

The Flood last time; the Fire next time (Part Two)

Six things you need to know about Christ's return from 2 Peter 3

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10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

11 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!

13 But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

14 Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless,

15 and regard the patience of our Lord *as* salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you,

16 as also in all *his* letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness,

18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen (**2 Pet 3:10-18**).

In part one of this article, we examined the first three of the *six things you need to know about Christ's return*. Those first three are:

1.) The certainty of Christ's return will be scoffed at the in last days (vv. 1-4).

2.) The deniers of Christ's bodily return are willfully ignorant of the Genesis flood (vv. 5-7).

3.) The apparent delay of Christ's return is a vital part of God's plan (vv. 8-9).

We saw in part one that Peter wrote to warn of the doctrinal error of the false teachers while emphasizing that we must avoid immorality and be intent on living blameless lives. For, God has a blessed inheritance reserved for the righteous. Judgment is coming upon all evil doers, and the rescue of the godly is certain. When the Day of the Lord arrives with suddenness, God will demonstrate "perfect discrimination" between the righteous and the wicked. ***Here are the final three things we need to know about Christ's return:***

4.) Christ's return will be in sudden cataclysmic judgment by fire (v. 10).

V. 10 – This is a WARNING—none should presume upon the apparent delay of His return as if an open-ended amount of time remains. In fact HOW one interprets the 'apparent' delay of His return shapes how one utilizes the time remaining. The use of your time is a keen revealer of your spiritual state before God ('*redeem the time*', **Ephesians 5:15-16**). Jesus gives the strictest warning possible about misinterpreting the delay. To misuse this present season of God's longsuffering is to risk

apostasy in which the individual enters a state of hardened unbelief, and consequently is lost forever in hell (**Rom 2:1-11**; Mt 24:48-51).

Christ warns that His coming will be like that of a thief (v. 10). “The Day of the Lord will come as a thief.” This simile sets forth the manner of His coming. It will be *sudden, unexpectedly, inflicting irreparable loss upon the unprepared* (See **Mt 24:43-44**; **1 Thess 5:2, 4**; **Rev 3:3**; **16:15**.) We know what our human nature is like—we tend to procrastinate, to wait until a crisis hits before we address certain problems. We put off what we know needs our attention. But never is the matter more urgent than the state of our souls before God. If a person waits until the terrible danger of a Christ-less eternity is at the door—the day of opportunity will have passed (note the Parable of the Ten Virgins in **Mt 25:1-13**).

The O.T. prophets describe the Day of the Lord as the Day of Yahweh’s wrath (Zeph 1:15, 18; 2:2). God’s is going to intervene in history in overflowing judgment. The O.T. prophets picture this catastrophic event as a day of darkness and unparalleled judgment. Every effort to find a route of escape will be thwarted. God will act to vindicate His Word, His Son, and His people. He will destroy His enemies and theirs, and He will establish His everlasting kingdom.

The events associated with the Day of the Lord include cataclysm by fire (2 Pet 3:12). The scoffers described in **3:3-5, 16-17** had asserted the durability of the cosmos. Peter says, not so. By the authority of the Holy Spirit, he asserts that there will be cosmological purging, comprehensive, and indescribable in scope. This is reminiscent of Jesus’ words when He stated that the heavens will pass from one state to another, in noise and fervent heat, and the atmosphere rolled up like a scroll (**Rev 6:14**). The elements will be broken up into their component parts, like a building torn down and the materials salvaged and cleansed. Peter’s prophecy describes the very opposite of what the mockers are saying. “The earth and its works shall be burned up” (v. 10). All human achievement apart from Him will be laid bare as worthless. The world as we know it will “pass away” (**1 Jn 2:15-17**). Nothing will survive but the “unshakable” kingdom of God (**Heb 12:26-29**).

The flood parallel here to the Day of the Lord is unmistakable. When God establishes His kingdom, the present world order, as well as the present cosmic order, will be replaced. He will sweep away all lies (**Is 28:17**). He will grind to powder and blow away all human authority (**Dan 2:35**). He will shake every temporal thing into oblivion (**Heb 12:26-27**). “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (**Hab 2:14**).

This announcement should send tremors through anyone who has not run to Christ for refuge. For God is determined to ‘evict’ unbelievers, hypocrites, the ungodly, and scoffers. Yet, unbelievers seldom, if ever, consider that they are but “tenants” on the earth, “tenants” in their own bodies. The myth of human ownership will die the moment Christ appears in the heavens. At the Day of the Lord, God will reclaim His rightful ownership of everything He has created.

