

It Must Be Settled Tonight

The burly miner left the dark interior of the coal mine stopping at a faucet near the entrance to wash the worst of the grime from his face and hands. As he trudged towards his little cottage along the dusty lane, he passed the open door of a little church. Inside, a small crowd had gathered to hear the gospel.

“Absolute surrender is what we must have,” the preacher was saying. “Are you willing to surrender yourself absolutely into His hand? If not, you are not ready to meet your God. We do not know how much longer our earthly life will last. Tonight you are living; tomorrow may be too late. Ask yourself, I beg of you, ‘Am I ready to meet the Lord?’”

The miner’s heart was touched and he slipped into a seat at the back of the room. “I am not ready to meet God”, he thought. “I have lived a careless, godless life. How can I make peace with Him?”

The miner remained in his seat after the message was over. Eventually the preacher touched him on the shoulder. “Friend, are you ready to meet the Lord?”

Head buried in his hands, the miner shook his head. “I know I am not. Oh, help me find peace!”

An hour passed as the minister shared the plan of salvation; yet something held the miner back from full surrender. “It’s getting late,” the preacher finally said. “Go home, and continue to seek the Lord.”

The miner shook his head. “Stay with me a little longer; it must be settled tonight.” Once again the minister explained the way of salvation and prayed, but in vain. Another hour passed as they talked and prayed. “You must go home,” the preacher told him. “It’s late, and I cannot make the way of salvation any clearer.”

“It must be settled tonight,” the miner pleaded, his eyes burning with earnestness. After a pause the preacher kindly said; “Then we shall stay here together” Once more he spoke of Jesus, His blood shed on the cross to wash away sins, reading Scripture after Scripture. Again he prayed, but it seemed in vain. Standing up, the preacher said, “I must go. It will soon be morning. Go home, and return tomorrow night after work. I will pray for you and perhaps God will give you peace.”

“Sir, I cannot leave this place until I find peace”, the poor man’s voice trembled. “Tomorrow may be too late. It must be settled tonight.”

Though already well past midnight, the minister could not resist his appeal. “By the grace and help of God” he told the agonizing miner, “it shall be settled tonight.”

Again he explained the gospel; again he prayed. And this time, as he spoke, the miner broke into sobs and tears, for at last the light pierced the darkness of his soul. “I see it!” He cried. “I give myself absolutely to God. I believe the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ shed on the cross has forever satisfied God and I believe that my sins are forgiven through His precious blood. It is settled. Praise His name, it is settled!” The two men knelt once again; this time to thank God for bringing light to a sinner’s soul.

The next morning the miner went to work as usual. During the day he was sent to a distant part of the mine to fetch some tools. When he did not return, his fellow workers went to look for him. They found that the mine walls had caved in on him, and he was buried in the debris. Working with pick and shovel, they began to dig. Finally, from amidst the fragments of rock, rubbish and stone which hid him from view came the faint sound of a feeble voice: “Tonight ... would have been ... too late. Thank God ... it was settled ... last night! ... I am ready ... to meet the Lord!

“... *the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*” (Romans 6:23).

“... *the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin*” (1 John 1:7).