

Acts - Commentaries by Hugh Henry Snell

Things New and Old: Volume 25, Looking Up Into Heaven

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When a believer is full of the Holy Ghost, where will he look? and what will mark his testimony? We are told that Stephen, "being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." (Acts 7) Thus we learn that the Holy Ghost led him to look away from his present trial to the Lord Himself, where He now is in the glory of God. He was thus led by the Spirit to gaze steadfastly on that blessed One who loved him and gave Himself for him. He was occupied with the glorified Man who a short time before had suffered at the hands of His betrayers and murderers, who no doubt was strengthening His servant's faith, and encouraging his heart, by presenting to his view a martyr's crown. It was not now Stephen remembering a finished work done for him on the cross, blessed as it always is, but occupation with the Person who had done the work. Thus the Spirit of God directs us to look to Christ in glory.

Stephen's testimony to others, therefore, was concerning this wondrous Person who now filled his soul's vision, occupied every faculty of his mind, and filled every chamber of his heart. He was absorbed with the Lord Himself, so that he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."

Of what else could he speak at such a moment, but the glorified Man? What a testimony! It was not abstract doctrine, however true, or important in its place; but what he saw and was occupied with, was the Lord Himself.

We read also of Barnabas being "a good man and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith," and what was his testimony? Like the martyr we have been looking at, he could only speak of Him who was the chief treasure of his heart. "He exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord" (See Acts 7:55, 56; 11:23, 24.) How true it is that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. Occupation then with Christ glorified is certainly the Object to which the Holy Ghost directs us, and the One He leads us to commend and minister to others.

On referring a little further to scripture, we shall find that the secret of our walking as Christ walked, of growing in grace, of sustainment in the life of faith, and of joy—blessings which we all so desire—are realized in personal intercourse and communion with Christ glorified.

The effect of Stephens being taken up with Christ in heaven, in all the attractiveness of His grace and glory, was that he acted like his Master, and that under the most trying and distressing circumstances. The suffering martyr was able to pray for those that hated him and despitefully used him—"He kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." We also find that when the stones of his cruel murderers were rolling in upon his body and crushing him to death, he quietly and confidently committed himself to the Lord, saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" Thus the suffering servant on earth looking up steadfastly into heaven, and occupied with the Lord Himself, was able in measure to walk as He walked, who when suffering all the agonies of the cross, prayed for His murderers, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," and also closed His path of suffering with "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." What then can be more plainly taught than that if we would manifest the ways of Christ on earth, we must be taken up with Him who is now on the right hand of God?

Making spiritual progress, or growing in grace, is also connected with beholding Christ glorified. We most thankfully remember that He was on earth, and delight to call to mind all the grace manifested in the death of the cross, and know also that He hath left us an example that we should follow His steps; but we see Jesus where? "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor." (Heb. 2:9.) The veil was rent, the heaven opened, Jesus rose from among the dead, and entered into heaven itself by His own blood, so that all distance was removed between us and God, and title given us to stand in the presence of God in acceptance and nearness forever. There we see Jesus. There we behold Him without a veil. There is now nothing between. We come boldly to the throne of grace. There we have to do with the risen, ascended, glorified Son of man, while waiting for Him to "come again." The effect of our being occupied with Him there by the Spirit, as He is made known to us through the scriptures, is that we become more and more changed according to His own mind. "We all with open [or unveiled] face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as, by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. 3) Thus we have seen not only that the Holy Ghost directs us to look up to a glorified Christ, and occupies us with Him, but also that then our ways will be like His ways, our testimony be of Him, and our progress will be according to His own mind—"from glory to glory." How encouraging to our hearts to look up to Him!

The secret too of sustainment in the trials connected with the life and walk of faith is having to do with the ever living Sustainer. There is One, now in heaven, who has been here, and passed through sorrows and temptations, who, though verily and truly God as well as man, yet emptied Himself, took a servant's form, and trod perfectly the path of faith from first to last. He was the Beginner and Finisher of faith, and at last sat down on the right hand of the throne of God. It is to Him, the Forerunner, we, who are running the race, are exhorted to look; to look away from every other object to Him, with the eye fixed on Him, who has gone through the path perfectly, and knows all its difficulties, temptations, and trials. This ever-living, ever-loving Jesus on the throne is then our Sustainer for every step of the way. It is well for those who thus look off unto Him!

Christ glorified is also the unfading, and unfailing Object for our hearts—"whom having not seen ye love." Yes, there is One in the glory who has attracted, comforted, and satisfied our hearts. Oh how He loves! We see in Him eternal excellencies and beauty which eclipse every other object. "We love him, because he first loved us;" and not only so, but we love Him for what He is in Himself. As we often sing—

Being thus occupied with Him, our hearts are filled with joy. We remember His finished work upon the cross, and have peace, we look up to Him in the glory and are filled with joy. "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." Looking up and gazing by faith on a Person whom we have never seen and cannot see, and yet knowing Him so well—His worth, beauty, perfections, moral excellencies, official glories and fullness—as to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

What never-failing springs and resources we have in Christ! What an ever-flowing fountain of refreshment and comfort! Gladly we flee to Him in time of trouble for relief, but what do we know of Him as an unending source of delight for our hearts? Would indeed that we could say more of His manifesting Himself to us, of the hearty and deep-toned joy we find in personal intercourse and acquaintance with Himself! Then obedience, testimony, fellowship with Him in His rejection and present work on earth, as those who look for His coming, naturally, as it were, flow out. O to know increasingly the blessedness connected with looking up into heaven, and beholding Jesus there till we hear the shout! How soon He may come for us! What a moment that will be when we actually see His face! and then

H. H. S.

Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones: Volume 3 (1855), Mnason of Cyprus, an Old Disciple

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Acts 21:16.

