

WHEREFORE SHOULD I WEEP?

NO. 1320

A SERMON

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?”
Luke 23:27-31.

CAN you picture the scene? Jesus is given up by Pilate to the Jews that they may do their will with Him, and led by a small band of soldiers He is conducted into the public street, bearing His cross upon His shoulders. Perhaps they judged Him to be weary with His night of watching and worn with His suffering from the scourge, and they feared lest He might die upon the road, and therefore, with a cruel mercy they laid hold upon one in the crowd who had too loudly expressed His sympathy, impressed him into military service, and compelled him to assist in carrying the instrument of execution. You see the haughty scribes and the ribald throng, but the center of the spectacle, and the cause of it all, was our Lord Himself, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.

We cannot paint Him, all who have ever attempted to do so have to a large extent been unsuccessful, for there was upon His face a mingled majesty and meekness, loveliness and lowliness, sanctity and sorrow, which it would not be possible to express upon canvas or to represent in words. About His person there were abundant marks of cruelty. He had been scourged, everyone could see it, His own garments which they had put upon Him could not conceal the marks of the Roman lash. The traces of the crown of thorns were on His brow, and the rough treatment of the soldiery had left its tokens too, so that His visage was more marred than that of any man, and His form more than the sons of men.

And now He is being led away to be put to the shameful death of the cross. There were some glad eyes there, delighted that at last their victim was in their power, and that the eloquent tongue which had exposed their hypocrisy would now be silenced in death. There, too, were the unfeeling Romans, to whom human life was a trifle, and all around gathered in dense masses the brutal mob, bribed to shout against their best friend.

But all then present were not in this savage mood. There were some—and to the honor of the sex it is recorded that they were women—who entered their protest by their cries and lamentations. Not silently in their sorrow did they weep, but they began to lament aloud and bewail audibly, as though they were attending the funeral of some dear friend, or expected the death of one of their kindred. The voice of a woman's weeping has great power with most of us, but it would not stir the stony hearts of Roman legionaries, the wail of women was no more to them than the moaning of the winds among the forest trees, yet it must have struck many of the less stern and stolid mold, and filled their souls with some measure of kindred feeling.

Chiefly, however, did it strike One, the most tender hearted among them all, One whose ear was delicately sensitive to every sound of sorrow, and though He had not answered Herod, and had given Pilate but a few words of reply, and amidst all the mockeries and scourgings had been as dumb as a sheep before her shearers, yet He paused, and looking round upon the weeping company, piteously yet

sublimely broke the silence by saying to them, “Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.” Such was the scene.

As for the words themselves, they are especially noteworthy, because they constitute the last connected discourse of the Savior before He died. All that He said afterwards was fragmentary and mainly of the nature of prayer. A sentence to John, and to His mother, and to the dying thief, just a word or two looking downward, but for the most part He uttered broken sentences which flew upwards on the wings of strong desire.

This was His last address, a farewell sermonette, delivered amid surroundings most sad and solemn, restraining tears and yet at the same time causing them to flow. We reckon the words to be all the more weighty and full of solemnity because of the occasion, but even apart from this, the truths delivered were in themselves of the utmost importance and solemnity. This last discourse of our Lord before His death was terribly prophetic to a world rejecting Him, portentous of a thousand woes to a people whom He loved, woes which even He could not avert because they had rejected His interposition, and refused the mercy which He came to bring. “Daughters of Jerusalem,” said He, “weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.”

Not many hours before He had Himself set them the example by weeping over the doomed city, and crying, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the prophets, and stone them which are sent unto you, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not!”

Looking even upon the surface of the words you will perceive that they bear His undoubted image and superscription. Who but He would have spoken after this sort? You are sure that the passage is genuine, for it is in all respects so inimitably Christlike. See how self-oblivious He was, for Himself He asks not even tears of sympathy. Was there no cause for grief? Yea, cause enough, and yet He says, “Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves,” as if all His thoughts were taken up with other griefs than His own, and He would not have a tear wasted upon Him, but spent on woes which grieved Him more than His own pangs.

