

the point of his own sword. A dread of something else had seized him—the spell of the supernatural was instantly laid upon his soul—the lurid flames of a future retribution gleamed before his eyes—sins in hideous misshape rose up, and called him on to judgment. The fear of the earthquake quickly passed—but the fear of that worse thing remained—the soul was aroused—the conscience alarmed—the imagination was painting pictures of exceeding gloom and horror—he wanted to escape—to find deliverance from danger—so the question of a moment passed into the struggle of a life—a *work* in fear and faith toward salvation.

Let us pause here to make an observation or two. Here we have the story of an immediate awaking to the great facts and concerns of spiritual life—and the awaking was brought about by what appeared outward danger and calamity. The currents of heaven came pouring in upon the soul through channels of earth and clay. Disaster did but shake its finger at the man, and his spirit awoke to consciousness. Calamity with a rough hand swept away the illusions of a lifetime, and set him trembling, face to face with the realities of eternity. Everlasting life broke through a flimsy incident. That is but a type. Temporal calamity—the sudden crash and sweep of danger—is often the cry that calls the soul from slumber. You may see a man going on from year to year—eating, drinking, working, getting pleasure—with scarce a thought about his moral manhood, or the eternal destiny he is here to achieve. He will prosper, nor ever think of God. He becomes all of this world—no great thoughts ever agitate his worldly mind—no great and noble sentiments of truth and humanity and religion ever throb in his bosom—no lofty idea for man's recovery and God's glory ever finds welcome and entertainment beneath his roof—his heart has never glowed with charitable passion—and his hands have never turned the wheel of good and generous deeds. He is sordid, worldly, temporal altogether. But one day a commercial panic comes, which even *he* could not foresee—comes and shears off the half of his estate, rending the other half in shreds. Sickness flings open the door of his house and passes on from room to room—the windows rattle and the walls shake at this earthquake of misfortune—child after child drops through the wealthy floor to perish in the unseen night beneath. And in the trouble the man finds himself—through the rents in his walls eternity shines in—the spirit of God struggles and speaks through the hoarse crying of the storm—sorrow raises the heart that had been so long buried—the clouds of vanity comes down in a cold, thin pater of rain—upon the heels of sickness through the door comes marching in the spirit of truth and love—after the storm is heard the still small voice of God that awes, yet saves the soul. Calamity is often the salt of life—a sudden storm that wrecks the house, dispels the deadly vapour and saves the man. God has many ways of speaking to the heart—many agencies at His command. He seeks to quicken the torpid nature, to arouse the soul, to polarise the will, and methods are innumerable. Sometimes it is by the slow intermixing of grace in domestic education. Sometimes it comes in adult years by a sudden feeling of unrest in the satisfactions which the world gives when the forces of life are prosperous—sometimes it is by the gnawing sense of bondage in corrupt and shameful habits—sometimes it is by the torment bubbling up through memory of a crime done and hidden out of sight. It is brought about by the sudden pain of bereaved affections—or meditation on the Scriptures, the shadows, and the mysteries of life—or some reading of the Gospel, when the letter, instead of encrusting the truth, blazes before the eyes with great, immeasurable meaning; or else by the sudden crash of some misfortune, the vision of danger near; but the object is the same—to arouse the soul to a consciousness of truth, and bring from the lips the startled cry, "What must I do to be saved."

Another observation I would make is this: the question of this newly awakened man must be drawn out and filled up from our knowledge of the circumstances and what he felt. The soul, when in agony, doesn't go searching about for precise phrases and logical forms of speech. It puts time and eternity into a single cry. The brief question was perfectly intelligible to Paul and Silas, but it wouldn't have been to any other prisoner in that jail. "What must I do to be saved?" That is only half a question—it is only a hint. "To be saved from what?" What do you fear? What is it you would escape? What is the nature of the danger that threatens? And if any man would get or give an intelligent and satisfactory answer, the question must be filled up. The record given here is but a fragment—a short sentence giving the substance of the question—and another giving the substance of the answer. Each must be filled up and interpreted. How will you interpret the jailer's question? "What must I do to be saved?" *from*—what? for all are not in the like danger. A young man sees himself drifting into evil company—sinful pleasures and shameful habits. Awake to the danger, he cries—"what must I do to be saved from the baneful influences of those men—from those degrading habits and pleasures—from the ruin that lies darkling in the way what must I do to be saved?" A man finds himself in the fierce grip of covetousness—held down by it—fettered on every limb—it is on him like the fabled old man of the mountains, riding the victim to death, and in dismay he cries, "What must I do to be saved?" So the drunkard often cries as the fires burn in him and he feels his impotence to battle with the passion. Men fear to reap the harvest when they have sown the seed of evil-doing—they could sow gaily to the wind, but tremble at thought of the whirlwind's coming. They fear to confront the just Judge of quick and dead; they fear to enter the unknown with a character shaped by sin; and so they cry—"what must I do to be saved?" How be able to break away from the degradation and ruin of an evil habit—how escape the fierce fangs of remorse for sin done—how recover the manhood bartered away and lost—how get restored to strength and beauty and the perfect image of God—how leave the husks, and the swine, and the famine, and find the way home; and how escape the hell that burns within, and the hotter hell that lies on before? "What must I do to be saved?" is a general cry—but you must go on. "What must I do to be saved" *from*—and then you fasten on particulars. For each man has his sin and his danger—his idol and his evil lord, from which to seek salvation. Man by asking the how and the way of salvation means, or ought to mean, that he is rushing upon some peril, and some peril is rushing on him—some dark evil from which he would escape—some impending ruin that threatens to overwhelm him.

