

THE LOVED ONES CHASTENED

NO. 164

A SERMON
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BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.”
Revelation 3:19.

THE dealings of God towards the sons of men have always puzzled the wise men of the earth who have tried to understand them. Apart from the revelation of God, the dealings of Jehovah towards His creatures in this world seem to be utterly inexplicable. Who can understand how it is that the wicked flourish and are in great power? The ungodly man flourishes like a green bay tree. Behold, he stretches out his roots by the river. He knows not the year of drought—his leaf withers not. And his fruit does not fall in an untimely season. Lo, these are the ungodly that flourish in the world! They are filled with riches. They heap up gold like dust; they leave the rest of their substance to their babies. They add field to field and acre to acre and they become the princes of the earth! On the other hand, see how the righteous are cast down. How often is virtue dressed in the rags of poverty! How frequently is the most pious spirit made to suffer from hunger and thirst and nakedness! We have sometimes heard the Christian say, when he has contemplated these things, “Surely I have served God in vain! It is for nothing that I have chastened myself every morning and vexed my soul with fasting, for lo, God has cast me down and He lifts up the sinner. How can this be?” The sages of the heathen could not answer this question and they, therefore, adopted the expedient of cutting the Gordian knot. “We cannot tell how it is,” they might have said—therefore they flew at the fact itself and denied it! “The man that prospers is favored of the gods. The man who is unsuccessful is obnoxious to the Most High.” So said the heathen and they knew no better. Those more enlightened from the east, who talked with Job in the days of his affliction got but little further. They believed that all who served God would have a hedge about them. God would multiply their wealth and increase their happiness. They saw in Job’s affliction a certain sign that he was a hypocrite and, therefore, God had quenched his candle and put out his light in darkness. And alas, even Christians have fallen into the same error! They have been apt to think that if God lifts a man up, there must be some excellence in him. And if He chastens and afflicts, they are generally led to think that it must be an exhibition of God’s wrath. Now hear the text and the riddle is all solved—listen to the words of Jesus, speaking to His servant John and the mystery is all unraveled. “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten—be zealous therefore, and repent.”

The fact is that this world is not the place of punishment! There may now and then be eminent judgments, but as a rule God does not in the present state fully punish any man for sin. He allows the wicked to go on in their wickedness. He throws the reins upon their necks. He lets them go on unbridled in their lusts. There may be some checks of conscience, but these are rather as warnings than as punishments. And, on the other hand, He casts the Christian down. He gives the most afflictions to the most pious. Perhaps He makes more waves of trouble roll over the breast of the most sanctified Christian than over the heart of any other man living! So, then, we must remember that as this world is not the place of punishment, we are to expect punishment and reward in the world to come! And we must believe that the only reason, then, why God afflicts His people must be this—

*“In love I correct you, your gold to refine
 To make you at length in My likeness to shine.”*

I shall try this morning to notice, first, *what it is in His children that God corrects*; secondly, *why God corrects them*; and thirdly, *what is our comfort when we are laboring under the rebukes and cor-*

recting of our God. Our comfort must be the fact that He loves us even then—“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.”