Observe the majesty of the speech too, steeped as the speaker was in misery. You can see that His is sorrow which well deserved to be wept over, but He is not overcome by it, but rather His royal soul reigns in the future, and as a King He anticipates His scepter and His judgment seat, and foretells the doom of those who now insult Him. Here is no craven spirit, no confession of defeat, no appeal for pity, no shadow of petty resentment, but on the contrary a majestic consciousness of strength. With His calm, prophetic eye He looks beyond the intervening years and sees Jerusalem besieged and captured. He speaks as though He heard the awful shrieks which betokened the entrance of the Romans into the city, and the smiting down of young and old, women and children.

Nay, mark how His piercing eye sees further yet, He beholds and describes the day when He shall sit upon the throne of judgment and summon all men to His bar, when He who was then the weary man before His foes should alarm the ungodly by the appearance of His countenance, so that they would call to the mountains to fall upon them, and to the rocks to hide them from His face. He speaks as if conscious of the majesty that would be upon Him in that dreadful day, and yet at the same time pitiful towards those who by their sins were bringing upon themselves so terrible a doom.

He says in effect, “Weep for those concerning whom it would have been better that they had never been born, and for whom annihilation would be a consummation devoutly to be wished.” He dries up the tears which were flowing for Himself, that the women may draw up the sluices of their souls, and let the torrents of their grief flow forth for impenitent sinners who will be filled with unutterable dismay at His second coming.

May the Holy Spirit help me while handling this awful subject. The text very readily divides itself into two parts, the one may be headed “*Weep not*,” and the other, “*Weep*.” The first is, “Weep not,” or what the Savior restrained, the second is “Weep,” or what the Savior enjoined.

I. He said to the weeping women, “**WEEP NOT.**”

There are some cold, calculating expositors who make it out that our Lord reproved these women for weeping, and that there was something wrong, or if not altogether wrong, yet something very far from commendable in their sorrow—I think they call it “the sentimental sympathy” of these kind souls. There is no being much more unnatural than a cold-blooded commentator, who bites at every letter, and nibbles at the grammatical meaning of every syllable, translating with his lexicon, but never exercising common sense, or allowing even the least play to his heart.

Blame these women! No, *bless* them again and again. It was the one redeeming trait in the dread march along the Via Dolorosa, let it not be dreamed that Jesus could have censured those who wept for Him. No, No, No, a thousand times No! These gentle women appear in a happy contrast to the chief priests, with their savage malice, and to the thoughtless multitude with their fierce cry of “Crucify him, crucify him!” They seem, to me to have shown a noble courage in daring to express their sympathy with one whom everybody else hunted to death with such ferocity. To espouse His cause amid those hoarse cries of “Crucify him, crucify him,” was courage more than manly, those women were heroines more valiant than those who rush upon the spoil. Those lamentations in sympathy with Him who was being led to die are worthy of our praise and not of our criticism. Our Lord accepted the sympathy they evinced, and it was only His great disinterested unselfishness which made Him say, “Spare your griefs for other sorrows.” It was not because they were wrong, but because there was something still more necessary to be done than even to weep for Him. I do not think we erred when we sang just now—

*“A moment give a loose to grief,
Let grateful sorrows rise,
And wash the bloody stains away
With torrents from your eyes.”*

Have we not all felt it to be a gracious exercise to sing in unison that almost dirge—

*“Oh come and mourn with me awhile;
Oh come ye to the Savior’s side;
Oh come, together let us mourn:
Jesus, our Lord, is crucified.*

*Have we no tears to shed for Him,
While soldiers scoff and Jews deride?
Ah! Look how patiently He hangs;
Jesus, our Lord, is crucified”?*

Who among us can blame Dr. Watts and others when they sing in words like these—

*“Thus might I hide my blushing face,
While His dear cross appears,
Dissolve my heart in thankfulness,
And melt my eyes to tears.”*

There can be nothing ill about the weeping of these women, and therefore let us proceed to say, first, that *their sorrow was legitimate* and well-grounded. There was reason for their weeping. They saw Him suffering, friendless, and hunted to death, and they could not but bewail Him. Had I been there and seen Him all alone, and marked the cruel eyes that watched Him, and heard the malicious voices which assailed Him, I too must have wept. And least I hope I am not so past feeling as to have looked on without overflowing sorrow.