CYPRUS, a considerable island in the Mediterranean Sea between Syria and Cilicia, was renowned in heathen story for its fertility so as to be called the happy island; but it was also sadly renowned for the profligacy of its inhabitants. But even to the inhabitants of this island the grace of God appeared and was made effectual to the sheaving forth that, in all cases where it is received, it "teaches to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works."

The first mention made of a disciple of the country of Cyprus, is the honourable testimony to "Joses, who by the Apostles was surnamed Barnabas (which is being interpreted, The son of consolation), a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the Apostles' feet." But there were early in the Church other disciples of the country of Cyprus; for we read, "Now they that were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus: and the hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed, and turned to the Lord" (Acts 11:19-21). The disciples of Cyprus were thus among the first to preach the Lord Jesus, outside the Jews.

When Paul and Barnabas were specially selected by the Holy Ghost, for the work of carrying the name of Jesus among the Gentiles, they immediately "departed" from Antioch to Selucia, and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. They visited the two chief cities in the island, Salamis and Paphos, and their ministry was no less strikingly marked by the conversion of Sergius Paulus, the Roman deputy, than by the infliction of blindness on Elymas the sorcerer.

On the occasion of the humiliating breach between Barnabas and Paul, two servants of the Lord sent forth on a common work by the direct appointment of the Holy Ghost, "Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus."

On Paul's last eventful visit to Jerusalem, after he and his companions had landed at Caesarea, "they went up to Jerusalem. There went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Musson of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge." The generous love for the truth which had wrought in Barnabas of Cyprus to sell his possession for the good of others, was evidenced in Mnason by his willingness to be the host of the Apostle and his companions in travel. But the distinctive notice of Mnason is, that he was "an old disciple," in reference not merely to his age, although that would necessarily come in, but to his being one of the early converts, who had "continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine." He knew it to be a high honor to lodge them. His value for the truth had not subsided as he advanced in age, and he had not been led to trim the doctrine of Christ so as to make it more compatible with the world or worldly religion. He had respect to "the old paths, where is the good way, and had walked therein." He had known no improvement in the doctrines originally taught by the Apostles. Doubtless, he had witnessed the rise of many novelties in his time, and seen many turned aside, and then recovered; but all these things were turned to account by one who knew Christ to be both the teacher and the doctrine of God, and had learnt to call no man master on earth; for one is our Master, even Christ.

It may be thought but a poor notice of an individual, that he was "an old disciple;" but one of the most common, and at the same time sorrowful trials to the Apostles was the readiness of their disciples to give heed to novelties. "Continuance" marks the "ways" of God (Is. 64:5), instability those of men. In those described in the parable of the sower, both the stony and the thorny ground hearers appeared promising for a while, but there was no "continuance." Those represented by the good ground bring forth fruit with patience. On one occasion a sudden impulse seems to have come over the Jews, as Jesus taught in the temple. "As He spake these words, many believed on Him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, "If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:30-32). Their seeming faith speedily passed into angry wrangling. Gracious indeed were the words of the Lord to His weak, wavering and ignorant disciples, "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations" (Luke 22:28).

How the heart of the Apostle dilates with gladness, when he writes to the Philippians, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all, making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now." There were others to whom he had to write in a very different tone. "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel" (Gal. 1:8). To the Thessalonians the Apostle writes not only with thanksgiving, but to show how much his soul was

wrapped up in their patient continuance in well doing. He says, "For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord." In a similar strain, the aged John writes both to the elect lady, and to Gains. "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."

Such expressions give an interest and meaning to the notice by the Holy Spirit of an "old disciple." Of all "the names written in heaven," very few comparatively are recorded on earth, but among them is "one Mnason" —apparently an obscure individual— "unknown, yet well known." His characteristic is, "an old disciple;" his service, hospitality to the ministers of Christ.

"An old disciple" is one who "continues in the things which he has heard and been assured of." In hearing Christ preached, and by the grace of God receiving the testimony, he has laid hold of "the truth." He has already before him in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ an object of the highest interest. "The Lord is his light and his salvation." To this test he brings everything. He weighs all human pretensions in this balance. However high men may aspire, he finds that, weighed in this balance, they are lighter than vanity, and that their boasted wisdom and righteousness shrink into insignificance, when set side by side with Christ, the wisdom, righteousness, and holiness of God.

The old disciple has witnessed many novelties in his day, and in all probability has been in some measure ensnared by them, or entangled in them. There is something so plausible and fascinating in pursuits which have the alleviation of human misery, moral or physical, for their object, that Christians often engage in them actively, without any suspicion that the honor of Christ may be compromised. For wherever Christ is not decidedly and avowedly the object, the believer will sooner or later find himself "unequally yoked." But all these things turn to him for a testimony as to the impossibility of serving God and mammon. If the continuous effect of man is to contradict the truth of God, as to the reality of the condition of man that he is a lost and ruined sinner, "without strength," and "ungodly," the continuous effort of Christians has been to achieve the impossibility of making the service of the world compatible with Christ. To this end Christians have "labored in the fire, and wearied themselves for very vanity;" and instead of finding Christ, their object, advanced by the attempt, they have invariably found themselves outwitted by the exaltation, not of Christ, but of man.

In the affectionate and paternal Epistles of Paul to his own child in the faith, Timothy, there are several intimations of too great a readiness in Timothy to disputation, rather than "continuance in the things which he had learned and been assured of." The conscious possession of the truth in the knowledge of Jesus, as a standard by which to test everything, is a prominent mark of an old disciple, whilst restlessness of enquiry and proneness to dispute is often the snare of the young disciple. The Grecian tendency, as manifested in the Athenians (Acts 17), "to hear or tell something new," has always had its place in the Church of God, and been the danger of those not well grounded in the faith. The old disciple, having his soul occupied with Christ Himself, will find neither heart nor opportunity for discussing each novelty as it presents itself. There is one great safeguard to prevent the old disciple being carried away by any existing topic of the day. It is not his province to discuss the truth of any new theory, but he is in possession of a summary process to dismiss many things which are of absorbing interest to others. They are "rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." Their tendency is to make the Christian who meddles in these things practically to let go the Head, so that however humanly exalting these novelties may be, they really end in degrading Him; for is not any human attainment degradation when put by the side of being "filled to the full in Him," "in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily?"