I. First, then, beloved, WHAT IS IT IN THE CHRISTIAN THAT GOD REBUKES? One of the Articles of the Church of England says right truly, that naturally, “man is very far gone from original righteousness and is of his own nature inclined to evil so that the flesh lusts always contrary to the spirit. And therefore in every person born into this world, it deserves God’s wrath and damnation. And this infection of nature does remain, yes, in them who are regenerated. Whereby the lust of the flesh, called by the Greek, *ponema sarkos*, which some do expound the wisdom, some sensuality, some the affection, some the desire of the flesh, is not subject to the law of God. And although there is no condemnation for them who believe and are baptized, yet the apostle does confess that sensuality and lust has of itself the nature of sin.” And because evil remains in the regenerate, there is therefore a necessity that that evil should be upbraided. Yes and a necessity that when that upbraiding is not sufficient, God should go to severer measures and after having failed in His rebukes, adopt the expedient of chastening! “I rebuke and chasten.” Hence God has provided means for the chastisement and the rebuking of His people. Sometimes God rebukes His children under the ministry. The minister of the gospel is not always to be a minister of consolation. The same Spirit that is the Comforter is He who convicts the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. And the same minister who is to be as the Angel of God unto our souls, uttering sweet words that are full of honey, is to be at times the rod of God, the staff in the hand of the Almighty with which to smite us on account of our transgressions! And ah, beloved, how often under the ministry ought we to have been checked when we were not? Perhaps the minister’s words were very forcible and they were uttered with true earnestness and they applied to our case, but alas, we shut our ears to them and applied them to our brother instead of to ourselves! I have often marveled when I have been preaching. I have thought that I have described the cases of some of my most prominent members. I have marked in them many sins and as Christ’s faithful pastor, I have not shunned to picture their case in the pulpit that they might receive a well-deserved rebuke. But I have marveled when I have spoken to them afterwards, that they have thanked me for what I have said because they thought it so applicable to such another brother in the church—while I had intended it wholly for them and had, as I thought, so made the description accurate and so brought it out in all its little points that it must have been received by them! But alas, you know my friends, that we sit under the sound of the word and we seldom think how much it belongs to us, especially if we hold an office in the church. It is hard for a minister when he is hearing a brother minister preach, to think it may be he has a word of rebuke to him! If exalted to the office of elder or deacon, there grows sometimes with that office a callousness to the word when spoken to himself and the man in office is apt to think of the hundreds of inquirers unto whom that may be found applicable and of the multitudes of the babes in grace to whom such a word comes in season. Yes, friends, if we did but listen more to the rebukes of God in the ministry; if we hearkened more to His word as He speaks to us every Sabbath, we might be spared many corrections! But usually we are not corrected until we have despised rebukes and after we have rejected them—then out comes the rod.

Sometimes, again, God rebukes his children *in their consciences*, without any visible means whatever. You who are the people of God will acknowledge that there are certain times when, apparently without any instrumentality, your sins are brought to remembrance. Your soul is cast down within you and your spirit is sorely vexed. God the Holy Spirit is Himself making inquisition for sin. He is searching Jerusalem with candles. He is so punishing you because you are settled on your lees. If you look around you, there is nothing that could cause your spirits to sink. The family is not sick. Your business prospers, your body is in good health. Why, then, this sinking of spirit? You are not conscious at the time, perhaps, that you have committed any gross act of sin—still this dark depression continues and at last you discover that you had been living in a sin which you did not know—some sin of ignorance, hidden and unperceived and therefore God did withdraw from you the *joy of His salvation* till you have searched your heart and discovered wherein the evil lay. We have much reason to bless God that He does adopt this way, sometimes, of rebuking us before He chastens.

At other seasons the rebuke is *quite indirect*. How often have I met rebuke where it never was intended to be given? But God overruled the circumstance for good. Have you ever been rebuked by a child? The innocent little prattler uttered something quite unwittingly which cut you to your heart and manifested your sin! Maybe you walked the street and you heard some man swear. And the thought perhaps struck your mind, "How little am I doing for the reclaiming of those who are abandoned?" And so the very sight of sin accused you of negligence and the very hearing of evil was made use of by God to convict you of another evil! Oh, if we kept our eyes open, there is not an ox in the meadow, nor a sparrow in the tree which might not sometimes suggest a rebuke! There is not a star in midnight—there is not a ray in the noonday but what might suggest to us some evil that is hidden in our hearts and lead us to investigate our inner man—if we were but awake to the soft whispers of Jehovah's rebukes! You know our Savior made use of little things to rebuke His disciples. He said, "Consider the lilies of the field how they grow. Behold the fowls of the air how they are fed!" So He made lilies and ravens speak to His disciples, to upbraid their discontent. Earth is full of monitors—all that we need are ears to hear. However, when these rebukes all fail, God proceeds from rebuke to correction. He will not always chide. But if His rebukes are unheeded, then He grasps the rod and He uses it! I need not tell you how it is that God uses the rod. My brothers and sisters, you have all been made to tingle with it. He has sometimes smitten you in your persons, sometimes in your families, frequently in your estates, oftentimes in your prospects. He has smitten you in your nearest and dearest friend. Or, worse still, it may be He has given you "a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet you." But you all understand if you know anything of the life of a Christian, what the rod and the staff of the covenant are and what it is to be corrected by God! Let me just particularize for a few minutes and show what it is that God corrects in us.

