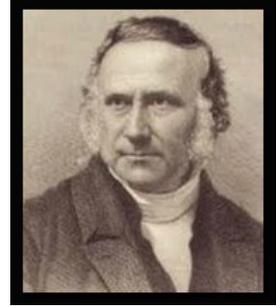


Delay or the Accepted Time



A young man called upon me one Sabbath evening, and as soon as we were seated, he said to me,—

“I have accepted the invitation that you have so often given from the pulpit, to any who are willing to converse with you upon the subject of religion.”

“I am glad to see you,” said I.

“I don’t know,” he replied, “as I have anything to say, such as I ought to have; but I am convinced that I have neglected religion long enough, and I am determined to put it off no longer.”

“That is a good determination,” said I, “Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation.”

“Well, I don’t know as that text is for me, because—”

“Yes, it is for you,” said I, interrupting him.

“I was going to say, sir, I don’t suppose I have got so far as that yet, so that salvation is for me now.”

“You told me that you was ‘determined to put off religion no longer;’ and therefore I say, ‘now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.’”

“But I don’t wish to be in a hurry, sir.”

“You ought to be in haste. David was. He says, ‘I thought on my ways and turned my feet to thy testimonies. I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments.’ God now commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent, and you are one of them. And if you are like David, you will ‘make haste and delay not’ to keep God’s commandments.”

“I don’t suppose I am in such a state of mind, as to be prepared to become a Christian now.”

“Will disobeying God put you in a better state of mind, do you think?”

“Why, I don’t know; but I have not much deep conviction. I know that I am a sinner against God, and I wish to turn to Him, and live a different life.”

“Then turn to Him. Now is the accepted time.”

“But I find my heart is full of sin; I am all wrong; I feel an opposition to God such as I never felt before.”

“Then repent and turn to God instantly, while it is called to-day.”

“But I don’t suppose I can be ready to come to religion so quick.”

“You said you was determined to put it off no longer, and I told you ‘now is the accepted time.’”

“But I never began to think seriously about my religion till last Sunday.”

“And so you want to put it off a little longer.”

“Why I want to get ready.”

“And are you getting ready? You have tried it for a week”

“No sir,” said he in a sad manner, “I don’t think I am any nearer to it than I was at first.”

“I don’t think you are. And I suppose the reason is, that you don’t believe ‘now is the accepted time.’”

“Oh, yes, I do; for the Bible says so.”

“Then don’t wait for any other time. Repent now. Flee to Christ now, in ‘the accepted time.’”

“I have not conviction enough yet.”

“Then it cannot be the ‘accepted time’ yet.”

“But I have not faith enough.”

“Then it cannot be ‘the accepted time.’”

“Well, sir, I,—I,—I am not ready now.”

“Then it cannot be ‘the accepted time’ now.”

“But it seems to me, it is too quick,” said he earnestly.

“Then it cannot be ‘the accepted time,’ and the Bible has made a mistake.”

“But, sir, my heart is not prepared.”

“Then it is not ‘the accepted time.’” With much embarrassment in his manner, he replied,—

“What shall I do?”

“Repent and turn to God, with faith in Christ to save you as a lost, unworthy sinner, now in ‘the accepted time.’”

He appeared to be in a great strait. He sat in silence with very manifest uneasiness for a few moments, and then asked,—

“Is it possible that anyone should repent, and give up the world, and turn to God so soon, when I began to think about it only last Sunday?”

“Now is the accepted time,” said I.

Again he sat in thoughtful silence, and after a time he asked me,—“Is salvation offered to sinners now?”

“Yes, now. ‘Now is the day of salvation.’”

“But it seems to me I am not prepared now to give up the world.”

“That very thing is your difficulty. You are not prepared; but ‘now is the accepted time.’ You wish to put off your repentance and conversion to Christ till some other time; but ‘now is the accepted time.’ You and your Bible disagree. And if nothing else kept you from salvation, this would be enough. I beseech you, my dear friend, delay no longer. Now is God’s time. ‘Deny yourself, and take up your cross, and follow Jesus Christ.’ You told me you was determined to put off religion no longer. I suspected you did not know your own heart, and therefore said to you ‘now is the accepted time.’ And now it has become manifest, that you meant to put off religion till some other time, all the while.”

“It seems hard to shut up a man just to the present time,” said he, in an imploring accent.

“If you were a dying man, and had only an hour to live, you would not say so. You would be glad to have the Bible say to you, ‘now is the accepted time,’ instead of telling you, you needed a month or a week to flee to Christ. It is mercy in God to say to you, ‘behold now is the day of

salvation,' when you do not know as you will live till to-morrow morning."

"Will you pray with me?" said he.

I prayed with him, and we separated. The last words I uttered to him as he left the door, were, "now is the accepted time."

Just one week afterwards he called upon me, "to give an account of himself," as he said,—

"I have got out of my trouble," said he. "Now, I trust in Christ, and I am reconciled to God, or at least I think so. I thought you were very hard upon me last Sunday night, when you hammered me, and hammered me with that text,—'now is the accepted time.' But I couldn't get away from it. It followed me everywhere. I would think of one thing, and then that would come up, 'now is the accepted time.' Then I would begin to think of something else, and it would come up again, 'now is the accepted time.' So I went on for three days. I tried to forget that text, but I could not. I said to myself, there is something else in the Bible except that; but wherever I read, that would come to my mind. It annoyed me and tormented me. Finally, I began to question myself, why it was that this plagued me so much? And I found it was because I was not willing to be saved by Christ. I was trying to do something for myself, and I wanted more time. But it was not done. Everything failed me. And then I thought, if 'now is the accepted time,' I may go to Christ now, wicked as I am. So I just prayed for mercy, and gave up all to Him."

The idea of this young man was new to me. It had never entered my mind, that when one wants more time, it is "because he is not willing to be saved by Christ." I suppose that is true. A delaying sinner is a legalist. Self-righteousness delays. How little the procrastinating know about their own hearts!