

***"I made haste, and delayed not, to keep thy commandments."***

Ps. 119:60

A superficial conviction brings with it a sense of duty, without constraining to it. Men stand reasoning and doubting, instead of *making haste*. But a sound conviction sweeps away all excuses and delays. No time will be lost between making and performing resolutions. Indeed, in a matter of life and death--of eternal life and eternal death (see Deut. xxx. 15-19)--the call is too clear for debate, and there is no room for delay. Many a precious soul has been lost by waiting for "a more convenient season" (Acts, xxiv. 25)--a period, which probably never arrives, and which the wilful neglect of present opportunity provokes God to put far away. To-day is God's time. To-morrow ruins thousands. To-morrow is another world. *"To-day--while it is called to-day; if ye will hear his voice"* (Heb. iv. 7)--*"make haste, and delay not."* Resolutions, however sincere, and conviction, however serious, "will pass away, as the morning cloud and as the early dew" (Hos. vi. 4. Comp. xiii. 3), unless they are carefully cherished, and instantly improved. The bonds of iniquity will soon prove too strong for the bonds of your own resolutions; and in the first hour of temptation, conviction left to chance to grow, will prove as powerless as the "seven green withs" to bind the giant Samson. (Judg. xvi. 7-9.) If ever delays are dangerous, much more are they in this concern of eternity. If therefore convictions begin to work, instantly yield to their influence. If any worldly or sinful desire is touched, let this be the moment for its crucifixion. If any affection is kindled towards the Saviour, give immediate expression to its voice. If any grace is reviving, let it be called forth into instant duty. This is the best--the only--expedient to fix and detain the motion of the Spirit now striving in the heart: and who knoweth but the improvement of the present advantage may be the moment of victory over difficulties hitherto found insuperable, and may open the path to heaven with less interruption, and more steady progress?

It is from the neglect of this *haste* that convictions often alternately ebb and flow so long, before they settle in a sound conversion. Indeed the instant movement--*making haste, and delaying not*--marks the principle of the spiritual life. This was the prodigal's resolution, no sooner formed than in action. He said--"I will arise, and go to my father--and *he arose*, and came to his father." (Luke xv. 18-20.) When Matthew heard the voice--"Follow me--*he left all, rose up* and followed him." (Luke, v. 27, 28. Comp. Matt. iv. 18-22.) When Zaccheus was called from the top of the sycamore-tree--"*Make haste, and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house--he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.*"<sup>1</sup>

Ah! as you prize a hope for eternity; as you wish to "flee from the wrath to come," and to "flee for refuge to the hope set before you"--beware of smothering early convictions. They may prove the first dawn of eternal day upon the soul--the first visit of the quickening Spirit to the heart. Guard them with unceasing watchfulness. Nourish them with believing prayer. "Exercise" them unto practical "godliness." (1 Tim. iv. 7.) "Quench not the Spirit." (1 Thess. v. 19.) Let not the spark be extinguished by opposition of the world. Let it not expire for want of the fuel of grace. Let it not lie dormant or inactive. "Stir up

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<sup>1</sup> Luke xix. 5, 6. Comp. also the example of Paul, Gal, i. 15, 16.

the gift of God which is in thee." (2 Tim. i. 6.) Every exercise, every motion, adds grace to grace, and increases its vigour, health, and fruitfulness. The more we do, the more we find we can do. The withered hand, whenever stretched forth in obedience to the Saviour's word, and in dependence on his grace, will never fail of a supply of spiritual strength. (Mark, iii. 5.) Every successive act strengthens the disposition, until a continual succession has formed the ready and active habit of godliness. Thus the Lord works in setting us to work. Therefore think--determine--turn--*make haste, and delay not*; and we wish you God speed; "we bless you in the name of the Lord." (Ps. cxxix. 8.)

Professor! did you realize eternity, would you hover as you do between heaven and hell? If you were truly alive and awake, no motion would be swift enough for your desire to "flee from the wrath to come"--to "flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before you." (Matt. iii. 7. Heb. vi. 18.) If ever God should touch your heart to feel the heavenly sweetness of communion with him, will there be no regret, that the privilege was not sooner sought and enjoyed? Had I betaken myself earlier to a *hearty* interest in the ways of God, how much more knowledge, experience, and comfort should I have attained! how much more honour should I have brought to God! how much more profit to my fellow-sinners! Remember, every day of carnal pleasure or lukewarm formality is a day lost to God--to your own happiness--to eternity.

A word to the believer--Have you any doubts to clear up, any peace to regain in the ways of the Lord? *Make haste* to set your heart to the work. *Make haste* to the blood of atonement. Be on the watch to "hear the Shepherd's voice" (John, x. 27), even if it be the voice of reproof. Promptness is a most important exercise of the habit of faith. Delay brings guilt to the conscience. The blessing of conviction--the comfortable sense of acceptance--the freedom of the Lord's service--is sacrificed to sloth and procrastination. The work that is hard to-day will be harder still to-morrow, by the resistance of this day's convictions. A greater cost of self-denial, a heavier burden of sorrow, and increasing unfitness for the service of God, will be the issue of *delay*. Be continually therefore looking for some beam of light to descend, and some influence of grace to flow in upon you from your exalted Head. A simple and vigorous faith will quickly enliven you with that love, delight, rejoicing in the Lord, readiness to work, and cheerfulness to suffer, which will once again make the ways of God "pleasantness and peace" to your soul.