Much of the tuition of an old disciple has been in the most difficult school, that of unlearning. The Apostle Peter speaks of redemption by the precious blood of the Lamb, as redemption from his hereditary and traditional religion. But neither that Apostle nor any of his followers have found it an easy thing to emancipate themselves from hereditary and traditional religion. "No man having drunk old wine straightway desireth new; for he saith, the old is better." "To know Him that was from the beginning," is the characteristic of a father in Christ; and he has made no little proficiency in the school of Christ, who has discovered that He is "the Omega" as well as "the Alpha," "the last" as well as "the first," "the end" as well as "the beginning." An old disciple finds that the first truth that beamed on his soul, even the glory of Christ and the perfection of His work on the Cross, is so comprehensive and wonderful, as not only to be his study here, but that it will be his study throughout eternity. He has been unlearning many things which were of interest in their "time and season," in order to learn Him, through many an anxious exercise of soul, whom he looks forward to learn perfectly in glory. "That I may know Him," is the suited prayer of the old disciple. An old disciple has learned not "to glory in men." This is by no means an easy lesson. Many who are thoroughly distrustful of their own hearts, have to learn the difference between the Master and the choicest of His servants. The Lord never disappoints, but is always better than our expectations. We raise our expectations from man to a great height, and then comes some painful disappointment; but our hope from the Lord never makes ashamed. To expect nothing from ourselves, and not to reckon on others, but to expect everything from the Lord must necessarily require time and experience. And happy is he who thus turns experience (always painful in itself) to account, in that it works hope, and such "hope that maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us." According to this rule, the old disciple is encouraged to expect every thing from that God who has manifested His love in already giving to him the greatest and all-comprehensive gift of His Son. "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift."

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EVIL REPORT AND GOOD REPORT.—If we are what we are called to be, "as lights in the world," the evil or good report will no more move us than the thoughts of men affect the course of stars above. Through night and day, they keep the path appointed to them; whatever names or notions men may invent for them, they are above it all, because they are in heaven, and yet shining for the guidance of those on earth. There may we abide, having our conversation in heaven, not falling thence into the tumults or contentions of this sinful world: if we so fall, we know the effect of fallen stars—the waters are made bitter. May the Lord preserve us to His praise. In His hand alone are we in safety.

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The Lord sometimes humbles us more than we reckon on, that we may the better learn of His Spirit to humble ourselves, that He may exalt us in due time.

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Moses, the "faithful" servant, said, "Who is on the Lord's side?" (Ex. 32:26.) Jehu, the zealous servant, said, "Who is on my side?" (2 Kings 9:32.)

Acts 1:8.

WHAT an honorable position, even in this present life, has Christ set His people in! We should feel it to be so. Among men it is considered no small honor, to be an ambassador, or representative, of a worthy and mighty prince; its honor is felt to be more than a compensation for the trials and self-denial connected with the service. But how much more should God's dear children feel the incomparable dignity of being witnesses to the majesty and glory of the person and work of the King of kings, and Lord of lords. "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me," said the risen Jesus, "both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." This, surely, is the great business of the Christian's life; for what are we left in the world for, but to savor of Christ? Jesus has died for us. He has purchased us with His own blood. He has made us His own, having taken us up into everlasting union with Himself, and, for a little season, has left us here to be the "light of the world," and "the salt of the earth." If His saints be dumb, there is not another voice throughout the length and breadth of this densely-peopled world to espouse the cause of the crucified Son of God. If the redeemed refuse to sing the praises of the Lamb, then is there not an inhabitant of the globe to extol His goodness, and to speak His praise? The glorious sun shining forth in daily brightness, the glittering stars cheering the midnight scene with surpassing beauty, the ceaseless foam of the tumultuous ocean, and the ever-fresh and ever-varying manifestations of animated nature, all speak aloud of the wonder-working power of the great Creator; but the testimony to the everlasting efficacy of the blood of the Cross, the proclamation of free and full forgiveness of sins, the wondrous depth and height of redeeming love, are reserved for those only who have tasted in their own souls that the Lord is gracious. If Christ had no witnesses, then, indeed, would the world become a dark cavern, awfully enveloped in midnight shades, without a ray of heavenly light, or the smallest testimony to the riches of divine grace.

Bright angels around the throne of God have their appointed sphere of ministry; but beautiful and perfect in its kind as the service of those ministers which are as a flame of fire is, still the honor of being Christ's "witnesses" before an evil and gainsaying generation is not delegated to them. Angels might comfort the weeping woman at the empty sepulcher, by the glad announcement that the Lord was risen from the dead; but the beloved fisherman of Galilee, who had shed many a bitter tear at the remembrance of his sinful ways, and who could glory in being himself a debtor to sovereign grace, he, and not the brightest angel, must astonish, and instrumentally deliver thousands of his fellow-sinners at Jerusalem, by preaching to them, in the power of the Holy Ghost, the victory that Christ had accomplished in triumphing over the powers of death and hell. Again, an angel of God faithfully executes his commission, by communicating to the praying Centurion at Caesarea, that he should send for the honored man of God at Joppa, who would tell him words whereby he and all his house should be saved; but it was not the angel's province to declare to Cornelius' household that life-giving soul-saving testimony of redemption through Christ, which was so successful by the mouth of Peter. The Apostle John also may receive a revelation from Jesus through an angel, but man, and not angels, must unfold these wondrous depths of love and favor to the blood-bought Church, and thus enable her to witness to the grace and glory of the Lamb to the uttermost part of the earth.