See those bleeding shoulders, those lacerated temples—mark, above all, that quiet, unrivalled Godlike countenance, so marred with sacred grief. One must have wept surely if one had a heart

anywhere within him. And to think that He who suffered thus, and was about to suffer so much more, should be so gentle, and so unresisting, was not this cause for intense sympathy? He was meek and lowly in heart and therefore He returned none of those fierce looks, and answered none of those ferocious words. He was like a lamb in the midst of wolves, or a dove surrounded by a thousand hawks, or a milk-white hind amid baying hounds.

There was none to pity and none to help, shall we, then, refuse our compassion? Nay, you women's eyes, you did well to weep, how could you help it, since you were mothers of children and hence had hearts to love? How could you help weeping for Him who was so lowly, so gentle, so unselfish, so submissive to all they put upon Him? Surely it was a superfluity of malice to be hunting Him to death who even in life was so much the man of sorrows. And then withal He was so innocent and pure. What had He done amiss? They could not answer Pilate's challenge—"Why, what evil has he done?" There was no fault in Him, they could not find any.

You could see by the very look of Him that He was the purest of all mankind, that all around Him was sin and vanity, and He alone was holiness and truth. Wherefore then should they lead Him forth among malefactors, and nail those blessed hands and feet to the wood, and hang Him to a tree? Above all, in addition to His being innocent of fault He had been so full of kindness, of more than kindness—of infinite love to all mankind, and even in His deepest sorrow boundless benevolence shone in His countenance, beaming as the sun. He looked upon His enemies and His glance was royal but it was tender too, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," was trembling on His lips. He would not harm them, not He, He would not curse them though His curse had withered them, nor even frown upon them, though that frown might have secured His liberation, He was too good to render evil for evil.

These women recollected what a life He had led, how He had fed the hungry, perhaps some of them had even eaten of the loaves and fishes, how He had healed their children, raised their dead, and had dislodged foul fiends from the bodies of their friends. He had preached openly in their streets, and He had never taught ill will, but always gentleness and love. He had been popular, and stood at the head of the multitude at one time, but He had never used His power for selfish purposes, He had ridden through their streets in pomp, but the pomp was simple and homely, on a colt, the foal of an ass, had He ridden with children for His courtiers, and with no sound of the trumpets of war, but only with the children's cries of "Hosanna, blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord."

Why should they crucify Him? He had done nothing but good. His noble presence seemed to appeal to the women, and they asked each other, "For which of His works would they slay Him? For which of His actions would they put Him to death?" He, the friend of the friendless, why should He die? I cannot, I say again, but commend the tears of these women. It is little marvel that they should weep and bewail when they saw the innocent one about to die.

I think, too, that *this weeping on the part of the women was a very hopeful emotion*. It was far better certainly than the non-emotion or the cruelty of those who formed that motley throng. It showed some tenderness of heart, and tenderness of heart, though it be but natural, may often serve as a groundwork upon which better and holier and more spiritual feelings may be placed. It is objected that persons weep when they hear the story of other griefs besides those of Jesus, and I am glad they do, should they not weep with them that weep? It is also objected that this natural sympathy may in many cases be as much due to the skill of the orator as in others it is the undoubted result of the music of the oratorio. I know it is so. I am going to show you that mere emotional sympathy is not all, nor a half, nor a tenth, of what is wanted, still I should be sorry if I thought myself capable of remembering the griefs of Jesus without emotion, while other men's woes affected me, and I should greatly deplore the fact if it were indeed true that you were all, especially you women, so hardened that you could think of Jesus of Nazareth bleeding and dying without your hearts beginning to melt.

The emotion is good at any rate so far that if it were absent you would be bereft of humanity and turned to stones. It is hopeful because it opens a door through which something better may enter. This tenderness is a natural stock suitable for grafting something far higher upon. He who can weep for the

sorrows of Christ may soon be on the road towards weeping over the sin which caused the sorrow, or he may be on the highway towards being able to lament, as Christ bids men lament, those other griefs and miseries which sin brings upon themselves and upon their children.

I would not carry the emotion towards Christ to an excess, nor ask men to make Jesus' death a fountain of sorrow only, since it is also a source of joy. I would deplore that idolatrous emotion which weeps before a hideous image, or mourns over touching a picture, but still I would not have men at the thought of Jesus dying act as if they were stocks and stones, but prove that they mourn for Him whom they have pierced.

