

# Religious Intelligencer,

## BIBLE SOCIETY, MISSIONARY, AND SABBATH SCHOOL ADVOCATE.

E. SELBY, Editor.

VOL. IV—NO. 34.

ST. JOHN, NEW BRUNSWICK.

That God in all things may be glorified

through Jesus Christ.—PATERA.

TERMS.—ONE

DOLLAR A YEAR, IN ADVANCE

WHOLE NO. 190

### The Act of Faith.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shall be saved."—Acts 16:31.

I once saw a lad on the roof of a very high building, where several men were at work. He was gazing about, with apparent unconcern, when suddenly his foot slipped, and he fell. In falling, he caught by a rope, and hung suspended in mid-air, where he could sustain himself but a short time. He perfectly knew his situation, and expected that, in a few moments, he must drop upon the rocks below, and be dashed to pieces.

At this fearful moment, a kind and powerful man rushed out of the house, and slinging a belt with extended arms, called out, "Let go the rope, and I will receive you. I can do it. Let go the rope, and I promise you shall escape unharmed."

The boy hesitated a moment, and then cast his hold, and dropped easily and safely to the arms of his deliverer.

Here, thought I, is an illustration of faith. He is a simple act of faith. The boy, sensible of his danger, hung suspended, and heard his voice. He believed in him, and trusted to him, and letting go, every other dependence, and so, dropped into his arms.

So must a sinner distinctly apprehend his guilt and his awful exposure by nature. He must know where he is, and who he is; else he will apply to Christ for help. He must see distinctly, that he is a sinner—a transgressor of God's law, and a rebel against his throne.

He must see that he had incurred the sentence of the law; that it is a just sentence, and that he is liable every moment to sink and perish under it. He must see that, so far as his own efforts are concerned, there is no possibility of escape. He cannot pay the debt he has contracted, nor can he in any way diminish it a farthing. He can make no amends, no expiation, for past sins. The long catalogue of his transgressions stands arrayed against him; and for ought he can do there it must stand.

The sentence of the law has been passed upon him, and for ought he can do, it must be executed. And if it is executed, it will sink him forever; for this sentence is no other than eternal death; "eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." 2 Thess. 1: 9. In awful exposure, and so far as he is concerned, helpless and hopeless condition, he must see himself, before he will consent to drop into the arms of his Saviour, and accept deliverance on the conditions of the gospel.

And he must see more than this. He must see who the Saviour is, and what he has done, and what is his ability and readiness to save. Suppose the boy, suspended by the rope, had seen another little boy like himself come out of the house and stretch his weak arms, and call upon him to trust him for deliverance. He would have cried out at once, "You cannot save me. Get out of the way, or I shall fall and crush myself and you." Just so the exercised sinner feels, when invited to put his trust in a man like himself. "A mere human being can never deliver me!" he exclaims—"do you mean to mock me? What can such a creature do for a wretched like me? What can he do with these mountains of guilt which are pressing upon me, and with that dead heart worn which is growing within me? What can he do with the awful sentence of the law which condemns me?" The sinner feels now, if he trusts a divine Saviour, an almighty Saviour—one who is able to "save to the uttermost"—one whose "blood cleanseth from all sin." He feels that no other Saviour can meet the several exigencies of his case, or can ever do any good. And when he looks into the Bible, and finds just such a Saviour as is provided, and is freely offered; when he finds he is a holy Saviour, whose word is truth—a glorious Saviour, altogether deserving of his confidence and love; when, with the eye of faith he sees the Saviour standing before him, and extending his mighty arms to receive him, and calling out to him to let go all his false dependencies and hopes; and springing at once into his faithful arms: what should prevent him from doing it—from simply putting forth the act of faith, and falling into the kind and gracious arms of his Deliverer? He obviously has all the knowledge and conviction that are necessary, and he has only now to believe in God, to trust to him, fall into his embrace, and live forever.

But suppose a man, while hanging, as it were, over the jaws of death, began to doubt the ability or the readiness of Christ to save. Suppose he begins to reason with himself, "My soul is of great value, and the difficulties in the way of my salvation are great; so do I know that that Jesus can save me—that he can cleanse such a polluted heart, and rescue such a wretched and guilty sinner; if he can, how do I know that he will?"

If he may not be sincere in his offers. It may be only intended to trifle with my misery," said not this a high-spirited and indignant friend to the benevolent Saviour? "Would you propose him now to withdraw his grace, and say, 'Well, master, if you are determined not to be saved, then you must perish. If you will not trust in me, I can do nothing for you. You might have been delivered, if you had entrusted to my care; but now you must be cast off for ever.'

Springs out, while the Saviour is crying, "Look unto me, and be ye set aright." He should say, "I am not worthy to come near to you. I now am. I must wait till I have done something to recompense you to

his regards." And suppose the Saviour should continue crying, "Come just as you are; come in all your wretchedness, and be cleansed in the fountain of my blood;" and you still hold back, and persist in the struggle, and hang upon the vain excuse: "I might not be expected soon to withdraw, and leave an unbelieving rebel to perish?"

Or suppose you should say, "How came I to be a sinner? Why did God permit me to sin, or permit sin to come into the world?" Or, "How can I believe of myself? Is not the gift of God; and, until the gift is received, what can I do but patiently wait?"

Or suppose you fly to the other extreme, and say, "I can believe and secure my salvation whenever I please; I need not sin, or permit sin to come into the world."

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