

Condemned, Awaiting Execution

A certain Prince traveling through France visited the arsenal of Toulon, where convicted criminals were held. The commandant, as a courtesy to the Prince's rank, said he was welcome to set any of the prisoners free, whom he should choose. The Prince, desiring to make the wisest use of this privilege, spoke to many of them in succession, inquiring why they were condemned to death.

"Falsely accused," cried one. "Unfair trial and prejudiced witnesses," grumbled another. "Unjust and unreasonable laws" was the contention of another who had set himself against civil authority. Still another complained that he had been the victim of the corrupt social and economic system. They were all innocents who had been ill treated and oppressed.

At last he came to one who, when asked the same question, answered: "My Lord, I have no reason to complain; I have been a very wicked and rebellious wretch. I account it great mercy that I am still alive."

The Prince fixed his eyes upon him and said: "You wicked wretch! It is a pity you should be placed among so many honest men; by your own confession you are bad enough to corrupt them all; but you shall not stay with them another day." Then, turning to the officer, he said, "This is the man, sir, I wish to see released."

The bitter remorse that filled the hearts of the other men as they saw their companion walk out free while they themselves remained to face their doom can better be imagined than told. Any other one of them might have been set free had they confessed their guilt.

But infinitely greater remorse awaits every reader of these lines who refuses to confess his ruin, guilt, and righteous condemnation, and receive the pardon which God offers only to confessed sinners.

Only sinners who have been pardoned and cleansed will be in heaven. Jesus says: "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

*His cross, His blood, His righteousness
My hope, my only plea,
My sins deserve eternal death.
But Jesus died for me.*

"He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." John 3:36.

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