

"Wholly a sinner, well!—but must I not get quit of some of my sins before I can expect blessing from Him?"

"No, indeed; He alone can deliver you from so much as even one sin; and you must go at once to Him with all that you have of evil, how much so ever that may be. If you be not wholly a sinner, you don't wholly need Christ, for He is out and out a Saviour; He does not help you to save yourself, nor do you help Him to save you. He does all, or nothing. A half salvation will only do for those who are not completely lost. He 'His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree'" (1 Peter 2:24).

It was in some such way as the above that Luther found his way into the peace and liberty of Christ. The story of his deliverance is an instructive one, as showing how the stumbling-blocks of self-righteousness are removed by the full exhibition of the gospel in its freeness, as the good news of God's love to the unloving and unlovable, the good news of pardon to the sinner, without merit and without money, the good news of **PEACE WITH GOD**, solely through the propitiation of Him who hath made peace by the blood of His cross.

One of Luther's earliest difficulties was that he must get repentance wrought within himself; and having accomplished this, he was to carry this repentance as a peace-offering or recommendation to God. If this repentance could not be presented as a positive recommendation, at least it could be urged as a plea in mitigation of punishment. "**How can I dare believe in the favor of God,**" he said, "so long as there is in me no real conversion? I must be changed before He can receive me."

He is answered that the "conversion," or "repentance," of which he is so desirous, can never take place so long as he regards God as a stern and unloving Judge. It is the goodness of God that leadeth to repentance (Rom 2:4), and without the recognition of this "goodness" there can be no softening of heart. An impenitent sinner is one who is despising the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering.

Luther's aged counselor tells him plainly that he must be done with penances and mortifications, and all such self-righteous preparations for securing or purchasing the Divine favor. That voice, Luther tells us touchingly, seemed to come to him from heaven: "All true repentance begins with the knowledge of the forgiving love of God."

As he listens light breaks in, and an unknown joy fills him. Nothing between him and God! Nothing between him and pardon! No preliminary goodness, or preparatory feeling! He learns the Apostle's lesson, "Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom 5:6); God "justifieth the ungodly" (Rom 4:5). All the evil that is in him cannot hinder this justification; and all the goodness (if such there be) that is in him cannot assist in obtaining it. He must be received as a sinner, or not at all. The pardon that is proffered recognizes only his guilt; and the salvation provided in the cross of Christ regards him simply as lost.

But the sense of guilt is too deep to be easily quieted. Fear comes back again, and he goes once more to his aged adviser, crying, "Oh, my sin, my sin!" as if the message of forgiveness which he had so lately received was too good news to be true, and as if sins like his could not be so easily and so simply forgiven.

"What! would you be only a pretended sinner, and therefore need only a pretended Saviour?"

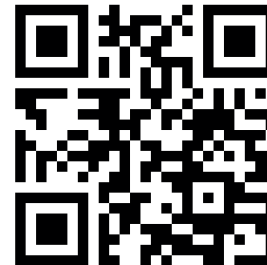
bought, but received; as men receive the sunshine, complete and sure and free. They are not to be earned or deserved by exertions or sufferings, or prayers or tears; but accepted at once as the purchase of the labors and sufferings of the great Substitute. They are not to be waited for, but taken on the spot without hesitation or distrust, as men take the loving gift of a generous friend. They are not to be claimed on the ground of fitness or goodness, but of need and unworthiness, of poverty and emptiness.

Horatio Bonar (1808-1889)
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"Dar a Conocer al Mundo
a Aquel que nos Llamo de las Tinieblas a la Luz,
para que toda Lengua Confiese que
Jesucristo Es El Señor para la Gloria de Dios"
Filipenses 2:11



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How Shall I Go To God?

Horatio Bonar (1808-1889)

IT IS with our sins that we go to God, for we have nothing else to go with that we can call our own. This is one of the lessons that we are so slow to learn; yet without learning this we cannot take one right step in that which we call a religious life.

To look up some good thing in our past life, or to get some good thing now, if we find that our past does not contain any such thing, is our first thought when we begin to inquire after God, that we may get the great question settled between Him and us, as to the forgiveness of our sins.

"In His favor is life"; and to be without this favor is to be unhappy here, and to be shut out from joy hereafter. There is no life worthy of the name of life save that which flows from His assured friendship. Without that friendship, our life here is a burden and a weariness; but with that friendship we fear no evil, and all sorrow is turned into joy.

"How shall I be happy?" was the question of a weary soul who had tried a hundred different ways of happiness, and had always failed.

"Secure the favor of God," was the prompt answer, by one who had himself tasted that the "Lord is gracious."

"Is there no other way of being happy?"
"None, none," was the quick and decided reply. "Man has been trying other ways for six thousand years, and has utterly failed, and are you likely to succeed?"

"No, not likely; and I don't want to go on trying. But this favor of God seems such a shadowy thing, and God Himself so far off, that I know not which way to turn."

"God's favor is no shadow; it is real beyond all other realities; and He Himself is the nearest of all near beings, as accessible as He is gracious."

"That favor of which you speak has always seemed to me a sort of mist , of which I can make nothing."

"Say rather it is sunshine which a mist is hiding from you."



