

WORDS OF EXPOSTULATION

NO. 356

A SERMON
 DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 20, 1861
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 AT EXETER HALL, STRAND

*“And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor?
 or what have you to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?”
 Jeremiah 2:18*

THE Jews had been chosen by God to be a special people separated to Himself forever. By sundry miracles, by divers mercies, by strange deliverances, He had proved Himself to be to them a God worthy of their trust. Yet, strange to say—and yet not strange when we know that they were fallen men like ourselves—the Jews were constantly desirous to mix with the nations.

They broke down the hedges with which God had enclosed them as a sacred garden. They desired to be laid like common lands and to be joined with other peoples. No, more than this—they forsook their own true and loving God who had never deserted them, and they adopted sometimes the deities of Egypt, and at other times the false gods of Assyria.

They seemed never to be content with even the gorgeous ceremonials of their own temple. They must needs build altars after the fashion of Damascus. They must have altars on every high place, according to the custom of the accursed nations whom the Lord their God had driven out before them. And they seemed as if they had never reached the full desire of their hearts till they had mingled with the rites of God all the filth and the abominations with which heathens adored their gods.

Constantly did the Lord reprove them for this—for this infatuation of theirs which made them turn aside from Him, the living water, to hew out to themselves broken cisterns which could hold no water. They were “often reprov’d,” but they often “hardened their necks.” Often were they chastened, and they were smitten so often that “The whole head was sick and the whole heart was faint.” They had been chastened so sorely that from the soles of their feet even to the head, they were full of wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores. Yet they still went after evil, still they turned aside from the righteous and true God.

Our text contains one instance of God’s expostulating with His people. He says to them, “What hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of the muddy river?”—for so it may be translated—and of course, that term is applied to the Nile by way of contempt. “Why need you go to drink of that muddy river? Or what have you to do with Assyria, to drink the water of Euphrates? Why do you turn aside and leave your own cool streams of Lebanon? Why do you forsake Jerusalem to turn aside to Noph and to Tahapanes? Why are you so strangely set on mischief, that you cannot be content with the good and healthful, but would even follow after that which is evil and deceitful?”

Taking the text just as it stands, I intend, by God’s help, to make a question of it to you. To myself and to you may God the Holy Ghost apply it, and may this be a time to all God’s people, to every convinced soul, yea, and to the careless too—a time of searching of heart. May God question us and may we be prepared honestly to answer. May the Holy Spirit push home the solemn inquiries, and may we with truthful hearts search and look, and give earnest heed thereunto.

I shall apply the text to three characters—first to the *Christian*. Secondly, to the *awakened conscience*, and thirdly, to the *careless sinner*. My sermon is not intended to instruct your minds, but to stir up your hearts.

I. Addressing myself to the CHRISTIAN, I shall use the text in three senses while I expostulate with you in regard to sin, to worldly pleasure, and to carnal trust.

1. And first, O true believer, called by grace and washed in the precious blood of Christ, “What hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of the muddy river?” What have you to do with the sins which once delighted you and which now find happy pastime for the world? What have you to do with your deceitful lusts, with the indulgence of your old passions? What have you to do to follow the multitude which do evil?

Believer, answer these questions, especially if you have lately fallen into sin, if you have backslidden in heart, and if you have been led to backslide in your ways. Answer me, what have you to do—what excuse have you for what you have done? Do you see yonder a gang of men, dragging, like so many beasts of burden, a tremendous load? Hark to the cracking of the whip of the overseer!

Do you see how they pull and strain, till it seems as if their every sinew would snap? Do you observe them as the hot sweat stands upon their brow? Look at them! Let the gang stay awhile, while we examine. I can understand why all these are oppressed with sore labor, for I can see the brand of the slave owner upon their backs. Their flesh is scarred.

But what means this—there is one among them who is not a slave—a man who is free! What means this? How is it that he does the slaves’ work—that he bends his back to the task masters’ yoke, when he is a free man? Can you answer the question?

Let me ask it in your own case. I see the sinner burdened in the ways of evil. I see him pulling iniquity as though it were with a cart rope, laying hold with both his hands on everything that is full of iniquity. But what have *you* to do there? The slaves of Satan are but acting out their condition, but what have you to do, to be his slave, since you have been redeemed with blood and set free by power?

