

JOHN BUNYAN

THE HEAVENLY
FOOTMAN; OR, A
DESCRIPTION OF THE
MAN THAT GETS TO
HEAVEN

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Or, A Description of the
Man That Gets to Heaven**

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The Heavenly Footman; Or, A Description of the Man That Gets to Heaven / With Directions How to Run So as to Obtain

THE AUTHOR'S EPISTLE TO ALL SLOTHFUL AND CARELESS PEOPLE

Friends,

Solomon saith, that "the desire of the slothful killeth him;" and if so, what will slothfulness itself do to those that entertain it? The proverb is, "He that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame:" and this I dare be bold to say, no greater shame can befall a man, than to see that he hath fooled away his soul, and sinned away eternal life. And I am sure this is the next way to do it; namely, to be slothful; slothful, I say, in the work of salvation. The vineyard of the slothful man, in reference to the things of this life, is not fuller of briars, nettles, and stinking weeds, than he that is slothful for heaven, hath his heart full of heart-choking and soul-damning sin.

Slothfulness hath these two evils: first, to neglect the time in which it should be getting heaven; and by that means doth, in the second place, bring in untimely repentance. I will warrant you, that he who should lose his soul in this world through slothfulness, will have no cause to be glad thereat, when he comes to hell. Slothfulness is usually accompanied with carelessness; and carelessness is for the most part begotten by senselessness; and senselessness doth again put fresh strength into slothfulness; and by this means the soul is left remediless. Slothfulness shutteth out Christ; slothfulness shameth the soul.

Slothfulness is condemned even by the feeblest of all the creatures. "Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise." "The sluggard will not plow, by reason of the cold;" that is, he will not break up the fallow ground of his heart, because there must be some pains taken by him that will do it; "therefore he shall beg in harvest;" that is, when the saints of God shall have their glorious heaven and happiness given to them; but the sluggard "shall have nothing;" that is, be never the better for his crying for mercy; according to that in Matthew xxv. 10-12.

If you would know a sluggard in the things of heaven, compare him with one that is slothful in the things of this world. As 1. He that is slothful is loath to set about the work he should follow; so is he that is slothful for heaven. 2. He that is slothful, is one that is willing to make delays: so is he that is slothful for heaven. 3. He that is a sluggard, any small matter that cometh in between, he will make it a sufficient excuse to keep him off from plying his work; so it is also with him that is slothful for heaven. 4. He that is slothful doeth his work by the halves: and so it is with him that is slothful for heaven. He may almost, but he shall never altogether, obtain perfection of deliverance from hell; he may almost, but he shall never (without he mend) be altogether a saint. 5. They that are slothful do usually lose the season in which things are to be done: and thus it is also with them that are slothful for heaven; they miss the seasons of grace. And therefore, 6. They that are slothful have seldom, or never, good fruit; so also it will be with the soul-sluggard. 7. They that are slothful, are chid for the same: so also will Christ deal with those that are not active for him. 'Thou wicked and slothful servant! out of thine own mouth will I judge thee. Thou saidst I was thus, and thus; wherefore then gavest thou not my money to the bank? &c. Take the unprofitable servant, and cast him into utter darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

What shall I say? 1. Time runs; and will ye be slothful? 2. Much of your lives are past; and will you be slothful? 3. Your souls are worth a thousand worlds; and will ye be slothful? 4. The day of death and judgment is at the door; and will ye be slothful? 5. The curse of God hangs over your heads; and will you be slothful? 6. Besides, the devils are earnest, laborious, and seek by all means every day, by every sin, to keep you out of heaven, and hinder you of salvation; and will you be slothful? 7. Also, your neighbors are diligent for things that will perish; and will you be slothful for things that will endure for ever? 8. Would you be willing to be damned for slothfulness? 9. Would you be willing the angels of God should neglect to fetch your souls away to heaven, when you lie a dying, and the devils stand by ready to scramble for them? 10. Was Christ slothful in the work of your redemption? 11. Are his ministers slothful in tendering this unto you? 12. And lastly, If all this will not move, I tell you God will not be slothful or negligent to damn you, (their damnation slumbereth not, 2 Pet. ii. 3;) nor will the devils neglect to fetch thee, nor hell neglect to shut its mouth upon thee.

