

"ready to save" the soul that is "ready to perish." But Oh, how awful is the folly of trusting to such a time as that! How awful the folly of those who risk their eternal destiny upon the frail chance of a dying bed! "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." Yet "the Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy;" and even to the last "let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

But almost invariably—and more especially in cases of death-bed conversions—God makes use of some human instrumentality to lead the soul to Himself. A man of God is sent to read and expound the word, to point out the way of life, to plead with and pray for the poor sinner; but here, to the dying thief, God in a most remarkable manner showed Himself independent of creature service. In the midst of intense bodily anguish, where it might have seemed the thoughts could only be concentrated on the terrible passing moments, with no one able to breathe a word of comfort in his ear, with no one to pray for him or tell him the way of salvation, the dying malefactor might have presented to man an utterly hopeless case. But "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness," shone into the heart of this dying man, "to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

What was the extent of that knowledge which he received we know not, or whether he was an Israelite and had any previous knowledge of the prophecies regarding Christ, or whether he had heard, in Pilate's judgment-hall, our Lord's claims to a "kingdom from above," we are not told; but this we know—that, in view of a speedy death, and conscious of his guilt in the sight of God, he cast himself entirely upon the mercy and intercession of the crucified Jesus, he showed an undoubting faith in his present sovereignty, and sought a place in His coming kingdom. Oh! who can fathom the depth of that joy which the Saviour must have experienced as He hung upon the accursed tree and received as "a kind of first fruits" this returning prodigal, "plucked as a brand from the burning," on the borders of eternity. In His agony in Gethsemane, we are told, "there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him, and may not this also have been given Him to strengthen Him for that terrible ordeal He had to pass through, that deep, mysterious woe into which He entered when He cried, as His Father's face was hidden from Him, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" "Thy wrath lieth hard upon Me, all Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over Me." It was "for the joy that was set before Him" that "He endured the cross, despising the shame;" and though He is now "set down at the right hand of the throne of God," He tells us "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Is there such an one now reading this—groaning under the burden of sin, longing for salvation? Be of good cheer: you have only to trust Him, to cast yourself believingly upon His own Word, to accept His finished work as an "atonement" for your soul, and "He will save, He will rejoice over you with joy."—*Selected.*