Further, the records of history furnish us with examples of mighty men of the world with vast intellectual powers, and uncommon physical abilities, who have been instruments of God in devastating kingdoms, deposing kings, and overturning empires; but the high and holy "testimony of Jesus Christ" was never entrusted to them. The sinner saved by grace alone has the distinguished honor of living and dying as Christ's witness—of showing forth the praises of Him who hath called him out of darkness into His marvelous light. Would that we more fully esteemed the privilege of being Christ's witnesses, beloved! Would that this honor that cometh from God only had a more grateful response in our hearts! Would that, when in any little way we find that suffering and rejection for Christ's sake is our portion, we could, like olden saints, "rejoice in being counted worthy to suffer for His name!"

It is important to notice, that before our Lord told His disciples that they should be His "witnesses," He informed them that they should "receive power" from the Holy Ghost. Yes, brethren, our Lord Jesus has not only called us to serve Him, but "He giveth strength unto His people." We are not led into the warfare at our own charges. We are not to trust to broken cisterns, or fall back upon the sandy foundation of human resources. We are not to attempt the fruitless effort of being Christ's witnesses with fleshly weapons. It is by the power of the Holy Ghost that we bear the true "testimony of Jesus Christ." He only is the Glorifier, Testifier, and Remembrancer of Christ. Heart and flesh fail in serving the Lord Christ, but God is the strength of our heart. The Spirit searcheth the deep things of God, reveals Christ to us, keeps us in communion with the Father and the Son, enables us to abide in the True Vine, and thus bring forth good fruit. Let us exhort one another to cherish an experimental acquaintance with the guidance and power of the Holy Ghost! It is not the busy efforts of unsubdued nature, or the argumentative abilities of the natural mind, that will enable us to confront our enemies, or to be faithful representatives of Him whose name and truth we bear. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts."

There is such a thing in our day as religion without Christ, but this is not the Shepherd's voice. The Lord's little ones are well assured that "Christ is all," and they acknowledge it to be their privilege, no less than their duty, to confess His name. May we have grace, beloved, to be Christ's "witnesses" at all times, in all our relationships of life, in our houses, in our daily matters of business, in the Church, and in the world; then, with truth, shall we be able to say with the Apostle, "For me to live is Christ."

Christian Truth: Volume 11, Philippian Jailer's Salvation, The: Abridged

There was a time in the life of every Christian when he was unconverted, for we were all "by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Eph. 2:3). What an awful condition it is to be unsaved! and yet how many are careless about it! The jailer at Philippi was unsaved; but when he felt the reality of the state he was in, he cried out for salvation and found it, to the joy and rejoicing of his heart.

Many persons are really ignorant of the terrible danger they are in; they see not the precipice on which they stand; they perceive not the brittle thread by which they are suspended; they know not that they live on the very threshold of eternity; they feel not that they are distant from God, rebellious against God, guilty before God; therefore they are not anxious about salvation. They may think of outward propriety before men, of religious forms, ordinances, and the like; but they are not concerned about salvation from the wrath to come. The Bible, however, speaks to us of salvation. The grace of God brings salvation. The gospel is a message from God to men about salvation. Jesus Himself preached salvation. He said to a weeping woman at His feet, "Thy faith hath saved thee"; and to a repentant publican, "This day is salvation come to this house." Paul exultingly exclaimed, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Rom. 1:16. Those who received the gospel in apostolic times knew that they were saved; they realized a present salvation; they regarded themselves and their fellow believers as saved.

With regard to the Philippian jailer, we know little of his former history. From the few materials we have, we may gather that he was diligent in his calling. It is very likely that he had heard something of Paul's ways, if he had not heard of the conversion and baptism of Lydia and others. He knew also why Paul and Silas were imprisoned, and appears not only to have acquiesced in the propriety of punishing and restraining such men, but also of preventing, as far as possible, a recurrence of their preaching. They were brought to the prison with a charge that he would "keep them safely"; but that we might know that they had then no favor in the jailer's eyes, we are told that he "thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks." This is enough to show us the condition of his heart. Like a thorough man of the world, he appears to have retired to bed that night with as much unconcern as on any other occasion. All that he heard and saw of the servants of the Lord Jesus was insufficient to awaken his dark mind and arouse his conscience. But God had a purpose of blessing in store for him. God's eye was upon him for good. God's good pleasure was to glorify His own name, in making the wrath of man to praise Him, and hiding pride from man. The holy, godly testimony of faithful ministers had not impressed his heart; therefore other means must be used to alarm his benighted soul. That jailer, who had so cruelly thrust them into the dungeon and chained them to the stocks, must yet be brought to fall before them and acknowledge them as the servants of the Most High; and Paul and Silas, who appeared to be interrupted in the faithful discharge of their gospel ministry, were also to prove that, like their Master, each step of cruelty and oppression turned out for the furtherance of God's purposes of grace, and only led them forward in the path of true service, and not out of it. Their midnight prayer and praise, too, seem to indicate that they were in the lively attitude of faith, and in full expectation of the blessing of the Lord.

But there is something very solemn in this period of the jailer's history, for it seems to tell us that if men reject the quiet, holy testimony of the servants of Christ, God has other means of bringing down man's lofty looks. God's power is unlimited, both in mercy and judgment. In this case it was to be made bare in grace. He who smote Saul of Tarsus with blindness, and brought him to the Savior's feet, could also bring the jailer there. That all-powerful arm might justly have been lifted up with the sword of vengeance and, piercing the heart of that man who had dared to chain the feet of His dear servants, have at once hurled him to the pit of destruction; but mercy rejoiced against judgment.