Sluggard! art thou asleep still? Art thou resolved to sleep the sleep of death? Will neither tidings from heaven nor hell awake thee? Wilt thou say still, yet a little sleep, a little slumber, and a little folding of the arms to sleep? Wilt thou yet turn thyself in thy sloth, as the door is turned upon the hinges? O that I was one that was skilful in lamentation, and had but a yearning heart towards thee, how would I pity thee! how would I bemoan thee! O that I could with Jeremiah let my eyes run down with rivers of water for thee! Poor soul, lost soul, dying soul, what a hard heart have I that I cannot mourn for thee! If thou shouldst lose but a limb, a child, or a friend, it would not be so much; but poor man, it is **THY SOUL**! If it was to lie in hell but for a day, but for a year, nay, ten thousand years, it would (in comparison) be nothing; but O it is **FOR EVER**! What a soul-amazing word will that be, which saith, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into **EVERLASTING FIRE**!" &c.

Objection. 'But if I should set in, and run as you would have me, then I must run from all my friends; for none of them are running that way.'

Answer. And if thou dost, thou wilt run into the bosom of Christ, and of God; and then what harm will that do thee?

Objection. 'But if I run this way, then I must run from all my sins.'

Answer. That is true indeed; yet if thou dost not, thou wilt run into hell fire.

Objection. 'But if I run this way, then I shall be hated, and lose the love of my friends and relations, and of those that I expect benefit from, or have reliance on, and I shall be mocked of all my neighbors.'

Answer. And if thou dost not, thou art sure to lose the love and favor of God and Christ, the benefits of heaven and glory, and be mocked of God for thy folly. "I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh." If thou wouldst not be hated and mocked then, take heed thou by thy folly dost not procure the displeasure and mockings of the great God; for his mocks and hatred will be terrible, because they will fall upon thee in terrible times, even when tribulation and anguish take hold on thee; which will be when death and judgment come, when all the men in the earth, and all the angels in heaven cannot help thee.

Objection. 'But surely I may begin this time enough, a year or two hence; may I not?'

Answer. First, Hast thou any lease of thy life? Did ever God tell thee thou shalt live half a year, or two months longer? Nay, it may be, thou mayst not live so long. And therefore, Secondly, Wilt thou be so sottish and unwise, as to venture thy soul upon a little uncertain time? Thirdly, Dost thou know whether the day of grace will last a week longer or no? For the day of grace is past with some before their life is ended; and if it should be so with thee, wouldst thou not say, 'O that I had begun to run before the day of grace had been past, and the gates of heaven shut against me!' But, Fourthly, If thou shouldst see any of thy neighbors neglect the making sure of either house or land to themselves, if they had it proffered to them, saying, 'Time enough hereafter,'—when the time is uncertain; and besides, they do not know whether ever it will be proffered to them again, or no: I say, wouldst thou

not call them fools? And if so, then dost thou think that thou art a wise man to let thy immortal soul hang over hell by a thread of uncertain time, which may soon be cut asunder by death?

But to speak plainly, all these are the words of a slothful spirit. Arise, man! be slothful no longer: set foot, and heart, and all, into the way of God, and run. The crown is at the end of the race.

Farewell. I wish our souls may meet with comfort at the journey's end.

JOHN BUNYAN.

CHAPTER I. HEAVEN MUST BE RUN FOR

SO RUN, THAT YE MAY OBTAIN.—1 Corinthians ix. 24.

