

"Ready"

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We want the reader to dwell for a few moments on the little word "ready." If we mistake not, he will find it to be a word of immense depth and suggestive power, as used by the Holy Ghost in Scripture. We shall just now refer to four passages in which our word occurs; and may the One who penned these passages be pleased to open and apply them in divine power and freshness to the heart of both writer and reader.

1. And first we shall turn to 1 Peter 1: 5, where it is used in connection with the word "salvation." Believers are said to be "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, *ready* to be revealed in the last time."

Here, then, we are taught that salvation is ready to be revealed at this moment; for we are, as John tells us, in "the last times." And be it noted that salvation as here used is not to be confined to the mere matter of the *soul's* deliverance from hell and perdition: it refers, rather, to the deliverance of the *body* of the believer from the power of death and corruption. In short, it takes in all that stands in anywise connected with the glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We already possess the salvation of our souls, as we are told in the very context from which our text is taken. "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.... Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you *at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*"

Thus we learn in the clearest way that the "salvation ready to be revealed" is linked on to "the revelation of Jesus Christ." This is confirmed, were confirmation needful, by Hebrews 9: 28, where we read, "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time, apart from sin, unto *salvation.*"

From all this we learn that the salvation which is ready to be revealed is at the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. For this we are taught, as Christians, to look at any moment. There is literally nothing so far as God is concerned, nothing so far as the work of Christ is concerned, nothing so far as the testimony of the Holy Ghost is concerned, to hinder our hearing "the shout of the archangel and the trump of God" this very night, this very hour. All is done that needed to be done. Atonement is made, redemption is accomplished, God has been glorified by the work of Christ, as is proved by the fact of Christ's present place on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. From the moment that our Lord Christ took His seat upon that throne, it could always be said that "salvation is *ready* to be revealed."

But it could not have been said before. Salvation could not be said to be ready until the divine groundwork thereof was laid in the death and resurrection of the Saviour. But when once that most glorious work of all works was accomplished, it could at any moment be said that "salvation is ready to be revealed." "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool" (Ps. 110: 1).

2. The apostle Peter gives us another instance and application of our word in 1 Peter 4: 5, where he refers to some "who shall give account to Him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead."

Here the word stands before us in a form of awful solemnity. If on the one hand it be true that salvation is ready to be revealed for the everlasting joy of God's redeemed, it is equally true on the other hand that judgement is ready to take its course, for the everlasting misery of those who neglect God's proffered salvation. [As regards the solemn subject of eternal punishment, we shall just refer the

reader to three passages of Scripture which establish the truth of it beyond all question: Mark 9: 43-48, the fire is *unquenchable*, and the worm *never dies*; Luke 16: 26, the great gulf is *fixed*; John 3:36, the wrath of God *abideth*] The one is as true, and as pointed, and as forcible, as the other. There is nothing to wait for in respect to the judgement, any more than there is in respect to the salvation. The one is as "*ready*" as the other.

God has gone to the utmost in demonstrating His grace; and man has gone to the utmost in demonstrating his guilt. Both have reached their climax in the death of Christ; and when we see Him crowned with glory and seated on the throne, we have the most powerful evidence that could possibly be afforded that nothing remains but for salvation to be revealed on the one hand, and for judgement to take its course on the other.

Hence it follows that man is no longer under probation. It is a grand mistake for any one to think so. It falsifies man's entire position and state. If I am under probation — if God is still testing me; if He is even now occupied in testing whether I am good for aught; if I am capable of producing any fruit for Him — if this be indeed the case, then it is not and cannot be true that "He is ready to judge." Nature is not ripe for judgement so long as a probationary process is pending, if there is yet something to wait for ere judgement can take its course.

But no; we feel bound to press upon you the fact that the period of your probation is over forever, and the period of God's long-suffering is nearly run out. It is of the utmost importance to seize this truth. It lies at the very foundation of the sinner's position. Judgement is actually impending. It is "*ready*" at this moment to fall upon the head of the unrepentant — the reader of these lines, should he be one of them. The entire history of human nature — of man, of the world — has been wound up and closed forever. The cross of Christ has made perfectly manifest the guilt and ruin of the human race. It has put an end to man's probationary season; and from that solemn hour until now the true position of the world as a whole, and of each individual sinner — man, woman, and child — has been that of a culprit tried, found guilty, and condemned, but the sentence not executed. This is the present awful position of the unconverted, unbelieving reader.

Dear Friend, wilt thou not think of this? Fellow immortal soul, wilt thou not, even this very moment, bend the undivided attention of thy soul to this eternal question? We must speak plainly and pointedly. We feel in some small degree the awfulness of the sinner's state and prospect, in view of these weighty words, "*ready to Judge*." We are convinced that the present is a moment which calls for serious and faithful dealing with the souls of our readers. We do not, as God is our witness, want to write essays or sermons; we want to reach souls. We want the reader to be assured of this; that he is not now reading an article on a religious subject prepared for some literary purpose, but a solemn appeal made to his heart and conscience in the immediate presence of "Him who is ready to judge the quick and the dead."

