

run to a place of safety. "Is it possible that I shall be a lost man for ever? Must I run out the line of my being with the centuries of hell? No day star to beckon me away, no morning light to show me the beginning of hope? Must I be lost? How can I help being afraid? How can I sleep to-night unreconciled to God? With all my sin and guilt, and with perdition hard by me, how can I sleep? To-night I may be in hell; many shall be there, if I am not."

This theology of fear is terrible, but needful. Out of desperation arises hope. A drowning man will seize hold of a straw, and an alarmed soul may be glad to shelter itself in any ruined building that offers the least security; but when it has got there, it only stands shivering with terror, and soon finds the need of another and more secure retreat. A full view of any man's sins, without a full sight of the sufficiency and grace of the Redeemer, is enough to fill any man with despair, even, sometimes, bordering on madness. The mind of Cowper had been thrown from its balance, and he was really insane, under the belief that he was doomed to destruction. His "trouble of soul," like that of Wilberforce, while under conviction, was "long and terrible." A juster and happier view which he was enabled to take of his spiritual condition and prospects, came when he least looked for light to come, and began to fear that the cloudy day would be succeeded by the thick darkness of a stormy night. "*Saved by hope*," from immoderate dejection and despair. Saved from a rock horrid with breakers, and as much to be dreaded as the treacherous whirlpool—that daring confidence in the goodness of God without obedience to his will—Cowper records his affecting experience: "The happy period which was to shake off my fetters, and afford me a clear discovery of the free mercy of God in Christ Jesus, was now arrived. I flung myself into a chair near the window, and seeing a Bible there, ventured once more to apply to it for comfort and instruction. The first verse I saw was the 25th of the III. of Romans, 'Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God.' Immediately I received strength to believe, and the full beam of the Sun of Righteousness shone upon me. I saw the sufficiency of the atonement he had made for my pardon and justification. In a moment I believed, and received the peace of the gospel. Unless the Almighty arm had been under me, I think I should have been overwhelmed with gratitude and joy. My eyes filled with tears, and my voice choked with transport. I could only look up to heaven in silent fear, overwhelmed with love and wonder. How glad should I now have been to have spent every moment in prayer and thanksgiving. I lost no opportunity of repairing to a throne of grace, but flew to it with an earnestness, irresistible, and never to be satisfied."

As evening comes on we see the stars, so we discover the beauty of gospel light in the pit of penitential grief and humiliation. When the attention is turned effectually to the evil of sin, as displayed in its opposition to the divine law in the judgments threatened and inflicted for it; and, above all, in the cross of God's dying son, the conviction of guilt arises within the heart, and the sentence echoed from the depths of an awakened conscience is **GUILTY! DEATH!**