Having said this much, we now add that *on our Lord's part such sorrow was fitly repressed*, because after all, though naturally good, it is not more than natural, and falls short of spiritual excellence. It is no proof of the work of the Spirit upon your heart that you weep as you hear the story of Christ's death, for probably you would have been even more affected had you seen a murderer hanged. It is no proof that you are truly saved because you are moved to great emotions whenever you hear the details of the Crucifixion, for the Bulgarian atrocities excited you equally as much. I think it good that you should be moved, as I have said before, but it is only naturally and not spiritually good.

Doubtless there are many who have shed more tears over the silly story of a love-sick maid in a frivolous novel than they have ever given to the story of the Lover of our souls, though they have felt emotion when they have pictured the sufferings of Emmanuel, they have felt even more when the bewitching pen of fiction has sketched some imaginary picture of fancied woes. No, no, these natural sympathies are not so to be commended that we wish you to be continually exercised with them, our Lord did well to set them healthy bounds.

Besides, such feeling is generally very evanescent. Tears of mere emotion, because of the external sufferings of Christ, are speedily wiped away and forgotten. We do not know that any of these women ever became our Lord's converts. Among those who met in the upper room, we do not know that any had taken part with this company of weepers, these were women of Jerusalem, and the followers of Christ at His death, who ministered unto Him, were generally women from Galilee. For this see Matthew 27:54-56. I fear that the most of these Jerusalem sympathizers forgot tomorrow that they had wept today. I may be mistaken, but there is nothing in the mere fact of their lamenting the Savior's doom which would prove them to be His regenerated followers. The morning cloud and the early dew are fit emblems of such fleeting emotions.

Such weeping too is morally powerless, it has no effect upon the mind, it does not change the character, it does not cause the putting away of sin, nor create real and saving faith in Jesus Christ. Many tears are shed under powerful sermons that are so much wasted fluid, the discourse is over, the sorrow has ceased. There was no work of grace upon the inner heart, it was all surface work and no more.

The worst of it is such feeling is often deceptive, for people are apt to think, "I must have something good in me, for what a time of weeping I had under the sermon, and how tender I felt when I heard the description of Christ upon the cross!" Yes, and thus you may wrap yourself up in the belief that you are under the influence of the Holy Spirit when, after all, it is only ordinary human feeling. You may conclude, "Surely these drops come from a heart of flesh," when it may be only moisture condensed upon a heart of stone.

This feeling, too, may stand in the way of something a great deal better. Jesus would not have these women weep for one thing, because they were to weep for another thing which far more seriously demanded their weeping. You need not weep because Christ died one-tenth so much as because your sins rendered it necessary that He should die. You need not weep over the crucifixion, but weep over your transgression, for your sins nailed the Redeemer to the accursed tree.

To weep over a dying Savior is to lament the remedy, it were wiser to bewail the disease. To weep over the dying Savior is to wet the surgeon's knife with tears, it were better to bewail that spreading polypus which that knife must cut away. To weep over the Lord Jesus as He goes to the cross is to weep over that which is the subject of the highest joy that ever heaven and earth have known, your tears are

scarcely needed there, they are natural, but a deeper wisdom will make you brush them all away, and chant with joy His victory over death and the grave.

If we must continue our sad emotions let us lament that we should have broken the law which He thus painfully vindicated, let us mourn that we should have incurred the penalty which He even to the death was made to endure. Jesus wished them not so much to look at His outward sufferings as at the secret inward cause of that outward sorrow, namely, the transgression and the iniquity of His people, which had laid the cross upon His shoulders and surrounded Him with enemies. As I quoted just now certain verses which led us to lament our Lord, let me propose to you as better still those words of Watts—

*“’Twas you, my sins, my cruel sins,
His chief tormentors were;
Each of my crimes became a nail,
And unbelief the spear.*

*’Twas you that pull’d the vengeance down
Upon His guiltless head:
Break, break, my heart, oh burst mine eyes!
And let my sorrows bleed.*

*Strike, mighty grace, my flinty soul,
Till melting waters flow,
And deep repentance drown my eyes
In undissembled woe.”*

II. Now we pass on from “Weep not” to “WEEP.”

May God the Holy Spirit help us to dwell upon that for a while with profit to our souls. Though Jesus stops one channel for tears, he opens another and a wider one. Let us look to it.

