

Why I Believe in Purgatory

Text: I Corinthians 3: 14-15; Luke 12: 47-48

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Spring Lake, Michigan

Advent, December 15, 1985

Transcription of the spoken sermon

Purgatory is a foreign word in a Protestant pulpit. It is even a greater surprise to find it in a title such as I have given to this message: "Why I Believe In Purgatory."

Perhaps it is just a teaser: baiting you a bit to get you to return - an attention catcher. You will have to judge that for yourself when we are finished. In the meantime, I must declare the seriousness with which I am treating the subject. Purgatory conjures up all sorts of ghosts in our minds and certainly there is much in the history of the tradition of the Roman Catholic Church with which I cannot agree. Yet there is a reality, a truth to which that teaching pointed, and we may well have missed that truth because our forefathers in the Reformation threw out the idea of Purgatory with all of the many abuses that went along with it.

Before we get into the idea itself, let me remind you of our deliberations this Advent Season. We are considering the great questions of the End. The drama of history will have its End. That is Advent's theme: the King is coming. God will bring Creation to its consummation. We personally will have our End; we will die. And then what?

We have affirmed that there is life after life. Death remains the last enemy but its sting has been removed; it is a conquered foe. The grave has been robbed of its fearsome power.

For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again; even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. (I Thessalonians 4:14)

Therefore we do not grieve as those who have no hope; we have a basis for comforting one another.

We have seen, too, that the New Testament sets forth a double image of the End: Heaven and Hell, Glorification and Condemnation, Union with God and

Separation from God. We quoted the pithy statement of C.S. Lewis in *The Great Divorce*:

There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, "Thy will be done," and those to whom God says, in the end, "*Thy* will be done." (p. 66F)

The traditional teaching of the Church and the conventional understanding of most of the Church is simply that those who receive Christ will be saved and those who reject him will be damned.

But a little sober reflection - and reflection on this subject ought to be sober - shows us that the matter is not quite that simple. Even if those who are exposed to the Gospel are judged on their acceptance or rejection of Christ - what about those who never heard? What about those who die in infancy? What about the mentally impaired?

A further serious question: What about those who have been terribly wounded by the Church itself? What about those who have been abused as children and are never able to trust? What about those who have received only a perversion and distortion of the Gospel?

It would seem that we must begin to make some exception, some qualification. Then, too, we have noted that the witness of the New Testament is not consistent. Several texts in Matthew and Revelation especially speak of eternal torment but several statements in Paul's letters seem to point in the direction of universal salvation.

Therefore I raised the question whether or not it might be possible that God's grace might finally triumph in the case of all persons; whether God would finally be "all in all" with every remnant of opposition to His Rule of Grace wiped out. I suggested that perhaps God's "Yes" to us in Jesus might be stronger than our "No."

God respects our response. He will never coerce. His is always a gracious invitation. Therefore, just as our "no" turned to "yes" by His grace must be authentically our own, just so our "no" maintained is always a possibility. It remains a possibility and witnesses to the seriousness of our decision.

But what if in His infinite patience He never gives up? (I asked you whether you hoped Hell might be finally empty.) I suspect you have thought about that. I suspect, too, I would receive a variety of responses. Let us admit at the outset we cannot know the answer to the question as to whether Hell will finally consume some eternally or whether Grace will finally triumph completely.

In either case, the reality of judgment is a reality through which we all must pass. There is a double judgment for each of us. First, the judgment regarding eternal

salvation. Second, the judgment regarding the character of our lives - the story we write with our lives.

The first is determined by our relationship with Jesus Christ. He is the Saviour of the world.

God sent His Son into the world, not to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved. John 3:17

And Paul declared,

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Romans 8:1

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 5:1

In John's Gospel we read:

Truly, truly I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. John 5:24

Thus judgment is passed. The verdict is not still out. The acquittal has been granted. We possess new eternal life.

But there is a second aspect to judgment that remains to be experienced by every person, that is the judgment of our work or our lives. This judgment has nothing to do with whether a person is saved or lost. This judgment has to do with seeing our lives in God's light, seeing our lives played out before us in His presence.

The main contention of this message is that God is not done with us at the moment of our death.

I can base that contention on Scripture in regard to those who die trusting in God through Jesus Christ. I will suggest that the possibility of an "empty hell" can be based only on the possibility of a continuing process of encounter between God and the person who dies without an experience of His grace.