Why, man, you are no slave now, you are a son of God. You are an heir of all things. You are joint-heir with Christ. What have you to do, then, in the service of sin and of Satan? Why do you follow these menial tasks? You will become a man who is to wear a crown in heaven, and who, even now, can read his title to it. Answer, Christian, and be ashamed and be confounded, because you are demeaning yourself in thus sinning against your own soul.

A vision flits before my eye. The Lord God has made a great feast; armies have met together; terrible slaughter has been the consequence. Men’s arms have been red up to the very elbow in blood. They have fought with each other and there they lay, strewn upon the plain—thousands of carcasses bleeding.

The vultures sniff the prey from far-off desert wilds—they fly, keen of scent. God has made a great feast to the fowls of heaven and to the ravenous beasts of the earth. Hark to the whirring of their wings as they come in multitudes, for where the body is, thither shall the eagles be gathered together.

But what is that I see? I see a dove flying with the same speed as the vulture towards the carrion. O dove, what has brought you there in dangerous connection with your fierce enemies? Whither are you going? Is there anything in that bloody feast that can content *you*? Shall your meek eyes glare with the fires of anger? Shall your fair white plumage be stained with gore, and will you go back to your dovecot with your pinions bloody red?

I appeal to you, my hearers. Can you answer the question? Can you explain the strange vision? How is it, then, that I see you, Christian, going with sinners after evil? Is it your food? If you are a child of God, sin is no more food for you than blood is for doves. If you have been “begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,” your peaceful soul will be as much out of its element as a dove upon a battlefield.

And the sight—the *sight* of sin will be as horrible to you as the sight of slaughter to that timid dove which even now flies itself with rapid wings to the cleft of the rock. Christian, I say, if you do as the worldling does, you do go against your nature—against your newborn nature. To him it is not strange—should not the swine eat husks? is it not his proper food? Should not the sinner love to sin? is it not his very element? But what have *you* to do? What have you to do, quickened of the Spirit and renewed in the image of Christ—what have you to do?

You have seen in Scripture a dreadful picture of a madman, where Nebuchadnezzar the king runs with oxen, and eats grass till his hair has grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws. Is he not the pitiful picture of a backslider, for what is a Christian when he plunges into sin, but as one who makes himself like the beasts that perish, and who herds with the common, yea, and the unclean beasts of the earth?

O believer! if it be a pitiful thing to see a man make himself a beast, how much more lamentable to see a Christian make himself a worldling! "Come ye out from among them; touch not the unclean thing." Why should the soul of my turtle dove be given up to its enemies? Why should the lamb flock with the wolves?

Come out, I pray you—leave this stygian filth, and be you clean, you vessel-bearer of the Lord. Come forth from the midst of that plague land, where you can get nothing but the ashy hue of leprosy, and be you clean! Today the Lord invites you. Refuse not His invitation, but return, you backsliding children of men.

The question then cannot be answered, because when a Christian goes into sin he commits an inconsistent act—inconsistent with the freedom which Christ has bought for him, and inconsistent with the nature which the Holy Spirit has implanted in him.

Let us press forward. Christian, what have you to do with sin? Has it not cost you enough already? What, man! have you forgotten the times of your conviction? If you have, my brother, *I have not*. At the very mention of that word, I think I hear my chains rattling anew. Was there ever a bond-slave who had more bitterness of soul than I—five years a captive in the dungeons of the law, till my youth seemed as if it would turn into premature old age, and all the buoyancy of my spirit had been removed.

O God of the spirits of all men! most of all ought I to hate sin, for surely most of all have I smarted beneath the lash of Your law. And as I look round, knowing the experience of some of you, I can recall to my mind the stories you have told me. How when you had first felt your need of a Savior, you could not endure yourselves.

Ah! there are those among you, who when you were under strong convictions of sin were ready to commit self-destruction. You prayed, but found no answer. You sought, but obtained no mercy. There were not creatures out of hell more wretched than you were then. What! and will you go back to the old curse? Burnt child, will you play with the fire?

What, man! when you have already been rent in pieces by the lion, will you step a second time into his den? Have you not had enough of the old serpent? Did he not poison all your veins once, and will you play upon the hole of the asp, and put your hand upon the cockatrice den? Have you not seen enough of the leopards and of the dragons, and will you step a second time into their dens?