It will be utterly terrifying and unbearable to stand before God as a sinner supported by nothing. What you thought was yours is not truly yours; your body, your property, your home, etc. All of it has been on loan. God is the true Owner and He will condemn those who have used these things for themselves alone, and not for His honor and glory (**Ps 50:10-12ff.**).

When the Lord invades human history at the Day of the Lord, unbelievers will long for annihilation rather than face divine wrath: “Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand (**Rev 6:15-17**). True salvation is to have a standing before God that is in Christ alone (**Rom 10:4**). In our next point the apostle Peter states that the world to come, and the utter finality of Christ’s return call for a life of preparation.

5.) Preparation for Christ's return calls for diligence in pursuing holiness (vv. 11-15).

Vv. 11-12 – In view of that great Day our duty is holy living through Christ. Peter urges his readers to dwell upon the strong link between Christian hope and holy conduct: “Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness?” (v. 11). Holy living involves separation from evil, and daily dedication to God in all our conduct. Our sanctified walk is to be characterized by seeking to please God (2 Cor 5:9). To please Him is to live as His grateful subject, willingly ruled by His Word. Holy living is inseparable from desiring to be with Christ and awaiting His return with eagerness (Rom 8:23; Titus 2:13-14).

There are common misconceptions about heaven among professed believers. Many imagine heaven as something entirely different than what it will be. Some envision heaven as an ethereal existence; perhaps floating on a cloud with a harp. But, the coming Day of the Lord will make this earth into heaven: “But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells” (v. 13).

John Piper notes that in heaven, believers will be fitted to delight in the glory of God with the very delight that God the Father has for His own Son (Jn 17:24-26). The Father’s delight is increasingly our delight. The glorified church will be brought into life of the Trinity. Wave after wave of revealed glory will wash over us; this is the Gospel’s final good (John Piper, *God is the Gospel*, p. 162). “What would you do in heaven if you do not love and honor Christ here?” (J. C. Ryle). The believer’s highest joy will be found in gathering around the throne of the glorified Christ (Rev 4:11; 5:9-14; 6:14-17).

V. 13 – Peter includes himself in this hope and expectation of looking for a new heavens and a new earth. Those who are now walking in godliness are indeed looking for a new heavens and a new earth where righteousness dwells. In the new heavens and earth the believer’s true citizenship will be realized. He will no longer be despised, an outcast, a pilgrim, an alien, and a stranger. He will dwell securely in his heavenly home with total love, purpose, usefulness, and belonging (Rev 21:1-7).

Everyone entering this new world will be in total, joyful agreement with, and submission to God’s sovereign rule. And, will continually be filled with overflowing gratitude and praise that Christ is Lord of all. God’s program for redemptive history will suddenly reach its consummation at the Day of the Lord. The finality of this event ought to grip us all. There will be a cataclysmic judgment upon evil and rebellion, and a culmination of that judgment in the eternal reign of righteousness.

Vv. 14-15 – With a shepherd’s heart Peter exhorts all believers to pursue personal purity. We are to anticipate a new world where righteousness dwells, BUT, only the righteous will attain that world! Therefore we stir ourselves from sloth, lethargy, and compromise. We can’t live in spiritual idleness and expect to fulfill what the Lord requires of us in preparation and readiness (Heb 6:11-12).

V. 14 -- We must be diligent and zealous, making every effort to fulfill our calling to live holy lives (separated unto God as His cherished possession). The development of righteous Christian character is not an addition to the life of faith, it is according to Peter, the logical result of having a Savior who ‘by His power has granted us everything pertaining to life and godliness, making us partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust’ (2 Pet 1:3-4). How will Christ find you when He returns? Will He find that you have been consistently mortifying sin and not dabbling in lust? Will you be “found in Him?” (Phil 3:9). Will you greet Him in confidence because you have been abiding in Him? (See 1 Jn 2:28ff; Heb 10:35-39).