3. But this leads us to the third passage of Holy Scripture in which our weighty motto occurs. The reader will find it in Luke 12: 40: "Be ye therefore ready also; for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not."

If salvation is "*ready*" to be revealed, and if judgement is "*ready*" to be executed, what becomes us but to be "*ready*" also?

And in what does this readiness consist? How are we to be ready? It strikes us that there are two things included in the answer.

First, we must be "*ready*" in *title*; and, secondly, we must be "*ready*" in our moral *state* — ready

in conscience, and ready in heart. The one is founded upon the work of Christ *for* us; the other is connected with the work of the Spirit *in* us. If we are simply resting by faith on the finished work of Christ, if we are leaning exclusively on what He has done and what He is, then are we in very truth ready in title, and we may rest assured of being with Him when He comes.

But, on the other hand, if we are leaning upon our fancied goodness, upon any righteousness which we think we possess, upon not having done any harm to any one, upon our not being worse than some of our neighbours, upon our church-membership, upon our attention to the ordinances of religion; if we are leaning upon any or all of these things, or if we are adding these things to Christ, then we may be assured we are not ready in title, not ready in conscience. God can accept nothing, absolutely nothing, as a title, but Christ. To bring aught else is to declare that Christ is not needful: to bring aught besides is to affirm that He is not enough. But God has borne ten thousand testimonies to the fact that we can do with nothing less, and that we want nothing more, than Christ. Hence, therefore, Christ is our all-essential and all-sufficient title.

But, then, there is such a thing as professing to be ready in title while at the same time we are not ready in our moral condition or practical state. This demands our gravest attention. There is a vast amount of easy-going evangelical profession abroad at the present moment. The atmosphere is permeated by the rays of gospel light. The darkness of the Middle Ages has been chased away by the brightness of a free gospel and an open Bible.

We are thankful for a free gospel and an open Bible. But we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that there is a fearful amount of laxity, unsubduedness, and self-indulgence going hand in hand with the evangelical profession of the day. We notice with the deepest anxiety many young professors who have, or seem to have, a very clear insight, so far as the intellect goes, into the truth of the sinner's title, who, if we are to judge from their style, deportment, and habits, are not "ready" in their moral condition — in the real state of their hearts. We are at times, we must confess, sadly cast down when we see our young friends decking their persons in the vain fashions of a vain and sinful world; feeding upon the vile literature that issues in such frightful profusion from the press; and actually singing vain songs and engaging in light and frivolous conversation. It is impossible to reconcile such with "Be ye also ready."

We may perhaps be told that these things are externals, and that the grand point is to be occupied with Christ. It may be said — it has been said — "Provided we have Christ in our hearts, it does not matter what we have on our heads or in our hands." We reply, "If we really have Christ in our hearts, it will regulate what we put on our heads and take into our hands; yea, it will exert a *manifest* influence upon our whole deportment and character."

We should like to ask some of our young friends this question: "Would you like the Lord Christ to come and find you reading a love-story, or singing a song?" We feel assured you would not. Well, then, let us, in the name of the Lord, see to it that we do not engage in anything which does not comport with our being "*ready*."

We specially urge this upon the young Christian reader. Let this question be ever before us, "Am I ready? — ready in title, ready in state, ready in conscience, ready in heart?" The times are really very solemn, and it behoves us to think seriously of our true state. We feel persuaded that there is a lack of real, godly heart-exercise amongst us. There are, we fear, many — God only knows how many — who are not ready; many who would be taken aback and terribly surprised by death or the coming of the Lord. There are things said and done by those who occupy the very highest platform of profession which we dare not indulge in if we are really *looking* for the Lord.

God grant that the reader may know what it is to be ready in title and ready in state; that he may

have a purged conscience and a truly exercised heart. Then he will be able to enter into the meaning of the fourth and last passage, to which we call his attention. It occurs in Matt. 25: 10.

4. "And while they [the foolish virgins] went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were *ready* went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut."

How solemn! How awfully solemn! Those who were *ready* went in, and those who were not ready were shut out. Those who have life in Christ, who are indwelt by the Holy Ghost, will be ready. But the mere professor — the one who has truth in the head and on the lip, but not in the heart; who has the lamp of profession, but not the Spirit of life in Christ — will be shut out into outer darkness — in the everlasting misery and gloom, the eternal monotony of hell.

Let us, as we take a solemn leave of you, put this question home to your very inmost soul, "ART THOU READY?"