

**++ Which Line
are You on? ++**

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“Which line are you on?”



“YOU don’t think he’ll get better, Doctor, do you? I’m sure I don’t; he seems like dying to-night.”

“While there is life there is hope in a fever case, so we must relax none of our efforts,” was my reply.

The sick man had brought a delicate wife from New Zealand to see a noted physician. On arriving in Edinburgh, he found that death, at too early an age, had just swept the illustrious man from the land of the living, and then himself contracting

typhus fever, his condition on the fifteenth day quite warranted the remark just given. The speaker was a kindly but shrewd lodging-house keeper, who had offered to the worn-out wife, and nurse of the sick man, to relieve them for a little, wait my midnight visit, and receive any directions I might give, while they got a rest.

Much interested in the welfare of his lodger, he was rather cheered by my reply, and readily took my orders. Seeing this, I added, “Whether he lives or dies is very doubtful, and all will depend on the nursing of the next twenty-four hours; but any way, I can tell you this, that Mr A—— is ready to die. He is a true simple believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, has long rejoiced in the knowledge of the Lord, and of a present and eternal salvation; and if he departs, it will be to be with Christ for ever.”

“Oh yes, sir, I am sure he’s ready to

die; he's a very good man," was the rejoinder.

"And I hope you are ready too, my friend," I said, turning to him, "for typhus fever is an ugly occupant of a house, and is no respecter of persons."

"Well, as to that I really can't say; in fact I don't think any one can know that he is ready in this life."

I did not stop at the moment to point out to him the contradiction of his two last speeches,—in one breath assuring me that he was sure the dying man was "ready," and in the next asserting that no one could know he was "ready" while here. It is worthy of notice, however, that this curious condition of matters is very common, when you begin to apply any special truth to a sinner's conscience. Perhaps, my reader, you feel there is safety (it is only fancied safety) in generalities, and therefore avoid personalities and individualising. But let me assure you, that

you must individualise yourself, and find out really where you are.

"Then, in plain language; you are not yet saved?" I went on.

"No; I could not take it on me to say that," was his reply.

"I see. But if you are not yet saved, have you found out that you are lost?"

"Lost? Me lost? No, God forbid! I shouldn't like to think I was lost."

"Well," I argued, "that is strange. You are not saved, and you will not own that you are lost."

"Certainly not. Of course I am not as good as I ought to be,—no one is,—but I am respectable and religious; that is, I go to church now and then; and though I can't say I'm saved, I shouldn't at all like to think I was lost. Because a man is not saved, it surely does not follow that he is lost."

At that moment the shrill whistle of a railway locomotive, about to move in the

Waverley Station near by, disturbed the midnight silence of the air.

“What is that?” I exclaimed, hoping to shunt him to a subject which would just illustrate my point.

“That is the whistle of a railway engine.”

“So I thought. By the way, can you tell me how many lines there are on a well-conducted railway?”

“Two, of course.”

“And what do you call them?”

“The up line and the down.”

“Exactly so. Now tell me, did you ever see a man with one leg in an *up* train and the other in the *down*?”

“No, of course not, and I never expect to. If a man is on the rails at all, he is either in the up, or in the down train; he can't be half in one and half in the other.”

“I quite agree with you; and now I would just ask, Which line are you on? You are either an unbeliever or a believer.

If still an unbeliever, you are in your sins, and steadily going on your way towards death, judgment, and the lake of fire,—the awful terminus of the down line. If, on the other hand, you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are certainly on the up line, and soon will find yourself in the glory to which the Saviour's blood brings every redeemed sinner at last. Now, be honest with yourself, which line are you on?”

This appeal laid hold of his conscience, and after a moment's silence, during which I saw he was convicted, he replied, “I admit your illustration is very apt ; I never thought of it in that way before, but I must see to the matter in future.”

Whether the Spirit of God used this to his awakening and conversion, I cannot say, as I did not meet him again, but my patient through mercy recovered.

And now, my reader, let me ask you,

“Which line are you on?” It is the merest evasion of the truth, and the veriest folly, to say you cannot tell. If your lips will not utter the truth, let God’s Word witness against you.

Did not David say? “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psa. li. 5). Are you other, or better, than the sweet psalmist of Israel? But, again, he testifies, “God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were *any* that did understand, that did seek God. *Every one* of them is gone back; they are *altogether* become filthy; there is *none* that doeth good, no, *not one*” (Psa. liii. 2, 3). He convicts *himself* of sin in the first passage, *you* and *me* in the second. How solemn!

Hear another witness. What says Isaiah? “But we are *all* as an unclean thing, and *all* our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we *all* do fade as a leaf; and our

iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away” (lxiv. 6). This testimony is tremendously solemn as to the natural state of every one.

Again, hear the words of our Lord Christ, and He spoke to a most respectable, religious, and morally excellent man, when He said, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh. . . . Marvel not that I said unto thee, *Ye must be born again*” (John iii. 6, 7). What an inexorable “must” is that! It applies to the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the learned and the illiterate, the moral and the immoral, the religious professor and the careless scoffer, to prince and peasant, peer and pauper. It embraces all, and excludes none, from the necessity of the new birth; and it is manifest that all are yet on the “down line” who have not been born again by the word and Spirit of God.

But, further, the Lord says to Nico-

demus,—“God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world ; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned : but he that believeth not is *condemned already*, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John iii. 17, 18). Now nothing can be plainer than this. The man who has not truly and really believed in the Son of God, who has not, in other words, been “born again,” and turned to God through faith in Jesus, is “*already condemned.*” He is not on trial, and the state of his soul an open question. The trial is over. The Judge has spoken. The verdict is given. The unbeliever is “*condemned already.*” The only thing future, is the execution or the sentence,—death ; and “after this the judgment,”—the lake of fire for ever, “the second death.”

The testimony of Scripture then, my

reader, is clear as to the line you are upon, if still an unbeliever. You are already a lost sinner, and as such you are treated and addressed by God, in the Gospel. "The Son of man is come to seek, and to save that which was *lost*," is the glorious news which Jesus Himself first proclaimed, and which the Holy Ghost yet carries forth. As an evangelist, it is my joy to tell you this. You are lost, but Christ came for such as you. He came "to *seek* and to *save* that which was *lost*." Now, I beseech you, let Him save you. If He does not save you now, He must execute judgment on you in a day not far distant. Which shall it be? Will you have salvation, or judgment, from the hands of Jesus? "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men."

Friend, I urge you, with all the energy of my soul, to open your eyes, see that you are on the down line, call a halt on

the spot, turn to Jesus just now, and join that blessed company of saved sinners, who, having believed simply in the Son of God, are "not condemned," and "shall not come into condemnation," but "have everlasting life," and are consequently, through grace, on the "up line."

Just listen simply to the words of the blessed Lord, and believe what He says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, *hath* everlasting life, and *shall not* come into condemnation ; but *is passed* (from the down line to the up) from death unto life" (John v. 24).

In view thus of the Word of God, any honest soul can tell, with the greatest certainty, its real spiritual whereabouts and direction. So I beg you, my beloved reader, just look this matter full in the face. If you are not yet Christ's, do not lose a day without turning to Him.