In 2 Corinthians 5:5-11, Scripture outlines the effect this coming Day should have upon us:

hope produces ‘good courage’—expressed in the anticipation of being ‘with the Lord’. And, knowing our lives will be evaluated by the Lord causes true believers to have as ‘their ambition to be pleasing to the Lord’. And, ‘knowing the fear of the Lord, believers eagerly persuade men’ concerning life in Christ. And, believers are sober in spirit, knowing each will stand before the Son of God and give an account of himself (**Eph 5:27; Col 1:22; 1 Thess 5:23; Rom 14:10-13ff; 2 Cor 5:9-11**).

V. 15 -- The exhortation Peter gives in view of Christ’s coming, is to hold a right view of the delay, “regard the patience of the Lord to be salvation.” Believers must continually take into account that the Lord’s patience (and apparent delay) is an expression of His divine longsuffering. Therefore, God’s patience will result in the salvation of all those given to Christ by the Father (**Jn 6:37**). How are you utilizing the apparent delay? God is giving time for the unbeliever to be saved, and for the believer to “work out his salvation with fear and trembling” (**Phil 2:12-13**).

By contrast, the false teachers and scoffers were spreading the error that the Lord’s failure to return soon was proof that hope in His bodily return was a delusion. Can you see how this sets up a litmus test? For, how a person evaluates the apparent delay of Christ will determine how he orders his life. The certainty of the Day of the Lord begs the question, *do you know Christ?* (**Mk 1:15**). Next, Peter gives the stern warning that those who mishandle Christ’s promise to return will be destroyed.

6.) The willful mishandling of the scriptural promise of Christ’s return results in the destruction of one’s soul (vv. 16-18).

Vv. 16-18 – The Word of God, the Bible, has the words of life—but it is also the most dangerous book in the world—because to twist it through willful misinterpretation results in destruction. Let’s lay another misconception to rest—namely that the Bible has countless interpretations. Not so. God has one intended meaning for each scriptural text. Sinners will be judged by the clear and plain meaning of the text. Jesus said that His words would be the basis of final judgment (**Jn 12:48-50**). Depraved sinners (all the descendants of Adam) are prone to let their own desires set the standard for their behavior rather than the will of God found in the Word of God. The stubborn thing about the truth is that it refuses to be conformed to fallen man’s will and desire.

Thus, those who are impenitent regard the Bible as restricting the full personal expression of their lusts and preferences. The response of the unbeliever (even the ‘religious’ unbeliever) is to suggest that the message of the Bible is unclear, unknowable, un-authoritative, and a matter of personal interpretation. But, Peter gives an unequivocal warning, deniers who attempt to destroy the clear authoritative message of God’s Word, end up destroying themselves. ‘The untaught and unstable distort the Scriptures to their own destruction’ (**v. 16**).

WARNING: false teachers allow the cravings of their sin natures to set the standard for their behavior. This skews their approach to the truth. Their handling of the Word of truth is dragged down to match their behavior. They derive their doctrine from their lifestyle, not the other way around. Thus, truth suffers at their hands as they mishandle Scripture (following their lusts, **v. 3**). This arresting caution issued by Peter in **v. 16** ought to put to rest the common misconception that “if you have 100 different people you’ll get 100 different interpretations of a biblical text.”

True believers are to be on guard against the influence of unprincipled men who seek to lead others astray (v. 17). In sensing our own weakness, we ought to maintain a spirit of habitual diligence that is perpetual and steadfast as we walk in obedience to His Word. This is not by the avoidance of falsehood alone; but also by cultivating our love for Christ and truth (**v. 18**). Faith and obedience are inseparably joined in the love relationship we have been given in Christ.

V. 18 – Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And keep

on growing! Feed continually upon the gospel of Jesus Christ. For our Savior has promised that to do so is to abide in Him (**Jn 6:56**). Keep removing the hindrances to growth by ‘putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, and making no provisions for the flesh in regards to its sinful lusts’ (**Rom 13:14**). Foster conditions that lead to growth by pursuing the spiritual disciplines of: *time in the Word, Scripture meditation, fervent prayer, fellowship, corporate worship, and evangelism.*

“Grow in grace.” True believers are already in the sphere of grace (**Rom 5:1-2**). But, they are not to remain static or stand still. We grow in grace when we apprehend God’s grace in Christ. He is the ‘fountain of life’—we are to respond to Him with ever-increasing faith, reliance, love, and obedience. This develops our character. As we grow in the knowledge of our Savior and His grace, the blessed ‘byproduct’ is the continual development of our Christian virtues (**2 Pet 1:5-8**).