Very frequently God corrects *inordinate affection*. It is right of us to love our relatives—it is wrong of us to love them more than God. You, perhaps, are today guilty of this sin. At any rate, beloved, we may, most of us, look at home when we come to dwell on this point. Have we not some favored one—perhaps the partner of our heart, or the offspring of our bosom more dear to us than life, itself? Have I not here some man whose life is bound up in the life of the lad, his child?—some mother whose whole soul is knit unto the soul of her baby?—some wife, some husband, to whom the loss of the partner would be the loss of life? Oh there are many of us who are guilty of inordinate affection towards relations! Mark you, God will rebuke us for that! Sometimes He will rebuke us by the minister. If that is not enough, He will rebuke us by sending sickness or disease to those very persons upon whom we have set our hearts! And if that rebukes us not and if we are not zealous to repent, He will chasten us—the sickness shall yet be unto death, the disease shall break forth with more fearful violence and the thing which we have made our idol shall be smitten and shall become the food of worms! There never was an idol that God either did not or will not pull out of its place. "I am the Lord your God. I am a jealous God." And if we put any, however good and excellent their characters may be, and however deserving of our affection, upon God's throne, God will cry, "Down with it!" And we shall have to weep many tears. But if we had not done so, we might have preserved the treasure and have enjoyed it far better, without having lost it.

But other men are baser than this. One can easily overlook the fault of making too much of children and wife and friends, although very grievous in the sight of God. But alas, there are some who are too sordid to love flesh and blood—they love dirt, mere dirty earth—yellow gold! It is that on which they set their hearts. Their purse, they tell us, is dross. But when we come to take anything from it, we find they do not think it is so. "Oh," said a man once, "if you want a subscription from me, sir, you must get at my heart and then you will get at my purse." "Yes," I said, "I have no doubt I shall, for I believe that is where your purse lies and I shall not be very far off from it." And how many there are who call themselves Christians who make a god out of their wealth! Their park, their mansion, their estate, their warehouses, their large ledgers, their many clerks, their expanding business—or if not these, their opportunity to retire, their money in the government stocks! All these things are their idols and their gods and we take them into our churches and the world finds no fault with them. They are prudent men! You know

many of them. They are very respectable people. They hold many respectable positions and they are so prudent—but the love of money, which is the root of all evil—is in their hearts too plainly to be denied! Everyone may see it, though perhaps they see it not themselves. “Covetousness, which is idolatry,” reigns very much in the church of the living God! Well, mark you, God will chasten for that! Whoever loves mammon among God’s people shall first be rebuked for it, as he is rebuked by me this day. And if that rebuke is not taken, there shall be a chastisement given! It may be that the gold shall melt like the snowflake before the sun, or if it is preserved it shall be said, “Your gold and silver are cankered. The moth shall eat up your garments and destroy your glory.” Or else the Lord will bring leanness into their souls and cause them to go down to their graves with few honors on their heads and with little comfort in their hearts because they loved their gold more than their God—and valued earthly riches more than the riches that are eternal! The Lord save us from that, or else He will surely correct us!