Oh, be not so mad. Be not so foolish! Did sin ever give you pleasure? Did you ever find any solid satisfaction in it? If so, go back to your old drudgery. Go back, I say, and wear the chain again if it delights you. But inasmuch as I know and you know that sin did never give you what it promised to bestow—inasmuch as it did delude you with lies and flatter you with promises which were all to be broken—I pray you be not beguiled a second time. Be not a second time led into captivity—be free and let the remembrance of your ancient bondage forbid you to wear the chain again!

There is yet another light in which to put the sin of the believer. Let me repeat the question once again—"What hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of the muddy river?" There is a crowd yonder. They have evidently assembled for some riotous purpose. They are attacking one man. There are very many of them. Oh, how they howl!—oh, how they yell! They give Him no space to take His breath, no time to rest. Let me press through the throng and look at the man.

I know Him at once. He has a visage more marred than that of any other man. 'Tis He. It is the Crucified One, it is none other than Jesus, the Son of Man, the Savior of the world. Hark to the blasphemies which are poured into His ears! See how they spit in His face and put Him to an open shame.

Onward they bring Him, and you hear them cry, “Crucify him! crucify him! crucify him!” They are doing it—they have nailed Him to the tree—yonder is a man with the hammer in his hand who has just now driven in the nail. Look round upon the mob. I can well-comprehend why yonder drunkard, why yonder swearer, why the whoremonger, and the like of infamous notoriety, should have joined in this treacherous murder.

But there is one man there—methinks I know his face. Ay, I have seen him at the sacramental table, eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ. I have seen him in the pulpit saying, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” I have seen him on his knees in prayer, pleading what he called, “The precious blood.”

What have you to do in this counsel of the ungodly, this scene of sin without a parallel? “What doest thou here, Elijah?” In the name of love’s own self, and of every holy thing that can ever pertain to a human heart—what doest thou here? Are you sickened at heart at such a spectacle—a Christian crucifying Christ? That spectacle is one in which you have had a share. You, too, when you have backslidden and have sinned—you have “crucified the Lord afresh and put him to an open shame.”

Is there any other picture needed to set my text in the very strongest light? “What have you to do, O Christian, in the way of Egypt to drink the water of the muddy river?” Cry revenge against yourself, because you have murdered your Lord, and opened His wounds anew!

Have patience with me a moment while I turn my question over and revolve it yet again. Believer, you have rebelled against your God. You have done despite unto His Spirit. How will you answer for this? What will you say to a scoffing world, when the quick eye of the sinner shall detect you? What will you say when he hisses out, “There’s your religion”—How will you answer him?

You may pretend to do so, but do you not feel that he will get the best of the argument? If he goes his way, and says the religion of Christ is a lie and an hypocrisy, what will you have to say? Surely you will have to hide your face in confusion, and bemoan yourself because by this act you have given the enemy cause to blaspheme.

And what will you say to Christ’s church, when the church shall say to you, “What doest thou here?” How will you excuse yourself for dishonest acts in business, or for any lust into which you have fallen? Will you tell the church it was your old nature? But how will you answer when the church shall say, “They that are in Christ have crucified the flesh and its affections and lusts”?

More than this, how will you answer your own conscience? Will you use some Antinomian quibble and apply that as a plaster to your wounds? No, if you are a child of God, you will have to smart for it. The waters of the muddy river may be sweet to the Egyptians, but they will be bitter to you. You shall have, as it were, a cauldron in your bowels, if you do drink thereof. Christians can never sin cheaply—they pay a heavy price for all the pleasures that they ever find in evil.

And what will you say to your Lord and Master next time you are at the sacramental table? How will you dare to eat that bread and drink that wine? And when you are alone on your knees and seeking fellowship with Him, how will you dare to seek it when you have just now been following His enemies and imitating them that hate Him? Will you say unto Him, “Come unto me, my Spouse, from the top of Lebanon, from Amana.”

Ah! well may He say to you, “I have withdrawn Myself, I have gone, for you have grieved My Spirit and vexed My soul.” Believer, if Jesus Christ were here, what would you say to make an excuse for your sin? Surely you would be speechless as the dumb, and silent as the grave. Your tears might make confession. Your shudders should bespeak your guilt, but your lips could not make an apology. What have you to do, O Christian, in the way of evil? What do *you* here, *O God’s Elijah*?