Our solid hope and eager expectation of Christ’s return has everything to do with our conduct. All of the godly who have gone before us have, by faith, weighed the infinite riches of the glory to come against the passing pleasures of this world. The godly have said along with Paul, “Momentary light affliction is working an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison” (**2 Cor 4:17**). These faithful ones have decided along with Moses that “the reproach or Christ is greater riches than the world” (**Heb 11:26**). They have seen the infinite value of the kingdom of God and their King. And, have released their hold on this world (‘selling all’) that they might obtain an everlasting kingdom (**Mt 13:44-52**).

Scripture speaks to faith, not to sight when it describes “things not yet seen.” *Things not yet seen* belong both to the events associated with the Genesis flood and the Day of the Lord. Noah was warned about ‘things not yet seen’ (**Heb 11:7**). And what were these things not yet seen by Noah and his generation? Answer: *a global cataclysm by water and all of its accompanying catastrophes (volcanism, asteroid impacts, etc.).* And, concerning the coming Day of the Lord, what are the *things not yet seen* in the warnings issued to us by Peter? Answer: *thermonuclear fire on a cosmic scale, the glory of Christ, and a new heavens and a new earth.*

CONCLUSION: In this two-part study on 2 Peter chapter three, we have seen that Peter anchors his support for Christ’s second coming in the historic facts surrounding the Genesis flood. We could designate Peter’s biblical logic as, ‘flood theology’. In other words, the Genesis flood is a kind of paradigm—for sudden divine judgment follows the offer of salvation. **For, prior to the flood as well as prior to the Day of Lord:** 1) There is a period of grace preceding judgment. 2) There is but one means of salvation. 3) Salvation is appropriated by faith alone. 4) There will be perfect discrimination exercised by God between the righteous and the wicked. 5) This decisive judgment is followed by the replacement of the whole world. These parallels between the flood and the second coming are difficult to miss, but it is Peter who brings them to our attention so clearly in chapter three.

Peter’s warnings imbue us with urgency. It is utter folly to wait until things get really bad before repenting, for that mindset is the very essence of unbelief. Sinners are jarred, shocked by the biblical truth that they are in bondage to darkness and depravity and therefore do not have the ability comply with the requirements of salvation from sin. Every unbeliever, in his natural state of self-righteousness imagines that he has time to amend himself through religion and moral reformation. And that in so doing, he has the ability to commend self to God and finally be saved thereby. This satanic self-righteousness must receive a death blow if the person is to be saved. The command, “make your selves a new heart” (**Ez 18:31**) is impossible in the sinner’s own strength. What is needed is to be “born from above” (**Jn 1:12-13**)—something only God is able to grant in His sovereign mercy.

The great stumbling block of the cross is the news that sinners deserve to be cut off from God forever and eternally miserable. Unbelievers take offense at the remedy because the diagnosis

is so devastating and mortifying to human pride. Unbelievers trip over the crushing news that sin renders them spiritually helpless, separated from God, and under divine condemnation. They cannot reckon with the fact that they deserve what Christ received; death and separation from God under divine wrath. They have an ‘unsettled quarrel’ with God over what their sin deserves. As a consequence, they resist the Spirit’s verdict, even when He relentlessly ‘sets up court’ in the conscience (**Acts 7:51**). They ‘throw out the case’ because they reject the verdict.

Sinners unprepared by the Spirit of God are unable to exalt God’s justice at the cross, and unable to affirm God’s justice in sending the lost to hell. Man’s proud heart wants to employ human standards of righteousness, therefore man rejects God’s holy justice and moral perfection. In so doing, men behave as if God ‘grades on a curve.’ They are scandalized over the truth that God’s standard is Himself, His own perfect righteousness as manifest in Christ (**Rom 10:1-4**). Therefore, they stumble over the fact that the cross of Christ is a monument to the human race that man deserves to die. But, those within the sound of God’s Word will not perish for want of an atonement. They perish by reason of the fact that the divine diagnosis and remedy are refused (**Jn 3:19-21**) (Gardener Spring, *The Attraction of the Cross*).