In the darkness and stillness of the night, without any warning whatever, a tremendous convulsion threatened to raze the whole building to the ground, and to bury every inmate in its ruins. We are told that "suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken:.. and every one's bands were loosed." This was God's way of showing that He is greater than man. This was Mercy's way of bringing salvation to that house, and of honoring the Lord's faithful, suffering servants. This was the very weapon that would arouse the hard and unfeeling jailer. He awoke out of sleep; his conscience owned it as God's dispensation. His first feeling was of despair and self-destruction. When he saw the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had all fled, he drew his sword and would have killed himself. His heart sank; terror filled his mind; his imagination drew the most hopeless conclusion, and Satan's last effort with him was the foul suggestion, "Kill thyself." A loud voice, however, suddenly altered his judgment and produced an instantaneous revolution in his mind. Are not all the prisoners gone? No. "Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here." This was the sweet and heavenly way that Paul took with his jailer. It was returning good for evil, and kindness to one who had treated him cruelly.

But there was more than this. The jailer's conscience was awakened; a crowd of solemn thoughts pressed upon his mind. The convulsion of an earthquake might have consigned him at once to a dark eternity; another shock and he might be called to give account of himself to God. He is assured that Paul and Silas have that peace and joy to which he is a stranger, and that they are the servants of God. He feels now that he is an unsaved man, that if he die, he must go where hope and mercy never can come. His case is urgent, his danger imminent, his position most perilous; for he now knows that he has been sleeping on the edge of a fearful precipice. Not a moment then can be lost. A light! a light! he cried. His very joints are loose, and every fiber of his body seems to quiver. Salvation, salvation is the longing of his whole soul. He springs at once into the inner prison and, falling down before these servants of the Lord Jesus, cries out, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

It was salvation that occupied the jailer's whole soul—nothing less than salvation—not religious ceremonies, but salvation. What must I do to be saved? This, too, is the anxious inquiry of every truly enlightened soul; and we need not go to commentators or learned doctors for a correct answer to the question, for the Scriptures plainly tell us. The apostolic reply was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." This was the gospel that Paul and Silas preached, and it was an echo of their Master's voice; for when He was asked the question, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." John 6:28, 29.

The gospel then preached to this awakened sinner of the Gentiles was salvation 'by faith. The jailer's thought, like many others, was that salvation was by works; what must I do? But Paul and Silas assured him that he could be saved only in the way of faith. They presented the Lord Jesus Christ to him as the object of faith—and His finished work, and God's acceptance of it, as the ground of salvation and the warrant for perfect peace—"thou shalt be saved." This is very simple and commends itself to the confidence of an anxious enquirer. The gospel really excludes all idea of creature-doing for salvation, because it testifies that Jesus, the Son of God, has so completely finished the work of our redemption, so thoroughly purged our sins, that He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, the rightful Lord of heaven and earth, and that all who believe on Him have at once an eternal interest in that blessed work.

What could man do for salvation? Nothing; it is done already, and we have the warrant of God's word to receive and enjoy it by faith—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Faith reads the lessons of redeeming love in the death of the Son of God upon the cross; and those who can say, "We have known and believed the love that God bath to us," have peace; they see that God's love has brought salvation to them, even when sinners, in the cross of His Son; and, knowing He is now risen from the dead, they approach God with confidence. And who so thoroughly reject the gospel, display self-ignorance, and despise the unsearchable riches of divine love as those who talk of doing for salvation? "Where is boasting?" said the Apostle. "It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Rom. 3:27, 28. Blessed gospel for a sin-convicted, heavy-laden sinner!

The gospel is the power of God unto salvation and, when received into the heart, it brings forth fruit. This we should expect when a sinner is brought to know that he is saved. Who is so grateful, so dutiful, so happy, so free! Some hear the truth of the gospel, and the only apparent effect is, that it hardens them. This was not the case with Lydia, for her heart was opened, that she attended to the word ministered by Paul; and so the jailer, for his whole soul was filled with anxiety; he therefore received the truth at once in the love of it, and its effects were most manifest.

With what intense interest the trembling jailer must have listened to those servants of the Lord while they declared to him the way of salvation! and what grateful surprise must have filled his heart at hearing that the way was so simple, so free, so full of blessing, and so suited to a lost, helpless sinner! It at once engaged his attention and made him long to hear more about such glorious tidings; and soon all his household was brought together, though at midnight, and became attentive listeners to Paul and Silas while they further opened up to them the riches of divine grace. The energetic, determined jailer who only a few hours before had so rudely thrust them into the inner prison, regardless of their lacerated backs, now sat like a little child as an anxious enquirer at their feet, and gathered others to partake also of the blessings of the gospel

"They spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house."

Among the first effects, then, of the jailer's reception of the gospel of Christ, was his love for the truth, in a child-like inquiring mind, and concern for the spiritual welfare of others. The good news of salvation by Christ had been so applied to his conscience by the Holy Spirit, that it came to him as cold water to a thirsty soul, and he was immediately like a dead man raised to life. He had an ear -to hear, a mind to understand, a heart to receive and love and desire more and more the sincere milk of the Word, and such a sense of its value, that he wished others to receive the same blessed gospel.

The next thing we may notice among the fruits of faith is his love to the Lord's servants. He is begotten by the word of truth, and is thoroughly changed in his ways; he has passed from death to life—therefore he loves the brethren. A few hours before, he saw nothing more in Paul and Silas to call forth affection and sympathy than in the other prisoners; but now he views everything with new eyes. Having received the word of truth, the gospel of the grace of God, he loves not only Him that begat, but them also that are begotten of Him; hence we are told that he took Paul and Silas "the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes... and... brought them into his house," and "set meat before them." This was blessed. This was a fine example of the fruit of the Spirit, and it proved the sincerity of his profession; for it was not love in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth. Love is a vital point. Religious profession without a loving heart toward Christ and His members is like a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. The Apostle John declares that, whatever any man may profess, "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." 1 John 3:14. But in the jailer's case, the entrance of God's word had given light; it had given understanding to the simple; it had by the Spirit quickened him when dead in sins. He thus had divine life; therefore there was divine love, fruit in season, and self-denial for the sake of Christ's servants.