Let us first look at the Scripture. To begin with, we must recognize that there is not much to go on because the whole thrust of Scripture is the imperative to repentance and faith and the whole stress is on the urgency of decision. Yet there are indications that there is something more.

Our first Scripture investigation is Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, Chapter 3. Let me acknowledge immediately that this passage can be used only indirectly for the purposes of establishing the main contention of this message - namely that God is not done with us at the moment of our death. Paul is talking to a particular

congregation about a specific problem - divisions in the Church. Dealing with that issue he decries the choosing up of sides, identifying with one leader rather than another and thus forming factions in the Church. He points to the one foundation of the Church, Jesus Christ, and says all who build on that foundation, which he had himself laid in Corinth, must take care how they build. But all are co-laborers.

Whether they plant or water, they work as a team. I Corinthians 3:8

That refers to the image of the garden. One plants, one waters, but God makes it grow. The image of the building picks up the idea of foundation and superstructures. Christ is the foundation. He, Paul, Apollos and the other apostles build the superstructure. If they build well the building will stand; if they build of faulty materials the building will not meet the test.

This is where we touch our interest - the idea of judgment: This is not a judgment regarding one's eternal salvation; this is a judgment of one's works or a judgment of one's life. This is a judgment through which all God's children will pass. The question is not whether one will be finally redeemed and enter the presence of God - enter "heaven." The question is how will one fare as one's life comes under the scrutiny of the Eternal God.

The text speaks specifically about ministers of the Gospel and the building of the Church. I do not think we err, however, in seeing what here has a specific focus as being generally true of all persons regarding their life's issue whether that be in building churches or building houses or laboring in business or industry or living in community, nation, family.

Will the things to which we devote our lives, our time, our energy stand God's refining process or will they go up in smoke?

Notice: The one who builds with precious stones, gold and silver, will see his creation stand the test. He enters life beyond life with something good and positive going with him.

The one who builds with wood, hay, straw - one who cuts corners and just gets by will see his life's devotion consumed before his eyes.

But now note carefully:

He will bear the loss but he himself will escape with his life, as one might from a fire.

Such a person will enter life beyond life having lost everything, secure in God's eternal presence, yet with nothing to show for his life.

From this text I conclude that there is beyond death or through death an encounter with God in which one's life will be tested. The issue will not be salvation or condemnation. The issue is whether we bring into God's presence something, or nothing.

Now I am going beyond the text's specific teaching but drawing, I believe, a legitimate inference from the text:

Through death, beyond death, at death, there is something more.

Does this text not indicate that Paul thought in terms of encounter with God and perhaps continuing the process beyond death? If it is a matter simply of being saved or lost as we enter the moment of death - if there is a status called "Salvation" and a status called "Condemnation," and that is all there is, then why be concerned about what one brings to death's moment: a fruitful life, or a barren life?

I see in our text Paul's conviction that there is not only the discontinuity between our time and God's eternity, death being the break, but also continuity between this life and the life beyond death's passage. We bring something (or nothing) with us and whatever lies beyond is influenced and determined by what we bring (or fail to bring.)

Let us look at one more text: Luke 12:47-48. These verses are in a context of the teachings of Jesus. The immediate context is a call to be watchful and ready for the End - the coming of the Son of Man. Jesus is encouraging loyal, faithful stewardship of life.

Happy that servant who is found at his task when his master comes!
(Verse 43)

But then Jesus speaks of two kinds of servants. One knew the master's instructions and failed to comply with them. The other did not comply either, but he was unaware of the demands. The first was flogged severely; the second was flogged less severely. This vivid, picturesque language of Jesus must not be pushed too far. We certainly could not build a whole system of judgment on the basis of these words. Yet, perhaps it is legitimate to draw at least this teaching: the sentence will vary in light of individual circumstances. Again, we have here not a judgment to eternal salvation or eternal condemnation; we have here a gradation of judgment on the basis of the individual life being examined.