Instead of welcoming the Spirit’s conviction as an essential part of God’s grace, the unbeliever ‘bribes’ his conscience. He looks for reasons in himself to justify himself, and thereby to reject the Spirit’s guilty verdict. This can be illustrated with an example from the Old West. The fugitive is on the wrong side of the law, thus he hopes to ride into a territory in which the local judge is corrupt and takes bribes. Because the fugitive is on the wrong side of the law, he is radically biased against justice; he runs with other fugitives and finds his false hope in bent justice. By contrast, the upstanding citizen desires a just judge who is not given to compromise, and who always rejects bribes. When the Holy Spirit works faith in a person, that individual bows before God’s verdict of guilt. Only the man who has seen himself as condemned will he flee to Christ for full pardon. Once a person has received forgiveness in Christ, then he is on the right side of God’s law, and he will display a commensurate zeal for divine justice being upheld—knowing that exalting God’s holy justice is inseparable from the honor and character of God.

Unbelievers flatter themselves by imagining that hell is for big sinners. What escapes their notice is that unmortified lusts are proof we do not love God, but love the world instead (**1 Jn 2:15-17**). Every man will have his appointment with Christ—for the Lord Jesus Christ is the God-appointed Judge of every man (**Jn 5:21-29**). Christ is King of the human race and He is Lord of the cosmos (**Ps 2; Col 1:15-21**). Those who have not bowed the knee to Him in this life—recognizing His rightful rule over all—will bow the knee to Him in final acknowledgement that He is Lord (**Phil 2:9-11; Heb 9:27**). The great question is: *have you seen your sin as ruinous?* Have you discovered that your sins will sink you beneath God’s eternal wrath if you do not have Christ as your merciful Redeemer?

How are we to make spiritually dead, darkened, enslaved sinners sensible to the severity of their dilemma? *First*, it must begin with a declaration and unfolding of the character of God. The Almighty God of the universe is not like us. He is not a greater, more benevolent version of ourselves. He is altogether other. His transcendent ‘otherness’ is what the word “holy” means when associated with God’s Name. Sinners err when they make God in their own image and imagine He does things the way they would do them (**Ps 50:16-23**).

Next, if we are to make sinners sensible of their predicament, we must take away what they think they have (a right to heaven). More than 95% of Americans think that they have a very good chance at heaven. How filled with self-deception this is. For Christ described the road to eternal life as very narrow with few individuals on it (**Mt 7:13-14**). The 95% who think heaven is in store for them are tragically deceived. For, Christ has told us that the gate to the narrow way is a gate of repentance and faith; a gate of willing enslavement to Christ.

Third, we must explain the gospel very clearly. Unbelievers need to hear how God makes sinners right with Himself—the gospel declares precisely how God gives the lost right-standing. The gospel tells us that Jesus came to earth and took on mortal flesh in order that through His substitutionary death, He might free His people from sin and Satan (**Heb 2:9-18**).

Fourth, we must explain to sinners that no one comes to the Father but through Christ. We must answer the question as many times as needed until the unbeliever understands; sinners come to God by coming to Christ. And they come Christ helpless, in need of mercy, with empty hands—with admittedly dirty hands—throwing themselves upon His compassion and merits and upon His willingness to save even the worst. They must come in faith and repentance. Faith renounces all possible ways of God accepting and receiving the sinner except the gospel way—through trust in a crucified and risen Substitute. The sinner comes as a condemned man; bowing before Christ as Lord, forsaking and turning from, and deploring the sin he once excused (**Rom 10:9, 10**). He does not come to Christ as one party in a transaction, consciously fulfilling conditions. No, he comes to Christ admitting that even the ability to fulfill the conditions of salvation (faith and repentance) is beyond his natural power. He comes to Christ as a guilty beggar in chains.

Unbelievers must be brought very low by the Spirit before the above ‘posture’ of soul is possible. Sinners not fully convicted by the Spirit are always optimistic that they will be able to comply with the requirements of salvation. But no one is saved when self-righteousness remains—for the yet awakened man is still ‘alive’ to the law—still relying on what he can do as his hope of heaven.

When the Spirit prepares a man for salvation, the bestowal of divine grace begins by the cutting off of all of that man’s hopes. How slow are modern evangelical pulpits to accept that this is the Spirit’s way of working. So many of today’s pastors preach as if they want to insulate their hearers from the devastation and trauma of experiencing moral bankruptcy. Thus, their evangelistic sermons are filled with transactional inferences. The implied message being, “if you will do this, God will do this.” With an appropriate terseness, Warfield exposes today’s easy-believism methods, “It is a flattering [gospel] to be told that we can get up and go to God whenever we choose, and that nobody is going to pester us about it. It is flattering to be told that when we choose to go back to God we can command a handsome reception, and no questions asked. But, is this the gospel of Jesus Christ?” (B. B. Warfield, *The Plan of Salvation*, p. 47).

