

A SOUL-SAVING CRISIS

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A SOUL-SAVING CRISIS.

ONE of the wise ones of the earth, recently writing on the world's financial affairs, referred to what he called "*a world-shaking crisis,*" and truly such a crisis is coming. What significant words! But they will carry the mind of the thoughtful believer far beyond the idea of a temporary paralysis in money matters. If all the millionaires on earth were to become bankrupt to-morrow it would not greatly affect heaven, if at all. But a crisis is rapidly and inevitably approaching which will do so. In one way or another, this momentous crisis is often referred to in Scripture.

The prophet Isaiah predicts such a time in these words—"The loftiness

of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of man shall be made low : and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. And they shall go into the holes of the rocks and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty, when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth ” (Isa. ii. 17, 19).

The apostle Paul, in Hebrews xii. 25-30, also draws attention to this “ world-shaking crisis,” but speaks at the same time of “ a kingdom which cannot be moved ” ; and in the same epistle of a “ promise,” confirmed by oath, that cannot be shaken. Who would not trust the hand that will shake everything that can be shaken, when we know that it is the hand of Him Who has already declared His wondrous love—a love that never has been shaken and never will ?

The apostle John, in the Book of Revelation, enters into more minute

detail as to what this "world-shaking crisis" will bring about. In chapter vi., having first mentioned a "great earthquake," he uses the symbol of a fig tree casting her untimely figs when she is shaken of a mighty wind. The inhabitants of the earth—the great, the rich, the military, the mighty, the bond and the free, and even kings—are spoken of as sharing one common dread, the face of Him Who sits upon the throne, and "the wrath of the Lamb." They pray, but not to God. What a contrast to the countless thousands who once sang on earth with unspeakable comfort and assurance—

"Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
Till the storm of life be passed."

But those whom John describes have no such song upon their lips, no such comfort in their hearts. They have no confidence in "the Lamb" that died for sinners, though He never cast out the vilest one that came to Him. To

the mountains and rocks they cry, but not to Him, "Hide us! Hide us!"

Then chapter viii. continues this solemn picture. Just before the "seventh seal" is opened, so serious a stage is reached in the prophetic crisis that we read, "*There was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour*" (v. 1). How solemnly significant!

But we have a brighter story to tell. True, it speaks of power, but of power put forth for man's blessing.

When Jesus was laid in the grave everything hung upon His resurrection. The unbelieving leaders of the people took the greatest care to keep His body within that sealed sepulchre. But more than a thousand years before, God had inspired one of His servants to record what He thought of their wicked determination. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision" (Ps. ii. 4).

The "earthquake" betokens God's mighty intervention; the keepers become as dead men, and one of His own ministers of power is specially sent from heaven to roll away the stone, to make it manifest to all beholders that He Who had tasted death—our Lord Jesus, that "Great Shepherd of the sheep"—had been brought again from the dead, "through the blood of the everlasting covenant." He Who was delivered for our offences had been raised again for our justification. The "God of power" had put forth His exceeding might in raising the Adorable Substitute. Peace may now be ours. The mighty power of God is openly declared to be on man's side.

But there is more to tell. Not only was God's power put forth in resurrection that repentance and forgiveness might be preached to His revolted creature man, but another marvellous

event followed. The Holy Ghost came down to endue "with power from on high" those who preach the glad tidings, and to bring the message in power to the hearts of those that needed it (compare Luke xxiv. 49; 1 Thess. i. 5). It is interesting to notice, too, the contrast between the "mighty wind" that betokened the energy of conquering judgment on the earth (Rev. vi. 13), and the "rushing mighty wind" that betokened the energy of triumphant grace on the earth, when, at Pentecost, the "Spirit of grace" had come down to dwell (Acts ii. 2).