I dare say you will think I am uttering only platitudes, and dwelling on very familiar teachings. Well, it may be so—but I am convinced that

this important question of the Philippian jailer is often put, and the answer of Paul, as recorded here, repeated, when in the minds of questioner and him who gives the answer, there is a very vague and indistinct notion as to what is meant. I have heard a score of times and more such dialogues in the enquiry room after a revival service as this: "Do you want to be saved?" Answer—"Yes." "Well, can't you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ?" "Yes." "You believe that He died for you?" "I believe that—yes." "Then you are saved—go home and rejoice," and there it ended. Now, I mean to say that such teachings are false and misleading and unchristian in spirit and in doctrine. That was not Paul's way of dealing with the awakened and trembling jailer. Paul "spoke unto him the word of the Lord." When I come to dwell upon the second part of this subject I shall tell what I think Paul would say to the enquiring man. But let it suffice for me now to say that the man was alarmed—he began to fear that he had disbelieved when he should have had faith—he saw that his words and works had been of sin and shaping his soul for ruin. Hence the cry what must I do to be saved from the sin that besets me, and the ruin that lies on before. The treating of this question as a merely general thing, and giving the answer in the same way, has led to most fatal consequences. We have made salvation to mean a simple dogma, or a sentiment in the mind, instead of Christ's likeness of character and working. What is the sneer thrown at us now? Why, just this—"you have had a revival, you say—a great revival—you have got many members in your church. Well—how does it show itself—are the Christians more brotherly—are they more generous and kind and pitiful—thinking less evil, and more given to patient long-suffering—are they less grasping in commercial affairs—less envious in social life—are the magistrates left with less work on their hands—are the jails less full than they were—are the records of crime made shorter and less revolting." That is a sneer, of course. Good is done, and much of it by the work of the churches—real and permanent benefit to the souls and lives of men—but before that sneer I hang my head in shame. We deserve it, for we have robbed Christian faith of half its meaning, and all its glory, by reducing it to an empty and profitless dogma. "What must I do to be saved?"—*from* pride—*from* the ruin which passion works—*from* infidelity of mind and heart and life—"What shall I do to be saved from my sin"—that is it. Make it definite, my friend. What do you want deliverance *from*? Set that well before your mind, and then cry aloud for information. Know the danger, and then look for a Saviour mighty enough to save.

Just one other remark. This question that broke from the newly awakened soul of the man, gave expression to a great fact of human consciousness: This—that each man must *do* in order to be saved. Nature speaks out her immortal principles in moments of surprise. When the earthquake of fear has rent the surface, the fire of truth leaps up in kindling flame through every fissure. And because the fact is found in human nature, it is in the Gospel. Salvation is not a thing let down from heaven—something out of myself and beyond myself, and I have only to remain quiescent in order to be saved. It is a power put in me—in my mind, my heart, my conscience. It is a character to be worked out—a destiny to be achieved—and I, leaning on the arm of God, drawing on His grace and love, must do it. If I gain it, it is mine—mine for ever and always. If I lose, the loss is mine—mine for ever and always. Helps are given me in manifold form—helps from facts of history—helps from the good and the true of earth—helps from Christ and God. I stand at the confluence of great rivers that pour through my nature with power of cleansing—but still I have a work to do with patience, and fear, and trembling. I pray you take that to heart. You are unconcerned now—content with the duties and joys of the day. But the time of concern and care will come—a time of fierce agony and deepening despair—a time when you will seem to stand with reeling brain, and failing limbs upon the edge of some horrible abyss. And if not until then, *then* will the cry break through your dry and trembling lips, What must I do to be saved? What will you do then? A dark past behind you—a darker future before—at your feet a sheer descent into the weltering wastes of horror. What will you *do* then? *What?*

PESSIMISTS.

We are so highly and so widely cultivated in these days, thanks to the profound researches of the monthly magazines, that we may safely assume that all our readers are acquainted with the existence of a modern school of philosophy which declares existence to be so unbearable that if men were truly wise they would agree to put an end to human existence by a joint and simultaneous act of suicide. Nor do the teachers of this seductive doctrine remain content with stating their opinion. They have written erudite volumes, with the object of showing how this desirable consummation of universal disappearance may be attained. This, no doubt, is pessimism with a vengeance; and we may leave the study of this engaging form of philosophy to our more learned contemporaries, while we seek to throw a little modest light on minor, but more interesting forms of the same mental disease. Who does not know a pessimist or two? Nay, who does not number among his acquaintances a considerable number of pessimists? The world is full of people who have failed; and a pessimist is nearly always a person who has failed. Many "failures" possess so elastic and generous a temperament that they remain optimists to the very moment when they are screwed down in their coffin. They are the people who justify Pope's line,—

"Man never is, but always to be blest."

They are going to succeed—to-morrow. It is despair of success that makes so many persons adopt pessimism as a standing creed. Consumed by an incapable ambition, they vent upon mankind and the arrangements of the universe the spleen that springs from their own personal mortification. Mr. Disraeli once made the just observation that every man has a right to be conceited until he is successful; and, perhaps, every man has more or less of an excuse for being a pessimist until the same date. Who ever knew a successful painter believe that art was going to the dogs? Where will you find a politician despairing of his country, so long as his own party is in power? When Mr. Gladstone was in office, all Tories believed that the star of England had set