But this is not the only sin—we are all subject to another crime which God exceedingly abhors! It is the sin of *pride*. If the Lord gives us a little comfort, we grow so big that we hardly know what to do with ourselves! Like Jeshurun of old, of whom it is said, “Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked,” if for a little time we enjoy the full assurance of faith—self-conceit whispers—“You will retain the savor of that all your days.” And there is not quite a whisper but something even fainter than that—“You now have no need to depend upon the influence of the Holy Spirit. See what a great man you have grown into! You have become one of the Lord’s most valued people. You are a Samson. You may pull down the very gates of hell and fear not! You have no need to cry, ‘Lord, have mercy upon me.’” Or at other times it takes a different turn. He gives us temporal mercies and then we presumptuously say, “My mountain stands firm. I shall never be moved.” We meet with the poor saints and we begin to lord over them as if we were something and they were nothing! We find some in trouble—we have no sympathy with them. We are gruff and blunt with them as we talk with them about their troubles. Yes, we are even savage and cruel with them! We meet with some who are in deep distress and faint-hearted. We begin to forget when we were faint-hearted, too, and because they cannot run as fast as we can, we run far ahead and turn back and look at them, call them sluggards and say they are idle and lazy! And perhaps even in the pulpit, if we are preachers, we have got hard words to say against those who are not quite as advanced as we are. Well, mark—there never was a saint yet who grew proud of his fine feathers, but what the Lord plucked them out, by-and-by! There never yet was an angel who had pride in his heart but he lost his wings and fell into Gehenna as Satan and those fallen angels did! And there shall never be a saint who indulges self-conceit and pride and self-confidence, but the Lord will spoil his glories and trample his honors in the mire and make him cry out yet again, “Lord have mercy upon me, less than the least of all saints, and the very chief of sinners.”

Another sin that God rebukes is sloth. Now I need not stop to picture that. How many of you are the finest specimens of sloth that can be discovered? I mean not in a business sense, for you are “not slothful in business,” but with regard to the things of God and the cause of truth! Why, nine out of ten of all the professors of religion, I do hazard the assertion, are as full of sloth as they can be! Take our churches all around and there is not a corporation in the world, however corrupt, that is less attentive to its professed interest than the church of Christ! There certainly are many societies and establishments in the world that deserve much blame for not attending to those interests which they ought to promote. But I truly think the church of God is the biggest culprit of all! She says that she is the preacher of the gospel to the poor—does she preach it to them? Yes, here and there—now and then there is a spasmodic effort—but how many are there who have got tongues to speak and ability to utter God’s word that are content to be still? She professes to be the educator of the ignorant and so she is, in a measure—but there are many of you who have no business to be here this morning—you ought to have been teaching in the Sunday school, or instructing the young and teaching others. You have no need of teachers just now—you have learned the truth and should have been teaching it to other people! The church professes that she is yet to cast the light of the gospel throughout the world. She does a little in missionary enterprise. But ah, how little! How little! How little compared with what her Master did for her and the claims of Jesus upon

her! We are a lazy set! Take the church all round—we are as idle as we can be! And we have need to have some whipping times of persecution to whip a little more earnestness and zeal into us! We thank God this is not so much the case now as it was even 12 months ago. We hope the church may progress in her zeal, but if not, she as a whole and each of us as members will be first rebuked—and if we take not the rebuke—we shall afterwards be chastened for this, our great sin!

I have no time to enter into all the other reasons for which God will rebuke and chasten. Suffice it to say that every sin has one twig in God's rod appropriated to itself; suffice it to say that in God's hand there are punishments for each particular transgression. And it is very singular to notice how in Bible history almost every saint has been chastened for the sin he has committed by the sin itself falling upon his own head! Transgression has been first a pleasure and afterwards it has been a scourge. "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways," and that is the most severe punishment in the entire world!

Thus I have tried to open the first head—it is that *God rebukes and chastens*.