Then to another thing would we draw the reader's attention. Both at the sepulchre and in the gaol of Philippi (Acts xvi. 26) we have an earthquake recorded. At one, as we have noticed, the keepers became as dead men. At the other, fearing the consequence of allowing the prisoners to escape, the

keeper would have killed himself had not mercy intervened. In the former, when their terror was over, they were prepared to tell lies for money. In the latter, grace had its triumph; the keeper was converted. God's mighty power over material things shook the foundations of the prison and the fetters from the prisoners. His gracious power shook the hardened gaoler out of his sinful indifference, and caused him to cry with trembling, "What must I do to be saved?" Years before that, the same gracious power had reached one of those very prisoners—then a proud, intolerant Pharisee—and had brought him to the ground as a subdued and trembling suppliant, crying, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

In different ways (perhaps not two exactly alike) He has brought about, through His own gracious intervention, a *soul-saving crisis* into the histories of

tens of thousands of sinners. He chooses His own time and His own methods, and who shall say Him nay? We select one striking example of His unique way of doing things.

God's distinct interference for the awakening of *Adoniram Judson*, early in the last century, was as unexpected as the earthquake that brought the Philippian gaoler out of his bed.

Before the age of twenty he had imbibed sceptical notions from a college companion, E——, whom he considered his dearest friend. Before departing for a holiday that year (a horseback tour), he disclosed to his Christian father his infidel sentiments. After all the care bestowed upon his early training, the news came upon his parents like a stunning blow, turning the fond hope of twenty years into bitterness and anguish.

The father's prayer in the family circle that morning, the look of deep

trouble on his face, and the silent farewell tears of his mother, fastened themselves in his heart and went with him on his purposed wanderings.

Resolutely he proceeded, but the unexpected "soul-crisis," unknown to any but the blessed God, was near at hand. Calling at his uncle's, he met a young clergyman, who, finding he was not a Christian, gently and tenderly urged upon him the importance of eternal things. This little talk greatly affected him.

Considerably softened, he pursued his journey that day, halting for the night at a country inn. Showing him his room, the landlord apologized for placing him next door to one who appeared to be dying. Young Judson assumed an air of supreme indifference as to sleeping close by, though expressing pity for the sufferer. But in the silence and darkness of his solitary chamber his bravery entirely left him.

He could not sleep. Sounds came from the sick room which carried their own reflections. But we had better quote the words of his biographer: "Was the dying man, Judson wondered, prepared for the change which awaited him? He blushed as he felt the prejudices of childhood again creeping over him. Prepared! What preparation was needed for an eternal sleep? But still the question would return. Into what scene is his spirit about to pass? The landlord had spoken to him of a *young* man. Was he, like the faithful friend whose warnings of yesterday were yet fresh in his mind, a Christian; or, like himself, a sceptic, the source of unutterable sorrow and anxiety to pious parents? What were the feelings of the dying youth in this testing hour? What would be his own in a like situation? Suppose he were now stretched on the bed of death, could *he* look with

philosophic calmness, towards the final moment, sure that the next instant his soul, with all its capacities for joy and sorrow, would have gone out like an extinguished taper? Ah! there was a shuddering in that soul which prophesied of a *future*, a future of conscious bliss or woe, a future of righteous retribution.

Through the whole night his spirit was tossed upon a restless sea of disquietude and doubt. Daylight proved a much more effective ally of reason. The young philosopher sprang up, relieved, reassured. On leaving his room he went immediately to the landlord with kind enquiries after the sick man.

“He is dead!” was the reply.

“Dead!”

“Yes, he is gone; poor fellow; the doctor thought he could not survive the night.”

“Do you know his name?”

“Oh, yes; he was from Providence

College—a fine fellow ; his name was E——.” (Judson’s infidel bosom friend).

Where were reasoning and philosophy now ? These few words had struck away their very foundations. Judson made his way back to his own room, where he spent several hours in a state of wretchedness, bordering on stupefaction. The words “Dead ! Lost ! Lost !” rang continually in his ears. He needed no argument to convince him that the doctrine in which he had trusted was a lie. Every instinct of his awakened soul bore witness that, after death, there is a dread *beyond* into which his miserable friend had entered, and on whose slippery brink he himself stood, just ready to follow.

Further on his journey he could not go. Mounting his horse, humbled and broken-hearted, crushed under a sense of guilt, he made for home. The “crisis” had been reached—a crisis

that moved heaven itself, not to "silence" but to *rejoicings*. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

Was there ever such joy over *you*, my reader? If not, may the crisis come to-day!

GEO. C.

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