The moment of death, the moment of encounter with God will be very personal, individual and discriminating. The sentences will vary. Does this point to a process beyond death's moment? If this were the only text it would be risky to claim so. But again, this seems to point in the direction of Paul's teaching explained above. To be sure, the Luke passage speaks of a gradation of severity of judgment depending on knowledge or opportunity while the Pauline passage

speaks of entering God's presence beyond the testing of judgment – with positive fruit of one's life, or denuded of whatever constituted one's life. Yet in both cases there is judgment in terms of one's life being put to the test and then the entering into the consequences of what that judgment revealed.

The traditional understanding of our texts is that, in the case of the Luke passage, there are gradations of punishment - yet to be lost, eternally condemned is to remain in a state spoken of as hell - separation from God. In the case of the passage from Paul, the understanding has been that the "saved" enter into heaven, or union with God, but some with greater, some with less capacity to experience the joy of salvation.

But let us push those conventional interpretations. Let me repeat what I said earlier: we cannot finally know answers which remain for us veiled in mystery. Yet it is important to come to some place where we can live with faith, conviction and peace. Think with me then; let your imagination loose. Think about the God of grace, His creation purpose, His covenant faithfulness, His final triumph over all. Think about the whole impact of the Scriptural revelation beyond individual texts.

I entitled this message, "Why I Believe in Purgatory," because I did want to grasp your attention. Surely you know that in a day when Catholic theology itself is very self-critical and is engaged in serious encounter with Scripture, I am not about to suggest we reinstitute a teaching that has been a means of distortion of the Gospel and open to great abuse. We cannot forget that it was precisely at the point of the teaching of indulgences, the exploitation of the faithful for purposes of raising money and manipulating people, holding them in spiritual bondage, that the Reformers rose up in protest.

But my title is more than a ploy. It expresses a conviction to which I have come through study and reflection, which is as much a surprise to me as it may be to you. I am convinced that, behind all indefensible practice and abuse of the Church, there is yet a true intuition. There has been over the centuries a sense that God was not through with us at the moment of our last breath.

Now the traditional Reformed faith never said He was through with us; there remains the judgment with its double issue - to salvation or condemnation. But the traditional teaching has been that with the last breath the issue is irreversible. It is this claim that I am calling in question. I do recognize that the strong call to decision, the seriousness of choices in this life is stressed. I would not deny that or even downplay the urgency of that call. However, is it not possible that in the experience of death itself, understood as an encounter with God, there is the possibility of something of eternal significance occurring? I raise the question for reflection.

Let me share with you some of the best thinking available on the subject. My first serious consideration of the idea of purgatory or the reality toward which that

teaching points was in Berkhof's *Christian Faith*. Because of my high regard for the thoroughness of his scholarship, depth of biblical and theological understanding, and deep personal faith in Christ, I had to take seriously his suggestion that there was really something here to be taken seriously. In his discussion of the judgment of the works done by believers, which we discussed above, Berkhof writes:

In protestant theology, this viewpoint is almost completely pushed aside by the accent on grace. In Roman Catholic piety it is (or used to be) very prominent in connection with the veneration of saints and purgatory. The Roman Catholic Church assumes correctly that believers differ greatly in regard to their progress and fruitfulness...

So the idea of a judgment according to one's deeds leads of itself to the consideration of a process of purification, called purgatory in Roman Catholic tradition. ... The Reformation broke with that doctrine because of its moralistic conception of salvation and its detrimental effect on the practice of piety (indulgences; intercessory prayers and masses for the dead.) It imagined a sudden, radical transformation after the judgment, usually without giving it further theological reflection and without connecting it with the struggle for sanctification on earth. Meanwhile Roman Catholic thinking, too, has become much more reserved. Typical of the modern R.C. conceptions is the idea of "ripening" ... which K. Rahner develops in "The Life of the Dead."

Referring to our text, I Corinthians 3:15, Berkhof asserts,

... that statement does suggest that Paul thought of more than an abrupt re-creation of man; salvation is accompanied by a painful becoming aware of one's own failures on earth. The difficulties here are more an open question for theological reflection than a subject for back and forth theological denouncement. (p. 489)

In the previous message I cited Berkhof's statement about the question of whether "Hell" was forever. He writes:

God is serious about the responsibility of our decision, but he is even more serious about the responsibility of his love. The darkness of rejection and God's forsakenness cannot and may not be argued away, but no more can and may it be eternalized. For God's sake we hope that hell will be a form of purification. (p. 532)

That word "purification" is one used by the Catholic theologian Hans Küng. It was Küng who stimulated me to pursue these matters. His forthright handling of them at the University of Michigan convinced me that these questions do not go away; they are deeply written on the human heart. In the published lectures

Eternal Life? Küng treats the idea of purgatory in his discussion of the question whether hell is eternal.