II. Now, secondly, WHY DOES GOD REBUKE AND CHASTEN? "Why," says one, "God rebukes His children because they are His children! And He chastens them because they are His children!" Well, I will not go the length of saying that is false, but I will go the length of saying it is not true! If anyone should say to a father, after he had chastened his child, "Why is it you have chastened the child?" he would not say, "It is because I am his father." It is true in one sense but he would say, "I have chastened the child because he has done wrong." The primary reason why he had chastened his child would not be that he was his father, but the absolute cause would be, "I have chastened him because he has done wrong, because I wish to correct him for it, that he might not do so again." Now, God, when He chastens His children, never does it absolutely because He is their Father. But, He does it for a wise reason. He has some other reason besides His Fatherhood. At the same time, one reason why God afflicts His children and not others is because He *is* their Father. If you were to go home today and see a dozen boys in the streets throwing stones and breaking windows, it is very likely you would chase the whole lot of them. But if there is one boy that would get a sweet knock on the head, it would be your own, for you would say, "What are you doing, John? What business have you here?" You might not be justified, perhaps, in meddling with the others—you would let their own fathers attend to them. But because you were his father, you would try to make him remember it! Certain special chastisements are inflicted on God's children because they are His children, but it is not because they are His children that He chastens them at any one time, but because they have been doing something wrong! Now, if you are under chastisement, let this truth be certain to you. Are the consolations of God small with you? Is there any secret sin within you? Are you chastened in your business? Then what sin have you committed? Are you cast down in your spirit? Then what transgression has brought this on you? Remember, it is not fair to say, "I am chastened because I am His child." The right way to say it is, "I am His child and therefore when He chastens me, He has a reason for it." Now, what is it? I will help you to judge.

Sometimes God chastens and afflicts us *to prevent sin*. He sees that the embryo of lust is in our hearts. He sees that that little egg of mischief is beginning to hatch and to produce sin—and He comes and crushes it at once—nips the sin in the bud. Ah, we cannot tell how much guilt Christians have been saved from by their afflictions! We are running on madly to our destruction and then some dark apparition of trouble comes and stretches itself across the way—and in great fright we fly back astonished! We ask, why this trouble? Oh, if we knew the deluge into which we were rushing, we should only say, "Lord, I thank You that by that direful trouble You did save me from a sin that would have been far more troublous and infinitely more dangerous."

At other times God chastens us for sins already committed. We perhaps have forgotten them. But God has not. I think that sometimes years elapse between a sin and the chastisement for it. The sins of our youth may be punished in our gray old age—the transgressions you did 20 years ago, those of you who have grown old—may this very day be found in your bones! God chastens His children but He sometimes lays the rod by. The time would not be seasonable, perhaps. They are not yet strong enough

to bear it—so He lays His rod by and He says, “As surely as he is My child, though I lay the rod by, I will make him smart for it, that I may at last deliver him from his sin and make him like unto Myself.” But mark—you people of God—in all these chastisements for sin there is no *punishment*. When God chastises you, He does not *punish* as a judge does. He chastens as a father. When He lays the rod on with many blows and smart ones, there is not one thought of *anger* in His heart—there is not one look of *displeasure* in His eyes. He means it all for your good. His heaviest blows are as much tokens of His affection as His sweetest caresses. He has no motive but your profit and His own glory. Be of good cheer, then, if these are the reasons, but take care that you fulfill the command—“Be zealous, therefore, and repent.”

I read in an old Puritan author the other day a very pretty figure. He says, “A full wind is not so favorable to a ship when it is fully fair as a side wind. It is strange,” says he, “that when the wind blows in an exact direction to blow a ship into port, she will not go near as well as if she had a cross wind sideways upon her.” And he explains it thus—“The mariners say that when the wind blows exactly fair, it only fills a part of the sails and it cannot reach the sails that are ahead, because the sail, bellying out with the wind, prevents the wind from reaching that which is further ahead. But when the wind sweeps sideways, then every sail is full and she is driven on swiftly in her course with the full force of the wind. Ah!” says the old Puritan, “there is nothing like a side wind to drive God’s people to heaven! A fair wind only fills a part of their sails. That is, fills their joy, fills their delight. But,” he says, “the side wind fills them all! It fills their caution, fills their prayerfulness, fills every part of the spiritual man and so the ship speeds onwards towards its haven.” It is with this design that God sends affliction—to chasten us on account of our transgressions.