But more than this, he carried out the mind of the Lord—he "was baptized." This Paul and Silas perhaps set before him, and it came with authority to his conscience, because the love of Christ constrained him. His heart was full. His whole soul was influenced by the atoning death of Christ, and the power of His resurrection. Faith does not argue; it simply believes and acts on God's word. Nor was the jailer alone in this; the whole congregation, even all his household, were also baptized. Hence we see that there was not merely a confession of faith, but the obedience of faith—not only an attentive ear to listen to the word of the Lord, but a grateful response in doing the will of the Lord. There was not only love and peace now animating the jailer's soul, there was joy also—he "rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." This seems to complete the picture.

Streams of Refreshing From the Fountain of Life, Salvation; or, the Philippian Jailer

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

What must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house (Acts 16:30, 31).

I desire to address myself especially to the unsaved. Many will read these pages who are not converted. Some know they are unsaved; their daily pursuits show it: they are conscious that they have not yet tasted the joys of redeeming love: others despise and discard the subject altogether. There was a time when every Christian in the world was unconverted; for

we all . . . were by nature children of wrath, even as others (Eph. 2:3).

What an awful condition it is to be unsaved! and yet how many are careless about it! The jailer at Philippi was unsaved; but when he felt the reality of the state he was in, he cried out for salvation, and found it, to the joy and rejoicing of his heart. One thing is certain, that all who would enjoy the blessings of salvation must have eternal life; for Jesus said,

Ye must be born again (John 3:7).

This is very plain and decisive.

Many persons are really ignorant of the terrible danger they are in; they see not the precipice on which they stand; they perceive not the brittle thread by which they are suspended; they know not that they live on the very threshold of eternity; they feel not that they are distant from God, rebellious against God, guilty before God; therefore they cannot be anxious about salvation. They may think of outward propriety before men, of religious forms, ordinances, and the like; but they are not concerned about salvation from the wrath to come. The Bible, however, speaks to us of salvation. The grace of God brings salvation. The gospel is a message from God to men about salvation. Jesus Himself preached salvation. He said to a weeping woman at His feet,

Thy faith hath saved thee (Luke 7:50);

and to a repentant publican,

Salvation is come to this house (see Luke 19:9)

Paul exultingly exclaimed,

I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth (Rom. 1:16).

Those who received the gospel in apostolic times felt that they were saved; they realized a present salvation; they regarded themselves and their fellow-believers as saved; hence we are told that

the Lord added to the Church . . . such as should be saved (Acts 2:47)

— saved ones. Paul addressed the Corinthians, saying

but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified (1 Cor. 6:11);

and that the preaching of the cross

unto us which are saved it is the power of God (1 Cor. 1:18);

and writing to Timothy, he said,

Who hath saved us, &c. (2 Tim. 1:9).

And so, also, the Old Testament taught; for the Israelite in Egypt, whose lintel and door-posts were sprinkled with the blood of the lamb, was safe. When God's angry judgments were all around, he was perfectly safe, because of the sprinkled blood; he might feast on the roasted lamb, and rejoice, because he was sheltered by the blood. The fleeing man-slayer was saved the moment he entered the city of refuge. The avenger might seek to alarm him, but he was safe, because he was inside the city. Noah was safe as soon as he entered the ark, for God shut him in; though afterwards he was in the midst of destroying vengeance. Rahab the harlot, whose house was on the wall of the city which fell down flat, was safe; for the scarlet line was in the window. All these persons, I say, were safe — their security was unquestionable. Whatever judgments happened to others, they were taught that they were perfectly safe. They so understood the matter, and the result confirmed it. And so now; God so values the death of the unblemished Victim — the one perfect offering of His well-beloved Son — that He pronounces a full, free, present, and eternal salvation to every sinner that believes; perfect safety, come what may, because he has redemption in Christ Jesus and through His blood.

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1).

In considering these verses, I shall notice —

1. The jailor's awakening;
2. The gospel preached to him;
3. Its effects.

1. THE AWAKENING. With regard to the Philippian jailor, we know but little of his former history. From the few materials we have, we may gather that he was diligent in his calling, and that he took no more interest in the apostles of the Lord Jesus than in the worshipers of the great goddess Diana. It is very likely that he had heard something of Paul's ways, if he had not of the conversion and baptism of Lydia and others. He knew also why Paul and Silas were imprisoned; and appears not only to have acquiesced in the propriety of punishing and restraining such men, but also of preventing, as far as possible, a recurrence of their preaching. They were brought to the prison, with a charge that the jailor would

keep them safely (Acts 16:23);

but that we might know that they had then no favour in the jailor's eyes, we are told that he

thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks (Acts 16:24).

This is enough to show us the condition of his heart. He knew not, felt not, God's love; therefore his heart was destitute of that love to the brethren which always marks those who are born of God. He had very probably heard Paul and Silas praying and singing praises unto God at midnight; for we are told that the prisoners heard them. But none of these things seem to have moved the jailor. Like a thorough man of the

world, he appears to have retired to bed that night with as much unconcern as on any other occasion. All that he heard and saw of the servants of the Lord Jesus were insufficient to awaken his dark mind, and arouse his conscience. But God had a purpose of blessing in store for him. God's eye was upon him for good. God's good pleasure was to glorify His own name, in making the wrath of man to praise Him, and hiding pride from man. The holy, godly testimony of faithful ministers had not impressed his heart, therefore other means must be used to alarm his benighted soul. That jailor who had so cruelly thrust them into the dungeon, and chained them to the stocks, must yet be brought to fall down before them, and acknowledge them as the servants of the Most High; and Paul and Silas, who appeared to be interrupted in the faithful discharge of their gospel ministry, were also to prove that, like their Master, each step of cruelty and oppression turned out for the furtherance of God's purposes of grace, and only led them forward in the path of true service, and not out of it. Their midnight prayer and praise, too, seem to indicate that they were in the lively attitude of faith, and in full expectation of the blessing of the Lord.