Some theologians argue that it is not God who damns man by a verdict imposed from outside. They are human beings themselves, by sins committed with inward freedom, who damn themselves. The responsibility lies not with God but with man, and by death this self-damnation and distance from God (not a place, but a human condition) becomes definitive. *Definitive?* Do not the psalms say that God rules over the realm of the dead? What is supposed to become definitive here, contrary to the will of an all-merciful and almighty God? Why should God, who is infinitely good, want to perpetuate enmity instead of removing it and in practice to share his rule forever with some kind of anti-God? Why should he have nothing more to say at this point and consequently render forever impossible a purification, cleansing, liberation, enlightenment, of guilt-laden man? (p. 137)

Then he refers specifically to purgatory.

Purification, cleansing, liberation, enlightenment: Here perhaps may be - I want merely to prompt a few reflections - the particle of truth, the real core, of the problematic idea of purgatory, which has been translated in German from the Middle Ages onward with the unfortunate designation of *Fegefeuer* ("winnowing fire") - This may be the true core, but it remains only if the idea is not reified. ... as no human being is entirely bad, neither is anyone entirely good. Any human being, even the best, falls short of what he might be, fails to meet his own demands and norms and thus never wholly realizes himself. For if he is to be fully himself, even the "saint" needs completion, not after death, but in death itself. And, in view of so much unpunished guilt in the world, a number of people wonder - not entirely wrongly - if dying unto God, the absolutely final reality, can be one and the same for us: The same for criminals and their victims, for mass murderers and the mass of the murdered; for those who have struggled a whole life long to fulfill God's will, true helpers of their fellow human beings, and for those who for a whole life long have only carried out their own will and at the same time shut out others? ...how this ... purification, cleansing, follows is not left to the speculation or calculation of human curiosity but remains a matter for God as merciful judge, in God's all-embracing final act of grace.

The key idea Küng would stress is the shattering effect of the encounter with God. We die not into nothingness; we die into God. Küng cites Karl Barth:

Man as such therefore has no beyond. Nor does he need one, for God is his beyond. Man's beyond is that God is his Creator, Covenant-partner, Judge and Saviour, was and is and will be his true Counterpart in life, and finally

and exclusively and totally in death. (*Church Dogmatics* Vol. III, 2, pp. 632-33)

Küng also cites a Catholic theologian, Greshake:

From this standpoint we can understand what was pointed out earlier, that God himself, the encounter with him, is purgatory. But this means that we need not fall back on a special place or still less on a special time or special event to grasp the meaning of purgatory. Still less do we need to work out crude ideas about the 'poor' souls. Instead we can understand what the Church teaches and has taught from the earliest times as an element in the encounter with God in death. ... we should avoid any talk of fire and speak instead of purifying and cleansing as an element of the encounter with God. At the same time what should be particularly clear is that purgatory is not - as it often seems to be in popular piety - a "demihell" which God has erected in order to punish the person who is not entirely bad, but also not entirely good. Purgatory is not a demihell but an element of the encounter with God: that is, the encounter of the unfinished person, still immature in his love, with the holy, infinite, loving God; an encounter which is profoundly humiliating, painful and therefore purifying. (Cited on p. 139)

Küng concludes,

That is to say that, since it is a question of dying into the dimensions of God, where space and time are dissolved into eternity, nothing can be discovered, either about place and time or about the character of this purifying, sanctifying consummation. (p.139)

A Lutheran theologian, Hans Schwarz, discusses the views of Tadislaus Boros who suggests something similar, the significance of the final decision at the moment of death.