III. And now, I am to conclude by noting WHAT IS OUR COMFORT WHEN GOD REBUKES AND CHASTENS US?

Our great comfort is that He still *loves* us. Oh, what a precious thing faith is when we are enabled to believe our God and then how easy it is to endure and to surmount all trouble! Hear the old man in the attic, with a crust of bread and a cup of cold water. Sickness has confined him these years within that narrow room. He is too poor to maintain an attendant. Some woman comes in to look on him in the morning and in the evening. And there he sits, in the depths of poverty. And you will suppose he sits and groans? No, brothers and sisters—he may sometimes groan when the body is weak, but usually he sits and sings! A visitor climbs the creaking staircase of that old house where human beings scarcely ought to be allowed to live. When he goes into that poor cramped room that is more fit to accommodate swine than men—he sits down upon that bottomless chair and when he has squatted himself as well as he can upon the four cross pieces of it—he begins to talk to him and he finds him full of heaven. “Oh, sir,” he says, “my God is very kind to me.” What?—propped up he is with pillows and full of pain in every member of his body—kind? But he says, “Blessed be His name, He has not left me. Oh, sir, I have enjoyed more peace and happiness in this room, out of which I have not gone for years”—(the case is real that I am now describing)—“I have enjoyed more happiness here than I ever did in all my life! My pains are great, sir, but they will not be for long—I am going home soon.” Yes, were he more troubled still—had he such rich consolation poured into his heart he might endure all with a smile—and sing in the furnace! Now, child of God, you are to do the same. Remember, all you have to suffer is sent in love. It is hard work for a child when his father has been chastening it, to look at the rod as a picture of love. You cannot make your children do that—but when they grow up to be men and women, how thankful are they to you then? “O Father,” says the son, “I know now why it was I was so often chastened. I had a proud hot spirit. It would have been the ruin of me if you had not whipped it out of me. Now, I thank you, my Father, for it.”

So, while we are here below, we are nothing but little children. We cannot prize the rod—when we come of age and we go into our estates in paradise, we shall look back upon the rod of the covenant as being better than Aaron’s rod, for it blossoms with mercy! We shall say to it, “You are the most wondrous thing in all the list of my treasures. Lord, I thank You that You did not leave me unafflicted, or

else I had not been where I am and what I am—a child of God in paradise.” “I have this week,” says one, “sustained so serious a loss in my business that I am afraid I shall be utterly broken up.” There is love in that. “I came here this morning,” says one, “and I left a dead child in the house—dear to my heart.” There is love in that. That coffin and that shroud will both be full of love. And when your child is taken away, it shall not be in anger. “Ah,” cries another, “but I have been exceedingly sick and even now I feel I ought not to have ventured out—I must return to my bed.” Ah, He makes your bed in your affliction! There is love in every pain, in every twitch of the nerve. In every pang that shoots through the members, there is love. “Ah,” says one, “it is not myself, but I have got a dear one that is sick.” There is love there, too. Do what God may, He cannot do an unloving act towards His people! O Lord! You are omnipotent! You can do all things but You cannot lie, and You cannot be unkind to the elect. No, omnipotence may build a thousand worlds and fill them with bounties. Omnipotence may powder mountains into dust and burn the sea and consume the sky. But omnipotence cannot do an unloving thing towards a believer! Oh, rest quite sure, Christian, a hard thing, an unloving thing from God towards one of His own people is quite impossible. He is as kind to you when He casts you into prison as when he takes you into a palace! He is as good when He sends famine into your house as when He fills your barns with plenty! The only question is, Are you His child? If so, He has rebuked you in affection and there is love in His chastisement!