I do not know whether there are any Christians here who have fallen into any special sin during this last week. If there be, brother, open your heart to this question. It may be my Master has sent me to you to nip your sin in its bud—to bring you back before you have backslidden very much. Turn you, my brother, He has not forgotten His love to you. Turn you, His grace is still the same. With weeping and

with bitter lamentation, come you to His footstool, and you shall be once more received into His heart, and you shall be set upon a rock again, and your goings shall be established.

2. To take a different view of the subject. The pleasures of this world do sometimes entice the people of God, and they find some degree of mirth therein. To those Christians who can find pleasure in the common amusements of men, this question may be very pertinently put—"What hast *thou* to do to drink the water of that muddy river?"

I may be speaking to some believers who try if they can, to keep their conscience quiet while they frequent places of amusement—they lend their sanction to things which are not spiritual, and sometimes even not moral. Now, I put this question to them. Christian, you have tasted of better drink than the muddy river of this world's pleasure can give you.

If your profession be not a lie, you have had fellowship with Christ. You have had that joy which only the blessed spirits above, and the chosen ones on earth can know—the joy of seeing Christ and leaning your head upon His bosom. And do the trifles, the songs, the music, the merriment of this earth content you after that? Have you eaten the bread of angels and can you live on husks?

Good Rutherford once said, "I have tasted of Christ's own manna and it has put my mouth out of taste for the brown bread of this world's joys." Methinks it should be so with you. Again, believer, have you not already learned the hollowness of all earth's mirth? Turn to your neighbor and ask him. Does he frequent the play-house? Does he go from one party of pleasure to another? Does he indulge in the common pleasures of the world?

Ask him whether they have ever satisfied him. If he be a worldling, and be honest, he will say, "No." He will tell you that his soul pants after something better than fashion and dissipation can afford him. He will tell you, too, that he has drained that cup and it is not the wine which he thought it was—that it excites for the moment, but leaves him weak, and miserable afterwards.

And I say, what wise men, according to the discretion of this world, cast away, shall the yet wiser man, the Christian, made to salvation wise, lay hold upon? What! shall the parings and offals of this world's joys suit the heir of heaven?—You who profess to be of nobler birth, and to be brother to the angels—nay, next akin to the eternal Son of God Himself—are you to wallow in this mire, and think it a soft and downy couch fit for a royal-resting place?

Get you up, believer. You are not lost to every sense of shame. Betray not yourself in seeking satisfaction wherein worldlings confess they have never found it. But let me ask you—will these pleasures yield to you any helps in your growth in grace? You say the world is crucified unto you—will these pleasures help to crucify it? You have prayed that you may be made like Christ—will these things help to conform you to His image?

Often do you cry, "Oh! Spirit of God, purge out the old leaven from me." Will these help to purge out the old leaven? Unless you will fling the lie into the face of all your prayers, I pray you, shun these things. Fly at higher game than this. Let the mere hawk fly at the sparrow, but the eagle needs something nobler to be the object of its chase.

If you were of the world, it would be right for you to love her. If she were your mother, you might suck, but even then you should not be satisfied with the breasts of her consolation. But you confess that not this world, but the next is the mother of your soul. I pray you then, be not content with what this earth yields, but lift up your eyes, and expect your manna to spring not from the earth, but from heaven, and may it drop into your hands.

I can never understand that Christianity which alternately goes out to find joy in worldly amusements and returns home to have fellowship with Christ. In the life of Madame Guyon, who, though professedly a Papist, one must ever receive as being a true child of God, I have read an anecdote something to this effect. She had been invited by some friends to spend a few days at the palace of St. Cloud. She knew it was a place full of pomp, and fashion, and I must add, of vice also. But being persuaded by her friend and being especially tempted with the idea that perhaps her example might do good, she accepted the invitation.

Her experience afterwards should be a warning to all Christians. For some years that holy woman had walked in constant fellowship with Christ—perhaps none ever saw the Savior’s face and kissed His wounds more truly than she had done. But when she came home from St. Cloud, she found her usual joy was departed—she had lost her power in prayer. She could not draw near to Christ as she should have done. She felt in going to the lover of her soul as if she had played the harlot against Him.