... decisively modifies the traditional concepts of purgatory and death. Boros agrees that the Church has only gradually developed the doctrine of purgatory. Though the Scriptural basis of purgatory may be obscure, the fact and the essential nature of purgatory are of such quality that it must be called a "truth of revelation." However, through his hypothesis of a final decision, Boros seems to view purgatory as the "point" of intersection between life and death. Purgatory is no longer conceived of as a process of purification which can be measured similar to the days and years we live here on earth. According to Boros, "purgatory would be the passage, which we effect in our final decision through the purifying fire of divine love. The encounter with Christ would be our purgatory. ... Boros replaces an untenable concept of purgatory with the idea of a confrontation with Christ in death. ... he calls death "man's first completely personal act;" and, "therefore, by reason of its very being, the place above all others for

the awakening of consciousness, for freedom, for the encounter with God, for the final decision about eternal destiny." (*On The Way To The Future*, pp. 142F)

It has been obvious to me as I have pursued this subject that those who have reflected on the biblical material, the whole context of Scripture, the revelation of God as He has shown Himself in Jesus Christ and the human person are very restrained in their conclusions and very cautious in their statement. There is in all serious inquirers into this question a recognition of the serious nature of human decisions, an acknowledgement of the urgent need for repentance and faith, the reality of evil and human wickedness that demands response if there is any justice, the judgment as the exposure of our lives to the scrutiny of the God of truth.

All serious biblical thinkers recognize that God takes us seriously and that our wrong and guilt are not simply soft-pedaled and our exposure to God's light and truth will be painful even while we are conscious of being embraced within a larger grace. Judgment will be experienced: No one will "get away" with anything.

If an eternal hell is questioned, it is not because passing through God's final examination is not a serious matter and neither is it because there is no sense of the need for change and renewal of the person who through the earthly pilgrimage has become scarred and tainted and twisted.

Recognizing that we cannot simply move from the ambiguity, partial insight, fickleness and unfaithfulness of one's human experience into the presence of the God of light and truth, there is the belief on the part of some that a purifying process will be necessary.

What have we believed traditionally? Simply that God sees us in Jesus; his righteousness is our righteousness now and when we pass through death to life we will be made like him - *instant perfection*.

What I am questioning in this message is the instant perfection.

Certainly the question is not whether God is able in a moment to totally transform us. But does He ever work as far as we can trace His work in Creation apart from process? How often we wish He would work by a "snap of the finger;" but God takes time and allows the process to work.

Further, we must recognize that we can only think in terms of time but when we speak of moving through "the moment of death," what do we mean? At that "moment" we move beyond "moments in succession" - we move into the dimension of Eternity. It is far beyond our purpose or capacity to enter into the discussion of time relative to eternity here, but we must not naively project our time-conditioned thinking beyond death.

C. S. Lewis has dealt as creatively and profoundly as anyone of whom I am aware with the question of heaven, hell and purgatory. He points to the relation of time and eternity in a fascinating imaginary discussion with the Christian writer, George MacDonald:

'In your own books, Sir,' said I, 'you were a Universalist. You talked as if all men would be saved. And St. Paul too.'

'Ye can know nothing of the end of all things, or nothing expressible in those terras. It may be, as the Lord said to the Lady Julian, that all will be well, and all will be well, and all manner of thing will be well. But it's ill talking of such questions.'

'Because they are too terrible, Sir?'

'No. Because all answers deceive. If ye put the question from within Time and are asking about possibilities, the answer is certain. The choice of ways is before you. Neither is closed. Any man may choose eternal death. Those who choose it will have it. But if ye are trying to leap on into eternity, if ye are trying to see the final state of all things as it *will* be (for so ye must speak) when there are no more possibilities left but only the Real, then ye ask what cannot be answered to mortal ears. Time is the very lens through which ye see - small and clear, as men see through the wrong end of a telescope - something that would otherwise be too big for ye to see at all. That thing is Freedom: the gift whereby ye most resemble your Maker and are yourselves parts of eternal reality. But ye can see it only through the lens of Time, in a little clear picture, through the inverted telescope. It is a picture of moments following one another and yourself in each moment making some choice that might have been otherwise. Neither the temporal succession nor the phantom of what ye might have chosen and didn't is itself Freedom. They are a lens. The picture is a symbol: but it's truer than any philosophical theorem (or, perhaps, than any mystic's vision) that claims to go behind it. For every attempt to see the shape of eternity except through the lens of Time destroys your knowledge of Freedom. Witness the doctrine of Predestination which shows (truly enough) that eternal reality is not waiting for a future in which to be real, but at the price of removing Freedom which is the deeper truth of the two. And wouldn't Universalism do the same? Ye *cannot* know eternal reality by a definition. Time itself, and all acts and events that fill Time, are the definition, and it must be lived. The Lord said we were gods. How long could ye bear to look (without Time's lens) on the greatness of your own soul and the eternal reality of her choice?' (*The Great Divorce*, p. 114 F.)