First, when He said, “Weep for yourselves,” He meant that *they were to lament and bewail the sin which had brought Him where He was*, seeing He had come to suffer for it, and He would have them weep because that sin would bring them and their children into yet deeper woe.

You know that just before He uttered this remarkable saying the husbands, and the fathers, and the sons of those women had been crying with loud voices, “Let Him be crucified,” and when Pilate had taken water and washed his hands to show that he was innocent of the blood of Jesus, they had imprecated upon their nation, and upon their unborn sons, the curse which follows from such a deed. “Then answered all the people, His blood be on us and on our children,” and though these women lamented and mourned, yet over their heads, the men who had spoken for the nation had gathered the thunder cloud of divine wrath. Jesus points to it and says, “Weep for the national sin, weep for the national curse, which will surely come upon you, because you are putting the just one to death.”

Yea, deeper still was His meaning, for all those about Him were in a sense guilty of His death, and you, and I, and all the rest of mankind have been, in our measure, the cause of the Savior’s crucifixion.

Oh, brethren and sisters, this is the reason why we should weep, because we have broken the divine law, and rendered it impossible that we should be saved except Jesus Christ should die. If we have not believed in Jesus Christ we have this cause for lamentation, that our sin abides upon us at this present moment. That curse which crushed the Savior down till He said, *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani*, is resting upon some who are here this morning.

O souls, you need not pity the dying Christ, but pity yourselves. On your own selves your sin is resting, and your children growing up unconverted, hardened in rebellion against God by your example—their sin is resting upon them too, and this is the overflowing cause why you should weep. And you believers, you from whom sin has been lifted, who are forgiven for His name’s sake, yet lament that you should have sinned, and with your joy for pardoned guilt mourn that Christ had to carry

the burden which you heaped together, and to bear the penalty which you deserved. All round, brethren, there is abounding cause for sorrow for sin—a sweet sorrow from the Lord’s people and a bitter sorrow from those who have no part nor lot in the result of Christ’s passion as yet, but who nevertheless are partakers in the crime which slew the Son of God.

I beg you now to look again into the reason why our Lord bade them weep. It was, first, for their sin, but it was next *for the impending punishment of their sins*. The punishment of the national sin of the Jew was to be the scattering of his nation and the total destruction of its holy city, and well does our Savior speak of it in terrible language, for under all heaven and in all history there never was such a scene of misery as the siege and destruction of Jerusalem!

I need not give you any outline of it, because you must be familiar with that painful subject where every horror seems to be combined in one, and exaggerated to the utmost. Nothing has ever surpassed it, I question if anything ever equaled it. But our Lord, as I have hinted, looked further than the Roman sword and the massacre of the Jews. Often in His preaching you do not know whether He is talking of the siege of Jerusalem or of the judgment day, for the one was in His mind such a foreshadowing, rehearsal, and type of the other, that in His language He often seemed to melt the two into one.

He means to you and to me this morning to speak, not of besieged Jerusalem, but of that day of wrath, that dreadful day, whose coming what man among us shall be able to abide? Concerning that there is cause enough for weeping, for when that day comes it will find some men in such a state that it would have been better for them that they had never been born.

When the dreadful sentence shall come from the Judge, “Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire in hell, prepared for the devil and his angels,” they will bless the barren womb and the breast at which no child has sucked. Then will impenitent sinners bitterly exclaim, “Cursed be the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed. Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man child is born unto you; making him very glad.” They will wring their hands in anguish and curse their existence and wish that they had never seen the light.

So terrible will the doom of the wicked be that mothers who looked upon the birth of their children as the consummation of their joy shall wish they had been barren, and never carried a babe at their breasts, they shall count those happy who were childless, whom, perhaps in their hearts in their past lives they despised. Existence is in itself a blessing, but what shall be the misery which shall make men wish that they had never breathed? Yet, alas, such is the condition of multitudes while I am speaking to you, and such will soon be the condition of some who are looking into my face now, except they repent! Alas! Alas! Weep you for yourselves and for your children!

