

The Danger of Delay

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Today, I am thinking about you, dear awakened sinner, and deeply concerned about your condition, because I know the longer you linger out of Christ the deeper the lethargy you will fall into. I want to remind you that the world is Satan's kingdom, and our Lord led the beloved Apostle, John, to warn you to *"love not the world, neither the things that are in the world."* Read I John 2:15-17, *"If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. I John 2:16 "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."*

"Love" means an inclination towards, having an affection for; the "world" (kosmos) means world systems and is the territory in which Satan lives and operates. For you to love the world, or the things of the world, for you to enjoy the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is to reserve a portion of your life for Satan's picnic grounds. The only way that the Lord will set a foot on Satan's territory (your heart) is for you to **surrender unconditionally** to Him, for **He will not deliver you from Satan's clutches so long as you cling to Satan's little finger.**

Hell never loses a victim without a malignant effort to retain it. Do you think that the lost spirits that surround you are any less idle in such an hour of conviction that you are experiencing than the guardian angels who witness the struggle in your breast with intense anxiousness? The value of your immortal soul is not so small to call forth this hellish energy. The struggle that rages in your breast spells out the seriousness of the situation you are in – for this is a most critical period of your life, and an **error at this point may mean an eternity without Christ.** The light of the Gospel that shines into your heart aggravates the guilt of every sin and worldliness, and renders every hour's delay more criminal in the sight of God. Oh, do not yield to despair that you cannot have Christ and the world, or some darling ambition or lust at the same time, and turn back to the world, for the destiny of your soul may be suspended on a trifle. Do not settle down in complacency that the Lord has *"begun a good work in you,"* and rest in the idea that all is well, as if this were somewhat of an assurance upon which to rest. This is not true. As long as you are outside of Christ, there is danger of you turning back to the world and being damned.

Let's examine the case of a sinner once awakened, who turned back to the love of the world. The story is told by T. Charlton Henry, an old Puritan of the early 1800's. A young man, his acquaintance, came under conviction, whose disposition was unrestrained and impetuous, thus making his struggle more visible and marked. His anxiety could not be hid, and his strong desire to be saved became known to his friends, who spent much time in prayer for him. It was such conviction, seemingly, that his friends hoped his conversion would be as great as his convictions had been. Such a wrought up state of emotions and convictions cannot remain always, very soon the result appeared. It was first discerned by the workings of wavering thought, a condition of indecision, a halting and hesitation to act upon the now dimly flickering light of truth upon his heart. Slowly the world began again to claim his affections, not grossly at first, but a little here, a little more there. The voice of prayer was hushed; and the concern of mind gave way to indifference.

Usually this is all we know of such a case. In the sight of the world he stands just were he was before his awakening. His Christian friends sigh and hope he will be stirred again, and that before it is too late a work of grace will be wrought in his heart. There is some thing about a sinner who has once been awakened that

he is never the same again. Though there was a growing disinterest in hearing the Word preached, and being with God's children, a growing distaste for the spirituality of the services, the light of conviction never fully went out altogether. Without conscience he could discuss the faults of Christians, the errors of the doctrines of professed preachers, and the unhallowed example of professors of religion. Yes, he had a great discernment along those lines, but he seemed to have left behind him all his personal cares. He seemed at peace, and his friends hoped for the best.

One day a voice arrested him – not the voice that unhorsed Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road, but the voice of Death. His friends put the best construction on the remorse of the deceased, for there is a **natural tendency to try to identify remorse with evangelical repentance**. But let's hear his own testimony from his deathbed one hour before he discovered more of Eternity than you and I know. He said,

"I have always believed that there was a horrible thought in dating the possible departure of the Spirit of God from the soul. We shudder at the idea of desertion, without reflecting on its particulars. But it is tolerable while wrapped in the mystery of ignorance: ignorance of its manner, its cause, and its time. And yet, at this very hour, I can look back to the turning point of my hopes. I can remember my struggles under conviction. I can recall the weariness of effort, the distaste, the compunctions which preceded the first bold act of worldliness; and which, in their departure, declared the issue decisive. In all the confusion of my thoughts, here is an unchanging spot in the survey of the past. There it remains, and no hand can blot it out. No, you are not to imagine my judgment impaired in such a review. I can deliberately retrace the seasons departed. My return to the world was not designated by an act which the common rules of morality would impeach, but it was by one, which, it is plain, put an end to the struggle. And I **could not renew** the conflict when I would willingly have done so. Conviction did not leave me. But it sat on my spirits like a lifeless weight, that instead of giving them activity, crushed them down. My judgment is as much convinced as ever. But it avails me nothing. The brightness of a holy law, and that of the world which I am approaching, only render my condition more awful, as the midnight lightning does that of the wrecked mariner, by showing him the impossibility of escape. **I can see, I can comprehend, but I can lay hold of nothing**. I can compel no play of that interest which the near approach of the Holy Spirit once created in by bosom."

According to God's Word, the heart that has once been brought to the nearness of the reality of eternal things, spiritual realities, and retreats from them again, will be less conscious thereafter of the strong desire and force of resolution to go to the Lord than at any other time. Read Heb. 6:4-8, especially verses 4-6, "*For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened...if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance...*" Isaiah 55:6 says, "*Call ye upon him while he is near.*" My sinner friend, my awakened one, do not let the impressions you have received from the Holy spirit slip away from you! Plead with the Holy Spirit not to leave you. You can do that on the basis that you also ask Him to shut your mouth and make you guilty, for Isaiah put a colon (:) after the command to "Call upon him while he is near:" and follows this command with this advice, "*Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return.*" You can not call upon Him until you cease the voice of your heart, and that by His grace. Salvation is a deliverance from the "horrible pit (pit of noise, or the voice of argument that goes on in the heart)". And what is the argument about? Worldliness – "*the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life...is of the world*" (I John 2:15-17). Flee every temptation to worldliness as from death itself.