Heaven and happiness is that which every one desireth, insomuch that wicked Balaam could say, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" Yet for all this, there are but very few that do obtain that ever-to-be-desired glory, insomuch that many eminent professors drop short of a welcome from God into this pleasant place. The apostle, therefore, because he did desire the salvation of the souls of the Corinthians to whom he writes this epistle, layeth them down in these words, such counsel, as if taken, would be for their help and advantage.

First, not to be wicked, and sit still, and wish for heaven; but to run for it. Secondly, Not to content themselves with every kind of running; but, saith he, "*So run, that ye may obtain.*"

As if he should say, 'Some, because they would not lose their souls, begin to run betimes; they run apace, they run with patience, they run the right way; do you so run. Some run from both father and mother, friends and companions, and this, that they may have the crown: do you so run. Some run through temptations, afflictions, good report, evil report, that they may win the pearl: do you so run. "*So run, that ye may obtain.*"

These words are taken from men's running for a wager. A very apt similitude to set before the eyes of the saints of the Lord. "Know you not that they which run in a race, run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain." That is, 'Do not only run, but be sure you win as well as run;' "*so run, that ye may obtain.*"

I shall not need to make any great ado in opening the words at this time, but shall rather lay down one doctrine that I do find in them; and in prosecuting that, I shall show you, in some measure, the scope of the words.

The doctrine is this; **THEY THAT WILL HAVE HEAVEN, MUST RUN FOR IT.**

I say, that they that will have heaven, must run for it. I beseech you to heed it well. "Know ye not that they which run in a race, run all, but one receiveth the prize?" So run ye. The prize is heaven; and if you will have it, you must run for it. You have another scripture for this in the 12th of the Hebrews: "Wherefore, seeing we also," saith the apostle, "are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." "And let us *run*," saith he. Again, saith Paul, "I so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air."

But before I go any farther, let me explain the Nature and Reasons of this Running.

As to its NATURE, this *running* is called,

1. *Fleeing*. Observe, that this running, is not an ordinary, or any sort of running; but it is to be understood of the swiftest sort of running; and therefore in the 6th of the Hebrews, it is called a fleeing. "That we might have a strong consolation, *who have fled for refuge* to lay hold on the hope set before us." Mark, "Who have *fled*." It is taken from that xxth of Joshua, concerning the man that was to flee to the city of refuge, when the avenger of blood was hard at his heels, to take vengeance on him for the offence he had committed. Therefore it is a running or fleeing for one's life; a running with all might and main, as we use to say. *So run*.

2. *Pressing*. This running in another place is called a pressing. "I press toward the mark;" (Phil. iii.) which signifieth that they that will have heaven, must not stick at any difficulties they meet with; but press, crowd, and thrust through all, that may stand between heaven and their souls. *So run*.

3. *Continuing*. This running is called in another place, a continuing in the way of life. "If ye continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel." Not

to run a little now and then, by fits and starts; or half-way; or almost thither; but to run for my life, to run through all difficulties, and to continue therein to the end of the race, which must be to the end of my life. "*So run, that ye may obtain.*" And the REASONS for this point are these:

1. Because *every one that runneth doth not obtain the prize*. There be many that do run, yea, and run far too, who yet miss the crown that standeth at the end of the race. You know that all that run in a race do not obtain the victory; they all run, but one wins. And so it is here; it is not every one that runneth, nor every one that seeketh, nor every one that striveth for the mastery, that hath it. "Though a man do strive for the mastery," saith Paul, "yet he is not crowned, unless he strive lawfully;" that is, unless he so run, and so strive, as to have God's approbation.

What! do you think that every heavy heeled professor will have heaven? What! every lazy one? Every wanton and foolish professor, that will be stopped by any thing; kept back by any thing; that scarce runneth so fast heavenward as a snail creepeth on the ground? Nay, there are some professors that do not go on so fast in the way of God as a snail doth go on the wall; and yet these think that heaven and happiness is for them. But stay; there are many more that run than there be that obtain; therefore, he that will have heaven must *run* for it!

