one particular act is committed which ensures perdition, yet, of the period and of the act we are not informed. The sinner knows not at any moment, whether he has already passed the line which separates the land of hope from the land of despair; whether it lies far ahead in the future, or whether he stands on its verge. God has fixed this line, but to none other has he revealed where it lies.

The impenitent transgressor goes onward in life at the hazard, and under the imminent peril, at each step, of passing the bounds of the region of hope, and barring eternally the doors of the kingdom of heaven against himself. The next moral act could be the act which fills to overflowing the cup of his iniquity. A vessel nearly filled may run over by adding another drop. Though the sin may not be of so deep a dye as a series of others of which he has been guilty, yet this, added to the long catalog of

his former crimes, may close his probation. This, as the last crowning act of the rebellion, may seal his doom.

A benevolent father may forever disinherit his son for some seemingly small act of transgression. This act is the occasion, not the cause of his disinheritance. A long series of rebellious acts may have shown a spirit of irreconcilable aversion and hostility to the parent. Repeated persuasions and reproof have been tried, but he still progresses in his wayward course. Repeated acts of disobedience enhance his guilt. The father now determines to execute his threatening on occasion of the next transgression. The son persists; he commits an act, not perhaps as glaringly vicious as some which have preceded it, but still manifesting a spirit of insubordination. The father fulfills his threatening, and disinherits him forever.

So God, on occasion of some seemingly minor sin (but remember, no sin is small!), may determine to dry up the fountain of his mercy. And when the sinner cries, God will not hearken, but rather "laugh at his calamity, and mock when his fear cometh" (*Prov 1:26*). Nay, refusal on the part of the sinner to comply now with the call of mercy, and yield his heart to Christ, may be the act, which, when connected with the heinous sins already noted in the great book of remembrance, God determines to make the occasion of his Spirit's final flight, and of the sealing of perdition of that soul.

Go, stand by the deathbed of the aged, obstinate sinner; watch his restless and impure spirit, which is about to be yielded into the hands of him who gave it. He struggles, it is true, under bodily torture, but this bears no contrast with the inward fire. Despair is depicted in his countenance. He alternately supplicates and blasphemes his Maker. He already experiences the gnawings of "the worm that dieth not," and of "the fire that is not quenched" (*Mark 9:44*). His doom is sealed. But when? Perhaps not in his dying hour. In the mind of God, it may be, his present despair and future torment are connected with some distant scene in the past, where, as he listened to the proclamation of the gospel, and heard the claims of God in Christ enforced, thought

of his duty and of yielding his heart, but he put off the Spirit's dictates till another day; and the heavenly messenger, thus grieved and mocked, took his final flight.

Reader! The brevity and uncertainty of life are not the only inducements to immediate repentance!

True, this life is "a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (*James 4:14*). It is as "the flower of the grass which, before the burning heat of the sun, withereth" (*James 1:11*). It is indeed, when most protracted, but a short period to employ in winning a crown of glory. Its uncertainty, too (for who knoweth he shall see tomorrow?), is forcibly presented in the Scriptures, to wean from sin and draw to duty now. But with all these warnings sounding in his ears, under the delusions of sin, man practically views this world as his eternal home. He feels and rejoices in his present health and vigor, and thinks not that his body will soon die. Yet mark, impenitent fellow man, God's grace is sovereign: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy" (*Rom 9:15*). "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth" (*v18; see John 5:21*). Salvation is in God's hands! Though your life be protracted to the end of the world; though you were assured by God you should not die until "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat" (*2 Peter 3:10*), still, delaying repentance to a future day is the height of madness and folly!

The inspired truth, "Now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation" (*2 Cor 6:2*), receives not all its solemnity and force from the brevity and uncertainty of life. It has another and more fearful import—"My Spirit shall not always strive with man." The Holy Spirit may "turn to be thine enemy." The mandate may go forth, "He is joined to his idols, let him alone." Then, like the barren fig tree, you will be cut down, while yet you stand! In a world of hope, you will be in despair! In the midst of life, you will be in hell!

Allow me, then, affectionately, but honestly, to remind you that your state is fearfully critical and dangerous. Snares are beneath your feet. While remaining

unrepentant, you go onward, not knowing but the next step your damnation may be certain—irretrievable.

Fellow man, stay your feet! Take not the fatal step. It may be you are on the verge of that line, beyond which all is darkness, despair, and death. The pressing calls of God, by his providence, his Word, and his preached gospel, to repent, you have rejected. When aroused to the consideration of duty, you have heedlessly postponed its claims, and relapsed into listlessness and sin. Days speed away; year after year is numbered with the past—and you are still the enemy of your God! The time will come, if you persist, when, by some act of transgression, you will eternally mar the prospects of your salvation. Might not the present be that critical moment, and your next act, the act which will destroy your soul? Might not the act be your neglecting now the offer of mercy?

Perhaps this message will prove to be the instrument of your ruin; that this very warning, rejected, may seal your doom. Oh! I beseech you, in Christ's stead, let it not pass unimproved, thereby adding despair to doubt, and endless death to death.