In his imaginary conversation with MacDonald, Lewis is told that it is possible for people in hell to take holiday excursions to the boundaries of the heavenly country, Lewis exclaims,

'But I don't understand. Is" judgement not final? Is there really a way out of Hell into Heaven?'

'It depends on the way ye're using the words. If they leave that grey town behind it will not have been Hell. To any that leaves it, it is Purgatory. And perhaps ye had better not call this country Heaven. Not *Deep Heaven*, ye understand.' (Here he smiled at me). Ye can call it the Valley of the Shadow of Life. And yet to those who stay here it will have been Heaven from the first. And ye can call those sad streets in the town yonder the Valley of the Shadow of Death: but to those who remain there they will have been Hell even from the beginning.'

I suppose he saw that I looked puzzled, for presently he spoke again.

'Son,' he said, 'ye cannot in your present state understand eternity: when Anodos looked through the door of the Timeless he brought no message back. But ye can get some likeness of it if ye say that both good and evil, when they are full grown, become retrospective. Not only this valley but all their earthly past will have been Heaven to those who are saved. Not only the twilight in that town, but all their life on earth too, will then be seen by the damned to have been Hell. That is what mortals misunderstand. They say of some temporal suffering, "No future bliss can make up for it," not knowing that Heaven, once attained, will work backwards and turn even that agony into a glory. And of some sinful pleasure they say "Let me but have *this* and I'll take the consequences": little dreaming how damnation will spread back and back into their past and contaminate the pleasure of the sin. Both processes begin even before death. The good man's past begins to change so that his forgiven sins and remembered sorrows take on the quality of Heaven; the bad man's past already conforms to his badness and is filled only with dreariness. And that is why, at the end of all things, when the sun rises here and the twilight turns to blackness down there, the Blessed will say "We have never lived anywhere except in Heaven", and the Lost, "we were always in Hell." And both will speak truly.'

'Is not that very hard, Sir?'

'I mean, that is the real sense of what they will say. In the actual language of the Lost, the words will be different, no doubt. One will say he has always served his country right or wrong; and another that he has sacrificed everything to his Art; and some that they've never been taken in, and some that, thank God, they've always looked after Number One, and nearly all, that, at least they've been true to themselves.'

'And the Saved?'

'Ah, the Saved ... what happens to them is best described as the opposite of a mirage. What seemed, when they entered it, to be the vale of misery turns out, when they look back, to have been a well; and where present experience saw only salt deserts, memory truthfully records that the pools were full of water.'

'Then those people are right who say that Heaven and Hell are only states of mind?'

'Hush,' said he sternly. 'Do not blaspheme. Hell is a state of mind - ye never said a truer word. And every state of mind, left to itself, every shutting up of the creature within the dungeon of its own mind - is, in the end, Hell. But Heaven is not a state of mind. Heaven is reality itself. All that is fully real is Heavenly. For all that can be shaken will be shaken and only the unshakable remains.'

'But there is a real choice after death? My Roman Catholic friends would be surprised, for to them souls in Purgatory are already saved. And my Protestant friends would like it no better, for they'd say that the tree lies as it falls.'

"They're both right, maybe. Do not fash yourself with such questions. Ye cannot fully understand the relations of choice and Time till you are beyond both. And ye were not brought here to study such curiosities. What concerns you is the nature of the choice itself: and that ye can watch them making.' (*The Great Divorce*, pp. 61F.)

Lewis' fertile imagination is thought provoking. Great caution is there; our curiosity will not be satisfied this side of death's portal. Yet it is clear that Hell, he seems to be saying, is porous. If one spends Eternity there or, conversely, if one never comes to the light, it will not be so much God's verdict as one's own fatal choice.

Much lies veiled in mystery. Yet all that is needful is clear and how can it be more clearly set forth than simply,

Now is the day of salvation;

Now is the day to choose the things that matter, things of ultimate concern; now is the day to live faithfully - covenant with the Good and Gracious God. Then already we possess Eternal life and death will move us "from splendour to splendour 'til we see Him face to face." Amen.

References:

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