But there is something very solemn in this period of the jailor's history; for it seems to tell us, that if men reject the quiet, holy testimony of the servants of Christ, God has other means of bringing down man's lofty looks. God's power is unlimited, both in mercy and judgment. In this case it was to be made bare in grace. He who smote Saul with blindness, and brought him to the Savior's feet, could also bring the jailor there. That all-powerful arm might justly have been lifted up with the sword of vengeance, and, piercing the heart of that man who had dared to chain the feet of His dear servants, have at once hurled him to the pit of eternal destruction; but mercy rejoiced against judgment. In the darkness and stillness of the night, without any warning whatever, a tremendous convulsion threatened to rase the whole building to the ground, and to bury every inmate in its ruins. We are told that

suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: . . . and every one's bands were loosed (Acts 16:26).

This was God's way of showing that He is greater than man. This was Mercy's way of bringing salvation to that house, and of honoring the Lord's faithful, suffering servants. This was the very weapon that would arouse the hard and unfeeling jailor. He awoke out of sleep; his conscience owned it as God's dispensation. His first feeling was despair and self-destruction. When he saw the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had all fled, he drew his sword, and would have killed himself. His heart sank, terror filled his mind; his imagination drew the most hopeless conclusion, and Satan's last effort with him was the foul suggestion, "Kill thyself." A loud voice, however, suddenly altered his judgment, and produced an instantaneous revolution in his mind. Are not all the prisoners gone? No.

Paul cried with a loud voice, Do thyself no harm; for we are all here (Acts 16:28).

This was the sweet and heavenly way that Paul took with his jailor. It was returning good for evil, and kindness to one who had treated him so cruelly. But more than this. His conscience is awakened, a crowd of solemn thoughts press upon his mind. The convulsion of an earthquake might have consigned him at once to a dark eternity; another shock and he may be called to give an account of himself to God. He is assured that Paul and Silas have that peace and joy to which he is a stranger, and that they are the servants of God. He feels now that he is an unsaved man; that if he die, he must go where hope and mercy never can come His case is urgent, his danger imminent, his position most perilous; for he now knows that he had been sleeping on the edge of a fearful precipice. Not a moment then can be lost. A light! a light! he cried. His very joints are loose, and every fiber of his body seems to quiver. Salvation, salvation is the longing of his whole soul. He springs at once into the inner prison, and falling down before these servants of the Lord Jesus, cries out,

Sirs, what must I do to be saved?(Acts 16:30)

Here I would pause, and kindly ask the reader, what profit has the sweet voice of God's redeeming love been to you? You read of Jesus in this book; you have often seen His servants, and heard them testify of forgiveness of sins through His blood; but has it aroused you? Will you, by your indifference, compel God to visit you with some painful affliction, some distressing dispensation, before you consider your state before Him? Must He snatch away from your eyes the dearest object of your life? Must He lay you prostrate on a bed of languishing? Must He make the earth to tremble, before you turn to Him for salvation?

It seems to me that these bitter ways are sometimes necessary, to alarm and incline men's hearts to come to Jesus. Oh, my reader! do consider how matters stand between you and God, and turn to Him at once for the salvation of your soul, lest, instead of an earthquake being sent to alarm your conscience and bring you to the Savior, a messenger be dispatched in judgment to hurl you into an eternity of blackness and despair!

2. THE GOSPEL PREACHED. It was salvation that occupied the jailor's whole soul, nothing less than salvation; not religious ceremonies, but salvation. What must I do to be saved? This, too, is the anxious enquiry of every truly enlightened soul; and we need not go to commentators or learned doctors for a correct answer to the question; for the Scriptures plainly tell us. The apostolic reply was,

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved (Acts 16:31).

This was the gospel that Paul and Silas preached, and it was an echo of their Master's voice; for when He was asked the question,

What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent (John 6:28, 29).

The gospel then preached to this awakened sinner of the Gentiles was salvation by faith. The jailor's thought, like many others, was that salvation was by works; what must I do? But Paul and Silas assured him that he could be saved only in the way of faith. They presented the Lord Jesus Christ to him as the object of faith, and His finished work, and God's acceptance of it, as the ground of salvation, and warrant for perfect peace —

thou shalt be saved.

This is very simple, and commends itself to the confidence of an anxious enquirer. The gospel really excludes all idea of creature- doing for salvation, because it testifies that Jesus, the Son of God, hath so completely finished the work of our redemption, so thoroughly purged our sins, that He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, the rightful Lord of heaven and earth, and that all who believe on Him have at once an eternal interest in that blessed work. The Lord Jesus having magnified the law by bearing its curse, put away sin, abolished death, burst the bars of the grave, and triumphed over Satan, hell, and the grave, has entered into heaven itself with His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us; the resurrection and glorification of Christ being God's public testimony of His acceptance of the Savior's all- sufficient work. What is then to be done for salvation? Nothing; it is done already, and we have the warrant of God's word to receive and enjoy it by faith —

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved (Acts 16:31).

Faith reads the lessons of redeeming love in the death of the Son of God upon the cross; and those who can say,

We have known and believed the love that God hath to us (1 John 4:16)

have peace; they see that God's love has brought salvation to them, even when sinners, in the cross of His Son, and knowing He is now risen from the dead, they approach God with confidence; they know that He declares them saved by grace, through faith. What, I would ask, can exceed this boundless love? What else could have really met us in our low estate? What could so redound to the glory of God? And who so thoroughly reject the gospel, display self-ignorance, and despise the unsearchable riches of Divine love, as those who talk of doing for salvation?

Where is boasting?

said the apostle.