I am almost done but not until I have made my last appeal. I have now to turn from God’s people to the rest of you. Ah, my hearers, there are some of you who have no God. You have no Christ on whom to cast your troubles! I see some of you today dressed in the clothes of mourning. I suppose you have lost someone dear to you. Oh, you that are robed in black—is God your God? Or are you mourning without God to wipe every tear from your eyes? I know that many of you are now struggling in your business with very sharp and hard times. Can you tell your troubles to Jesus, or have you to bear them all yourself—friendless and helpless? Many men have been driven mad because they had no one to whom to communicate their sorrow. And how many others have been driven worse than mad because when they told their sorrows, their confidence was betrayed? O poor mourning spirit, if you had, as you might have done, gone and told Him all your woes, He would not have laughed at you! And He would never have told it out again. Oh, I remember when once my young heart ached in boyhood, when I first loved the Savior. I was far away from father and mother and all I loved and I thought my soul would burst. I was an usher in a school in a place where I could meet with no sympathy or help. Well, I went to my chamber and told my little griefs into the ears of Jesus. They were great griefs to me then, though they are nothing now. When I just whispered them on my knees into the ears of Him who had loved me with an everlasting love, oh, it was so sweet, none can tell! If I had told them to somebody else, they would have told them again. But He, my blessed confidante, He knows my secrets and He never tells again! Oh, what can you do, you that have got no Jesus to tell your troubles to? And the worst of it is, you have got more troubles to come—times may be hard now but they will be harder one day—they will be harder when they come to an end. They say it is hard to live, but it is very hard to die. When one comes to die and has Jesus with him, even then dying is hard work. But to die without a Savior! Oh, my friends, are you inclined to risk it? Will you face the grim monarch and no Savior with you? Remember, you must do it, you must die soon! The chamber shall soon be hushed in silence. No sound shall be heard except the babbling watch that always tells the flight of time. The physician shall, “Hush!” and hold up his finger and whisper in a suppressed voice, “He cannot last many minutes longer.” And the wife and the children, or the father and the mother, will stand around your bed and look at you, as I have looked at some, with a sad, sad heart. They will look at you a little while, till at last the death change will pass over your face. “He is gone!” it shall be said. And the hand uplifted shall be dropped down again and the eyes shall be glazed in darkness and then the mother will turn away and say, “O my child, I could have borne all this if there had been hope in the end!” And when the minister comes in to comfort the family, he will ask the question of the father, “Do you think your son had an interest in the blood of Christ?” The reply will be, “O sir, we must not judge but I never saw anything like it. I never had any

reason to hope—that is my greatest sorrow.” There, there! I could bury every friend without a tear, compared with the burial of an ungodly friend! Oh, it seems such an awful thing to have one allied to you by ties of blood, dead and in hell!

We generally speak very softly about the dead. We say, “Well, we hope.” Sometimes we tell great lies for we know we do not hope at all. We wish it may be so, but we cannot hope it. We never saw any grounds that should lead us to hope. But would it not be an awful thing if we were honest enough to look the dread reality in its face—if the husband were simply to look at it and say, “There was my wife. She was an ungodly, careless woman. I know she never said anything concerning repentance and faith. And if she died so—and I have every reason to fear she did—then she is cast away from God”? It would be unkind to say it. But it is only honest for us to know it—to look dread truth in the face. Oh, my fellow brothers and sisters! Oh, you who are partners with me of an immortal life! We shall one day meet again before the throne of God. But before that time comes, we shall each of us be separated and go our different ways down the shelving banks of the river of death. My fellow man, are you prepared to die alone? I ask you this question again—Are you prepared to arise in the Day of Judgment without a Savior? Are you willing to run all risks and face your Maker when He comes to judge, you without an Advocate to plead your cause? Are you prepared to hear Him say, “Depart you cursed!”? Are you ready now to endure the everlasting ire of Him who smites and smiting once, does smite forever? Oh, if you will make your bed in hell; if you are prepared to be damned; if you are willing to be so, then live in sin and indulge in pleasures—you will get your wish! But if you would not, if you would enter heaven and you would be saved, “Turn you, turn you, why will you die, O house of Israel?” May God the Holy Spirit enable you to repent of sin and to believe on Jesus! And then you shall have a portion among them who are sanctified—but unrepentant and unbelieving, if you die so, you must be driven from His Presence—never to have life and joy and liberty as long as eternity shall last!

The Lord prevent this, for Jesus’ sake.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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END OF VOLUME 3.