Further, our Lord went on, with that melting voice of His, in overflowing grief to say that they might reserve their tears for those who would ere long wish to be annihilated, but wish in vain. “Then shall men begin to say to the rocks, fall on us, and to the hills, cover us.” The falling of the mountain would grind them to powder, and they wish for that, the descent of the hill upon them would bury them in a deep abyss, and they would rather be immured in the bowels of the earth forever than have to look upon the face of the Great Judge.

They ask to be crushed outright, or to be buried alive sooner than to feel the punishment of their sins. Then shall be fulfilled the word of the Lord by His servant John, “And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them” (Rev. 9:6).

Ah, sirs, extinction is a boon too great to be permitted to the ungodly. Earth will have no bowels of compassion for the men who polluted her and rejected her Lord. The mountains will reply, “We fall at God’s bidding, not at the petition of His enemies,” and the hills in their stolid silence will answer, “We cannot, and we would not if we could, conceal you from the justice which you yourselves willfully provoked.” No, there shall be no refuge for them, no annihilation into which they can fly, the very hope of it were heaven to the damned. Oh, could they but expect it, but it must not, shall not be. Their cry for extinction shall be in vain.

Now, if you have tears for Jesus dying, reserve them for those to whom death is but the beginning of evils! If you have griefs for Him to whom they said, “Blessed is the womb that bare you, and the paps that gave you suck,” have still more tears for those who shall curse the hour in which they were conceived. Here is indeed a subject which demands the tears of nations, and of ages—souls lost beyond all remedy, seeking destruction itself as a blessing, and *beginning* petitions of unutterable anguish, which shall never cease and never avail.

Then our Lord goes on to draw a wonderful parallel and contrast between His sufferings and those to be lamented, for He says, “If they do these things in a green tree, what shall they do in the dry?” I suppose He meant, “If I, who am no rebel against Caesar, suffer so, how will those suffer whom the Romans take in actual rebellion at the siege of Jerusalem?” And He meant next to say, “If I who am perfectly innocent, must nevertheless be put to such a death as this, what will become of the guilty?” If when fires are raging in the forest, the green trees full of sap and moisture crackle like stubble in the flame, how will the old dry trees burn, which are already rotten to the core and turned to touchwood, and so prepared as fuel for the furnace.

If Jesus suffers who has no sin, but is full of the life of innocence, and the sap of holiness, how will they suffer who have long been dead in sin, and are rotten with iniquity? As Peter puts it in another place, “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begins at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely are saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?”

Note well that the sufferings of our Lord, though in some respects far beyond all conceivable woes, have yet some points about them in which they differ with advantage from the miseries of lost souls. For, first, our Lord knew that He was innocent, and therefore His righteousness upheld Him. Whatever He suffered He knew that He deserved none of it, He had no stings of conscience, nor agonies of remorse.

Now, the sting of future punishment will lie in the indisputable conviction that it is well deserved. If there were one woe in hell more than a lost soul deserved it would act as an opiate to its pain, but the justice of every infliction will be the tooth of the worm, the edge of the sword. No dream of innocence or conceit of self-righteousness, will survive the judgment day, but conscience will be aroused and armed to do its work, the wicked will perceive their guilt and cling to it, and this will make their punishment the more severe.

The finally impenitent will be tormented by their own passions, which will rage within them like an inward hell, but our Lord had none of this. There was no evil in Him, no lusting after evil, no self-seeking, no rebellion of heart, no anger, or discontent. A man, in whom there is no evil passion to stir up, cannot know those fierce pangs and wild throes with which raging sin rends the soul. Pride, ambition, greed, malice, revenge, these are the fuel of hell’s fire. Men’s selves, not devils, are their tormentors, their inward lusts are worms that never die and fires that never can be quenched, there could be none of this in our divine Lord.

Again, lost souls hate God and love sin, but Christ ever loved God and hated sin. Now, to love evil is misery, when undisguised and rightly understood sin is hell, and it is love of evil continued in the soul, which causes the perpetuity of the lost estate of men, but the holy Jesus, though suffering beyond all conception, could not feel the pangs which come of hating good and loving evil. He was the green tree and the ungodly are the dry trees, yet if the innocent one suffers so, with what pains will guilty souls be racked by their avenging consciences.