It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law (Rom. 3:27, 28).

Blessed gospel for a sin-convicted, heavy-laden sinner!

3. THE EFFECTS. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation, and when received into the heart it brings forth fruit. It is God's means of begetting new creatures.

Of His own will,

says James,

begat He us with the word of truth (James 1:18).

It also gives liberty and peace —

the truth shall make you free (John 8:32).

All this we should expect, when a sinner is brought to know that he is saved. Who so grateful, so dutiful, so happy, so free! Some hear the truth of the gospel, and the only apparent effect is, that it hardens them. This was not the case with Lydia, for her heart was opened, that she attended to the word ministered by Paul; and so the jailor, for his whole soul was filled with anxiety; he, therefore, received the truth at once in the love of it, and its effects were most manifest. What could be so sweet to such an one as the story of the Savior's love! With what intense interest the trembling jailor must have listened to those servants of the Lord while declaring to him the way of salvation! and what grateful surprise must have filled his heart at hearing that the way, was so simple, so free, so full of blessing, and so suited to a lost, helpless sinner! It at once engaged his attention, and made him long to hear more about such glorious tidings; and soon all his household were brought together, though at midnight, and were attentive listeners to Paul and Silas, while they further opened up to them the riches of Divine grace. The energetic, determined jailor, who only a few hours before had so rudely thrust them into the inner prison, regardless of their lacerated backs, now sat like a little child as an anxious enquirer at their feet, and gathered others to partake also of the blessings of the gospel —

They spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house (Acts 16:32).

Among the first effects, then, of the jailor's reception of the gospel of Christ, we may notice his love for the truth, a child-like enquiring mind, and concern for the spiritual welfare of others. The good news of salvation by Christ had been so applied to his conscience by the Holy Spirit, that it came to him as cold water to a thirsty soul, and he was immediately like a dead man raised to life. He was born again of the incorruptible seed of the word, he was a new creation, old things had passed away, and all things were become new; he therefore had an ear to hear, a mind to understand, a heart to receive and love, and desire more and more, the sincere milk of the word, and such a sense of its value, that he wished others to receive the same blessed gospel.

The next thing we may notice among the fruits of faith, is his love to the Lord's servants. He is begotten by the word of truth, and is thoroughly changed in his ways; he has passed from death unto life, therefore he loves the brethren. A few hours before, he saw nothing more in Paul and Silas to call forth affection and sympathy than in the other prisoners; but now he views every thing with new eyes. Having received the word of truth, the gospel of the grace of God, he loves not only Him that begat, but them also that are begotten of Him; hence we are told that

he took Paul and Silas the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; . . . and . . . brought them into his house, he set meat before them (see Acts 16:33, 34).

This was blessed. This was a fine example of the fruit of the Spirit, and it proved the sincerity of his profession; for it was not love in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth. Love is a vital point. Religious profession, without a loving heart toward Christ and His members, is like a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. The apostle John declares, that whatever any man may profess,

he that loveth not his brother abideth in death (1 John 3:14).

But in the jailor's case the entrance of God's word had given light; it had given understanding to the simple; it had by the Spirit quickened him when dead in sins. He thus had Divine life; therefore there was Divine love, fruit in season, self-denial for the sake of Christ's servants.

But more than this, he carried out the mind of the Lord —

he was baptized (see Acts 16:33).

This Paul and Silas had doubtless set before him, and it came with authority to his conscience, because the love of Christ constrained him. His heart was full. His whole soul was influenced with the atoning death of Christ, and the power of His resurrection. He knew that he was saved by the Lord Jesus Christ, that he had redemption in Christ through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace; it was therefore not arduous, but a sweet privilege to attend to an ordinance in which he would realize so personally what it was to be buried with Christ. Faith does not argue; it simply believes and acts on God's word. Nor was the jailor alone in this; the whole congregation, even all his household who had heard the preaching, had no doubt received the gospel too, were happy in the Savior's love, and were also baptized. (See Acts 16:33.) Hence we see that there was not merely a confession of faith; but the obedience of faith; not only an attentive ear to listen to the word of the Lord, but grateful response in doing the will of the Lord.

And yet further. There was not only love and peace now animating the jailor's soul, there was joy also —

He rejoiced, believing in God with all his house (see Acts 16:34).

This seems to complete the picture. There was now nothing wanting to show forth the true workmanship of the Spirit in this new-born soul. It was indeed bringing forth good fruit. He could clearly see that there was only a short space of time between him and pleasures for evermore, so that he could rejoice in hope of the glory of God. He could look for the Lord's coming with unhesitating confidence, because he believed that all his sins had been atoned for, all his debt had been cancelled; and now being united by the Holy Ghost to Him who is Lord of heaven and earth, and seated in Him in the heavenlies, he could survey the future with a hope and confidence blooming with immortality and glory. We are told that he was

believing in God (Acts 16:34);

how could he then fail to rejoice? for

Thus we have traced, in the narrative of the Philippian jailor, the various workings of the Holy Spirit in awakening one dead in trespasses and sins, giving peace through the gospel of Christ, and its blessed power in giving life and salvation, and bringing forth fruit to God. But the thought crosses my mind that perhaps my reader is unconverted, still dead in sins, still seeking ease and satisfaction apart from God and Christ. Is it so? Is it possible that you are going on to eternal ruin without desiring salvation, without once anxiously crying out,

What must I do to be saved? (Acts 16:30).

Is it true that you hear of salvation by Christ, and heed it not? that you know there is a fountain open for sin and all uncleanness in the Savior's blood, and wash not? that the glorious sound,

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved (Acts 16:31),

rings in your ears, and you put it far from you? Oh, my friend! beware, lest the Savior have to say to you as to them of old,

Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life (John 5:40);

and

How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! (Matt. 23:37).

DEAR READER! ponder the Lord's awful words, YE WOULD NOT!

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