



12 Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even to day do I declare that I will render double unto thee. (Zech 9:12)

3 Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved. . . . Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved. (Psalm 80:3,7)

What does that phrase, “Ye prisoners of hope” mean? According to the seasoned old commentator, Adam Clarke, the meaning is this: “Ye who feel your sins, and are shut up under a sense of your guilt, look up to him who was delivered for your offenses, and rose again for your justification. Ye have hope, let that hope lead you to faith, and that faith to the blood of the covenant; and, through that blood, to GOD, the Father of all.” — Adam Clarke's Commentary

More than once, we are told that if God will but turn us again from our wicked ways, and set our feet on higher ground, we may see His brilliantly glowing face. Salvation comes to those who behold God just as it came to Paul on the Road to Damascus; and just as surely as it shall come to those who are pure of heart: *8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.* (Matt 5:8) You may argue, “But there are none who are pure in heart!” Yes, there are! Our hands may bear the stains of forgiven sins, but the joy of our hearts, if that heart is the Temple of God, is righteousness. Just as WHO we know may give us unmerited advantage in politics or business, so does WHO we know gain the favor of Heaven to those who know God. Our works can never merit Heaven, but the One we know as Lord can certainly do so.

But there is a condition of the heart that must die and be created anew. That is not something that can be accomplished by man – it is the work of the grace and mercy of God. If the heart is changed, than so will our lives reflect that change. We TURN from our old walk down the dark and dirty roads of sinful living, and embark upon that bright, heavenly, and Narrow Way that leads to our Lord. The TURN is not a 30° or 90° turn, but rather a complete 180° turn. The way of man is always opposite the way of Heaven.

If there is such thing as a ‘Pop’ hymn, we may have an example in the top-ranked song of late 1965 by The Byrds – the last place you would expect to find a Godly hymn, right? Here is the song below whose words surprised me when the song was first published. See if you can discover the reason for my surprise:

Turn! Turn! Turn!

The Byrds

*To everything (turn, turn, turn)
There is a season (turn, turn, turn)
And a time to every purpose, under heaven.
A time to be born, a time to die
A time to plant, a time to reap
A time to kill, a time to heal
A time to laugh, a time to weep.*

*To everything (turn, turn, turn)
There is a season (turn, turn, turn)
And a time to every purpose, under heaven
A time to build up, a time to break down
A time to dance, a time to mourn
A time to cast away stones, a time to gather stones together.*

*To everything (turn, turn, turn)
There is a season (turn, turn, turn)
And a time to every purpose, under heaven
A time of love, a time of hate
A time of war, a time of peace
A time you may embrace.
A time to refrain from embracing.*

*To everything, turn, turn, turn.
There is a season, turn, turn, turn.
And a time to every purpose under heaven.
A time to gain, a time to lose.
A time to rend, a time to sew.
A time for love, a time for hate.
A time for peace, I swear it's not too late.*

So why would I, a person who believes the dignity of the music should match the reverence of the words of a hymn, present this Rock song as a hymn? I am sure you already know by examining the words. Except for the title, the repetition of the word 'turn,' and the last line, the song is a complete extract of Ecclesiastes 3:1-8! *1 To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: 2 A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; 3 A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; 4 A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; 5 A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; 6 A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; 7 A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; 8 A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.* (Eccl 3:1-8) The Preacher of Ecclesiastes is telling us that there is a designated time for everything under the sun – even a time to die! He wishes to impress upon us the vanity and consequences of sin, and time wasted. *All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.* (Isaiah 40:6-8) Our lives on earth are time-limited to a very brief spell. **NO TIME TO WASTE!**

We all begin life's journey on the wrong path. We are guided, from cradle to grave, by our hungers, thirsts, and the presumed need for gratification of the flesh – even from infancy. The baby cares for no one. It desires, and expects, its wants to be gratified simply

by screaming its lungs out. We do not change much from that mentality as we grow older. For the sake of practicality, we may learn that courtesy and good manners may help us satisfy our desires more than screaming, but the end game remains the same. At some point, we may come to terms with our mortality and recognize our need for a Redeemer and Savior. The Holy Spirit may have already set a strong hook in our heart to draw us ever nearer the Straight and Narrow Way until we recognize no meaningful alternative but to seek the face of the Lord to remedy our hopeless estate. Then the unspoken prayer is wafted up from the depths of our souls to Heaven: *“Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.”*

If we seek the face of the Lord, He will surely cleanse our heart of all sin and turn us about to a life of righteous endeavor and hopeful expectations of greater faith. This does not come by studying an innumerable quantity of books, or practice in the finer habits of living – but by a diligent seeking of the face of God both in Spirit and in His Word. We will then heed the last words of the Preacher in Ecclesiastes:

13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. 14 For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. (Ecc1 12:13-14)

By the way, God is not changed from the day of Solomon until the present day in which we live. We are still bound to keep His Commandments as counseled in the above text – only, now, with Christ as Sovereign of our hearts, we are enabled to keep them by the force of LOVE and not stony compulsion! Being imperfect in the flesh, we may stumble and falter; but we have a mighty out-stretched arm upon which to balance and grasp. He will lift us up when we are weary, and set our steps once more on the heavenly Way from which we may have stumbled!