2. Because you know that though men do run, yet, *if they do not overcome, or win, as well as run, what will they be the better for the running*. They will get nothing. You know the man that runneth, doth do it that he may win the prize; but if he doth not obtain it, he doth lose his labor, spend his pains and time, and that to no purpose. I say, he getteth nothing. And ah! how many such runners will there be found in the day of judgment? Even multitudes—multitudes that have run, yea, run so far as to come to heaven's gates, are not able to get any further; but there stand knocking, when it is too late, crying, Lord, Lord; when they have nothing but rebukes for their pains. 'Depart from me; you come not in here; you come too late; you ran too lazy; the door is shut!' "When once the master of the house is risen up," saith Christ, "and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not, depart," &c. O sad will the state of those be that run and miss. Therefore if you will have heaven you must *run* for it; and "*so run, that ye may obtain.*"

3. Because *the way is long*, (I speak metaphorically,) and there is many a dirty step, many a high hill, much work to do; a wicked heart, world, and devil to overcome. I say there are many steps to be taken by those that intend to be saved, by running, or walking, in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham. Out of Egypt thou must go through the Red Sea; thou must run a long and tedious journey, through the vast howling wilderness, before thou come to the land of promise.

4. They that will go to heaven must run for it; because, as the way is so long, so *the time in which they are to get to the end of it is very uncertain*. The time present is the only time; thou hast no more time allotted thee than that thou now enjoyest. "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." Do not say, 'I have time enough to get to heaven seven years hence;' for I tell thee, the bell may toll for thee, before seven days more be ended. When death comes, away thou must go, whether thou art provided or not. And therefore look to it; make no delays; it is not good dallying with things of so great concernment as the salvation or damnation of thy soul. You know he that hath a great way to go in a little time, and less, by half, than he thinks of, had need to *run* for it.

5. They that will have heaven must run for it; because *the devil, the law, sin, death, and hell, follow them*. There is never a poor soul that is going to heaven, but the devil, the law, sin, death, and hell, make after that soul. "Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." And I will assure you the devil is nimble; he can run apace, he is light of foot; he hath overtaken many, he hath turned up their heels and hath given them an everlasting fall. Also the law, that can shoot a great way: have a care to keep out of the reach of those great guns, the ten commandments. Hell also hath a wide mouth; it can stretch itself farther than you are aware of. And as the angel said to Lot: "Take heed, look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain," that is, any where between this and heaven, "lest thou be consumed;" so say I to thee. Take heed, tarry not,

lest either the devil, hell, death, or the fearful curses of the law of God, do overtake thee, and throw thee down in the midst of thy sins, so as never to rise and recover again. If this were well considered, then thou, as well as I, would say, they that will have heaven must *run* for it.

6. They that will go to heaven must run for it; because *perchance the gates of heaven may shut shortly*. Sometimes sinners have not heaven-gates open to them so long as they suppose; and if they be once shut against a man, they are so heavy, that all the men in the world, or all the angels in heaven, are not able to open them. "I shut, and no man can open," saith Christ. And how if thou shouldst come but one quarter of an hour too late? I tell thee it will cost thee an eternity to bewail thy misery in! Francis Spira can tell thee what it is to stay till the gates of mercy be quite shut; or to run so lazily, that they be shut before thou get within them. What! to be shut out! What! out of heaven! Sinner, rather than lose it, *run* for it; yea, and "so run that thou mayst obtain."

7. Lastly, Because *if thou lose, thou lovest all*. Thou lovest soul, God, Christ, heaven, ease, peace, &c. Besides, thou layest thyself open to all the shame, contempt, and reproach, that either God, Christ, saints, the world, sin, the devil, and all, can lay upon thee. As Christ saith of the foolish builder, so will I say of thee, if thou be such a one who runs and missest; I say, even all that go by will begin to mock at thee, saying, This man began to run well, but was not able to finish. But more of this anon.

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