Pastors tend to be squeamish about exposing the sinner’s moral deformity and inability. But the sight of our depravity and helplessness is necessary if we are to truly flee to Christ. As long as self-righteousness remains, the heart is locked tightly shut against the offices of Christ. The Puritans knew this better than we do. They understood that Christ holds all the benefits of His atoning work in His own hands as “Mediator” of the new covenant (**Heb 9:15**). He alone reserves the sovereign right to dispense the benefits of His atoning work to whomever He will (**Mt 11:27**).

Priests, ministers, churches, and lost sinners are not the ones who dispense and appropriate the infinite benefits of Christ’s redemptive work. Therefore, salvation is wholly in Christ, and wholly in Christ’s hands. The ruined sinner who is to be saved must fall at the feet of the Savior—from Him alone proceeds the spiritual life needed to be believe and be saved. The life that brings a man into covenant with God is Christ’s sovereign prerogative to bestow. Once the sinner receives from Christ what he has no hope of doing himself, that penitent soul is united to Christ, and is utterly obligated to Christ. The redeemed sinner knows he is but a vessel of mercy utterly beholden to Christ. Would that sentiment be possible if the sinner held even the smallest key to his own salvation? No, the biblical accounts of salvation describe men and women suffocating under a mountain of debt to God’s law, not as individuals who have come to their senses who wish to transact with God.

This obligating work of grace is precisely why self-righteous sinners are so stubborn in hanging on to the illusion that they may contribute to their righteousness. It is because it is so

repugnant a thought to them that they are actually walking ‘moral deformity’ before God—that they are a decaying infected wound in God’s sight and that hope alone is in Christ. To receive that hope in Christ is to abandon autonomy and be utterly obligated to Christ forever. This is why salvation in Christ makes us Christ’s slaves—redemption makes us His possession and we can no longer live as if we are our own (1 Cor 6:19-20).

Sinners who retain the delusion of self-righteousness want to negotiate with God from a position of imagined strength—even if that imagined strength is but paying one penny of a trillion dollar debt. In this analogy, that ‘penny’ stands for the sinner’s contribution to his own salvation. The single cent is an attempt to escape from being utterly beholden to Christ for all time and eternity. That my friends is how vicious *the pride of life* is (1 Jn 2:16)—our addiction to independence from God is tantamount to rejecting the offer of salvation by sovereign mercy alone. Only divine pity and power can reverse the trajectory of our ruin (Rom 1:16-17).

Ministers in the Puritan era were excellent physicians of souls. We could learn much about the human heart from their writings:

“Let no man complain of wrong done to man’s free will, when God stops its way to hell; wisely, powerfully, graciously and sweetly moveth it to choose the way of life; but rather let men beware to take the glory of actual conversion from God, and either give it wholly to their idol of free will, or make it sharer of the glory of regeneration with God.” (David Dixson, 1583-1663)

“To believe in Christ, you must leave behind your own righteousness. Christ will be a perfect Redeemer and Mediator and thou must be an undone sinner, or Christ and you will never agree. It is the hardest thing in the world to take Christ alone for righteousness; that is, to acknowledge Him Christ. Nature would do anything to be saved, rather than go to Christ, or close with Christ and owe all to Him.” (Thomas Wilcox, 1622-1687)

“The reason why sinners die, is not because there is no mercy for them in God, nor because Jesus Christ is either unable or willing to save them, but because they are not willing to come up to the terms on which the salvation is offered.” (Matthew Henry 1662-1714)

“They only do account it an easy thing to believe in Christ, who never were acquainted with themselves.” (Thomas Shepherd, 1665-1739)

“It is one of the hardest tasks in the world to bring the heart to a sincere persuasion that sin is indeed as vile as God’s Word represents it; and that it deserves all that His law threatens against it. All men are convinced that they are sinners, but very few are convinced that they deserve to be miserable. A principle hindrance to our embracing Christ’s righteousness, is the want of (lack of) a due sense of our own unrighteousness.” (John M’Laurin 1693-1754) (The above quotes are from the book, *Words Old and New*, by Horatius Bonar, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1994, first pub. 1866).