

reason and evidence, that he would escape. When a turnkey brought his food, he questioned him whether any letter from the government had reached the governor of the prison: when a missionary came to tell him of pardon through the blood of Christ, he interrupted the solemn lessons by requests to send a petition to the Queen. He became more eager as the time drew near. In the long dreary sleepless nights, if the wind rattled on the roof, or a watchman's footfall were heard ringing on the stone pavement along the corridor of the prison, he started with a beating heart—Is this the messenger bringing me a reprieve? When all was silent again, he listened at the key-hole of the iron door, until his ear seemed ready to crack with the straining. Oh, it was an eager, deep, long-sustained listening: but the pardon which the criminal so fondly expected never came, and the death which he refused to believe in, approached as steadily as the laws of nature, and overtook him at the appointed hour. If the sovereign does not grant a pardon, all the listening and expectation and hope of the prisoner will not bring a pardon.

Reader, in respect of your guilt and God's judgment-seat, you are not in the position of the wretched prisoner whom we have described. If you have already closed with the offer made in the gospel, you have gotten the pardon into your hand—into your heart. You taste the sweetness of the gift, and rejoice in the goodness of the Giver. "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." "He that hath the Son hath life." Your sins are blotted out; and Christ's righteousness is yours; and you will stand in it accepted in the great day.

But if you have not closed with the offer made in the gospel—if you have been living without God and without Christ in the world, still you are not in the condition of the infatuated prisoner who desired and hoped and yet perished. You are in the same condition as to the sentence passed on you, and that a sentence of death eternal; but you are in a different condition in respect that a pardon is ready, is offered, is pressed upon you. You are in the state of one condemned already, but to whom a free pardon is offered from the King eternal. The Son of God has come to your prison with a pardon in His hand. He stands at the door and knocks: but up to this moment you have permitted Him to stand and knock in vain. His tender complaint stands recorded against you—"Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."

Look at the difference between yourself and that poor prisoner. He longed and listened with his whole soul for a pardon, but no offer of pardon ever reached him: to you the offer of pardon has come, but you have turned a deaf ear to the message, and allowed the divine compassionate Messenger to knock and plead in vain. Think of this, dear friend, and pray over it before the thought drop from your mind. Turn aside, and fall upon your knees, and confess your sin to that compassionate Saviour, and close with Him now. He is willing. He will receive you at once and forgive you all, although you have treated him so ill. Speak to Him, and pour out your heart to Him. Fall into His bosom as the prodigal did, and He will rejoice over you as a lost sheep found. He will take you now into His loving heart, and forever into His happy home.

But, reader, although you are not now like the prisoner of our story, there is one event in which your case may be fearfully like his, and like it forever: that is, if you remain careless and Christless till death overtake you, and carry you away to the judgment-seat in your sins. While you are here, God's terms are, "Seek and you shall find;" but when you have passed into eternity unforgiven, you will never hear those words again. Although the lost should listen for mercy with all the energy of their being, their listening will not bring mercy when the day of mercy is gone.

Oh! my brother, you have permitted the din of this world to drown God's still small voice in your heart; make silence now for Him. Fear not to listen fully, for the word is love: it brings a free pardon to you: "Hear, and your soul shall live."—*British Messenger*.