Our Lord Jesus knew that every pang He suffered was for the good of others, He endured cheerfully, because He saw that He was redeeming a multitude that no man can number from going down to the pit, but there is no redeeming power about the sufferings of the lost, they are not helping anyone, nor achieving a benevolent design. The great God has good designs in their punishment, but they are strangers to any such a purpose.

Our Lord had a reward before Him, because of which He endured the cross, despising the shame, but the finally condemned have no prospect of reward nor hope of rising from their doom. How can they expect either? *He* was full of hope, they are full of despair. “It is finished” was for Him, but there is no “It is finished” for them.

Their sufferings, moreover, are self-caused, their sin was their own. He endured agonies because others had transgressed, and He willed to save them. Their sufferings are self-chosen, for they would not be persuaded to forsake their sins, but He, from necessity of love, was made to bleed—the cup could not pass from Him if His people were redeemed. The torments of the lost will be self-inflicted, they are suicides to their souls, the venom in their veins is self-created and self-injected. They torment themselves with sin, to which they cleave, but it pleased the Father to bruise the Son, and the necessity for His bruising lay not in Himself, but in others.

Now, dear friends, I think I have said enough on this painful matter to assure you that the most terrible warning to impenitent men in all the world is the death of Christ, for if God spared not His own Son, on whom was only laid imputed sin, will He spare sinners whose sins are actual, and their own? If He smote Him to the death who only stood in the sinner’s stead, will He let the impenitent sinner go free? If He who always did His Father’s will, and was obedient even unto death, must be forsaken of God, what will become of those who reject Christ, and live and die enemies to the Most High?

Here is cause for weeping, and very solemnly would I say it, God help me to say it so that you may feel it—the most dreadful thought is that perhaps we ourselves are in the condition of guiltiness before God, and are hastening on to the judgment which Christ has foretold. Oh, think if within the next six months—nay, stretch it as far as you like—if within the next fifty years some of us should be asking the hills to cover us, and wishing that we never had been born? What an awful prospect! And yet, unless we are renewed in heart, and made believers in Jesus Christ, that certainly must be our doom. Think of your children, too, who are growing up about you, capable of understanding, and responsible for their actions. Oh, if they live as they now live, and die as they now are, you may wish they had never been given to you, and had never borne your name. Think of this and weep.

Dear friends, if the Lord would put you into a right state of heart, you would scarcely think of an unconverted person’s condition without the deepest pity. You would not hear an oath in the street without the tear starting to your eye.

That was a dreadful spectacle which I pictured to you just now—our Lord bearing His cross and the women weeping, but how much more awful is that before me! I see a soul carrying about itself the instrument of its own destruction, and going onward with it to its doom! Sin is the cross to which the soul will be fastened, and habits and depravities are the nails. The soul is bearing its sin, and loving to bear it. See, it is going to execution, but at each step it laughs. Every step it takes is bearing it towards hell, and yet it makes mirth! Lo, the infatuated one scoffs at the voice that warns him, and every scoff he utters is increasing his guilt. Look forward to his end, its never-ending end, look forward to it steadily, with calm and tearful gaze, is it not an awful spectacle?

But what if you should be beholding yourselves as in a vision, or seeing your child in the glass of prophecy! If it is your case, I beseech you, repent of your sins, bewail your condition, and fly to Christ for shelter, and if it be your child, give heaven no rest, plead continually at the throne of grace, till you have brought down a blessing from God upon your offspring. Never cease to pray until your sons and your daughters are safe landed on the Rock of Ages, and so secured there that they will need no other rock to hide them in the day when Christ shall come.

I beseech you, beloved Christian friends, ask for tenderness towards sinners, towards all sinners, and let your tenderness be shown in fervent prayer, in incessant effort, and in holy sympathy towards the wandering ones.

Alas, I have but stuttered and stammered compared with the manner in which I hoped to have spoken. I may have failed in expressing myself, but God can bless the word none the less. The subject is

worthy of an angel's tongue, it needs Christ Himself completely to expound it. Would God He might by His own Spirit expound it to your hearts in the leisure of this afternoon. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—LUKE 23:1-31

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—178, 265, 312

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