The message is, "God in Christ is reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Cor 5:19). The command has gone forth from God to all men everywhere, "Repent" (Acts 17:30). The command to thee, fellow sinner, is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," and the promise is, "thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). But the fearful alternative made known by God, immutably true is, "If thou believest not, thou shalt be damned" (Mark 16:16). Therefore, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near" (Isaiah 55:6).

Embrace the offer of salvation now, lest it prove your last—lest God lift his hand and swear, "You shall not enter into my rest" (Heb 3:11). After his irrevocable word is passed, your awful doom may indeed excite the compassion of God; he may lament over you, as over Jerusalem: "Oh, that thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace!" yet it will be no less certain: "they are hid from thine eyes" (Luke 19:42). Your doom will then be sealed! Your soul lost—lost for eternity! □

COME JUST AS YOU ARE

*"Him that cometh to me
I will in no wise cast out" —John 6:37*

Cast yourself at once, in the simplest faith, upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. All of your preparation for eternity is entirely out of yourself, and in the Lord Jesus. Washed in his blood, and clothed upon with his righteousness, you may appear before God divinely, fully, freely, and forever accepted. The salvation of the chief of sinners is all prepared, finished, and complete in Christ (Eph 1:6; Col 2:10).

Again, I repeat, your eye of faith must be directed entirely out of and from yourself to Jesus. Beware of looking for any preparation to meet God in yourself. It's all in Christ. God does not accept you on the ground of a broken heart, or a clean heart, or a praying heart, or a believing heart. He accepts you wholly and entirely on the ground of the perfect atonement of his blessed Son. Cast yourself, in childlike faith, upon that atonement—"Christ dying for the ungodly" (Rom 5:6)—and you are saved!

Justification is a poor, law-condemned, self-condemned, self-destroyed sinner, wrapping himself by faith in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is "unto all, and upon all them that believe" (Rom 3:22). He, then, is justified, and prepared to die and meet God, and he only, who casts from him the garment of his own righteousness, and runs into this blessed "City of Refuge"—the Lord Jesus—and hides himself there from the "avenger of blood" (Josh 20), exclaiming, in the language of triumphant faith: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1).

Look to Jesus, then, for a contrite heart; look to Jesus for a clean heart; look to Jesus for a believing heart; look to Jesus for a loving heart; and Jesus will give you all.

One faith's touch of Christ, and one divine touch from Christ, will save the vilest sinner. Oh, the dimmest, most distant glance of faith, turning its languid eye upon Christ, will heal and save the soul. God is prepared to accept you in his blessed Son, and for his sake he will cast all your sins behind his back, and take you to glory when you die.

Never has the Lord Jesus rejected a poor sinner who came to him empty and with "nothing to pay" (Luke 7:42). God will glorify his free grace in your salvation, and will therefore save you—**just as you are**, "without money and without price" (Isaiah 55:1). Paul immediately responded to the anxious jailor who asked what he must do to be saved—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31).

No matter what you have been, or what you are, plunge into "the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness" (Zech 13:1), and you shall be clean, "washed whiter than snow" (Psalm 51:7). "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18). Heed no suggestion of Satan, or of unbelief. Cast yourself at the feet of Jesus, and if you perish, perish there! Oh no! perish you never will, for he promised, "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). And his blessed invitation is, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt 11:28). Let your reply be, "Lord, I come! I entwine my feeble, trembling arms of faith around thy cross, thy death, thyself, and if I die, I will die, cleaving, clinging, looking unto thee!"

So act and believe, and you need not fear to die. Looking the Saviour in the face, you can look death in the face, exclaiming with good ol' Simeon, "Lord, now let me depart in peace: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation" (Luke 2:29). My prayer is that you and I, through rich, free, and sovereign grace, will meet in heaven, and unite together in exclaiming, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!" (Rev 5:12). □

*Just as I am without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidst me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!
Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind—
Sight, riches, healing of the mind,
Yea, all I need in thee to find—
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!*

CONDEMNED
awaiting execution

Acertain prince once traveling through France visited the Arsenal of Toulon, where convicted criminals were held. The commandant, as a courtesy to the prince's rank, said he was welcome to set any of the prisoners free, whom he should choose. The prince, desiring to make the wisest use of this privilege, spoke to many of them in succession, inquiring why they were condemned to death. "Falsely accused," cried one. "Unfair trial," grumbled another. "Unjust laws," was the contention of another who had set himself against civil authority. Still another complained that he was a victim of a corrupt social system. They were all innocents who had been ill treated and oppressed.

At last he came to one who, when asked the same question, answered, "My lord, I have no reason to complain; I have been a very wicked and rebellious wretch. I account it a great mercy that I am still alive." The prince fixed his eyes upon him, and said, "You wicked wretch! It is a pity you should be placed among so many honest men; by your own confession you are bad enough to corrupt them all; but you shall not stay with them another day." Turning to the officer, the prince said, "This is the man, sir, I wish to see released."

The bitter remorse that filled the hearts of the other men as they saw their companion walk out a free man, while they themselves remained to face their doom, can better be imagined than told. Any other one of them might have been set free had he confessed his guilt.

But infinitely greater remorse awaits every reader of these lines who refuses to confess his ruin, guilt, and righteous condemnation before God. The Bible says there is "none righteous, no, not one," "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of