She was afraid to hope that she could be received again to His pure and perfect love, and it took some months ere the equilibrium of her peace could be restored, and her heart could yet again be wholly set upon her Lord. He that wears a white garment must mind where he walks when the world’s streets are so filthy as they are. He that has a thousand enemies must take care how he exposes himself. He who has nothing on earth to assist him towards heaven should take care that he goes not where the earth can help towards hell.

O believer, shun, I pray you, fellowship with this world, for the love of this world is enmity against God. Now some will say that I am an ascetic and wish you to become Puritans. I wish we were Puritans, most certainly, but I am no ascetic. I believe the Christian ought to be the happiest man in the world, and I believe he is too. But I know that this world does not make him happy—it is the next world.

I say that the believer has a more sure and certain right to be a happy and a cheerful person than any other, but if in this world only we had hope, we should be of all men the most miserable, because this world yields no joy to us.

3. For one minute I shall now take my text with regard to the Christian in a third sense. We are all tried with the temptation to put our trust in things which are seen, instead of things which are not seen. The Lord has said it—“Cursed is he that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm,” but “Blessed is he that trusteth in the Lord.”

Yet Christians often do trust in man, and then our text comes home—“What hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the water of that muddy river?” “Some trust in horses and some in chariots, but we will stay ourselves upon the LORD God of Israel.”

Look at yonder believer—he trusts in Christ, and only in Christ, for his salvation, and yet he is fretted and worried even though this be the day of rest, about something in his business. Why are you troubled, Christian? “Because of this great care,” says he. Care! have you care? I thought it was written, “Cast thy burden upon the LORD.” “Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication make known your wants unto God.”

Can you not trust God for temporals? “Ah!” says the believer, “I wish I could.” Believer, if you cannot trust God for temporals, how dare you trust Him for spirituals? Surely if He be worthy to be trusted with eternity, He must be fit to be relied upon in time. Can you trust Him for your soul’s redemption and yet not rely upon Him for a few paltry pounds? Then what are you trusting in?

“Oh, I wish I had a good friend,” says one. “I wish I had some one at my back to help me.” Indeed, sir, what have you to do to go in the way of Egypt, to want to drink of that water? Is not God enough? Do you want another eye beside that of Him who sees all things? Do you want another arm to help besides Him who

*“Bears the earth’s huge pillars up,
And spreads the heavens abroad?”*

Is His heart faint? Is His arm weary? Is His eye grown dim? If so, seek another God, but if He be infinite, omnipotent, faithful, true, and all-wise, why gaddest thou abroad so much to seek another confidence? Why do you rake the earth to find another foundation, when this is strong enough and broad enough and deep enough to bear all the weight which you can ever build thereon?

Christian, be single in your faith—have not two trusts, but one. Believer, rest you only on your God and let your expectation be from Him.

God bless you, believer. Let this question ring in your ears this week, and if you are tempted to sin, or to worldly pleasure, or to carnal trust, think you see your minister and that you hear him saying in your ears—“What hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of the muddy river? or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of Euphrates?”

II. I now come to the second part of my subject. Let not our friends grow weary. I shall be brief on the matter that remain, that the Word may be felt.

CONVINCED SINNER, I hope I have some such here. Some of those precious ones of God, whose eyes are bejeweled with the tears of penitence, and whose hearts are like the fragrant spices, which when broken, send out a sweet perfume. And so, my friend, you feel your lost estate. God’s Holy Spirit has kindly looked upon you and begun a good work in your soul.

And yet during the past week, you have fallen into your old sin. Ah! ah! smarting and yet sinning! wounded and yet rebelling! pricked with the ox-goad and yet kicking against the pricks! It is hard for you! It is hard for you! To sin with a steeled conscience is easy, but to sin when conscience is raw, is hard, indeed.

You have a hard task—you have to go on in sin, and tread its thorny path, when your feet are tender, having just been burned in the fire. And what was the cause of your sin, after all? Was it worth sinning for—to grieve your conscience and vex the Holy Spirit? I have heard of a man who had just begun the Christian life, and he had some months of sorrow, owing to a hasty temper.

His neighbor had let some of his cattle stray into the field. He asked him to fetch them out again and mend the fence. His neighbor would not, and he flew into such a passion with him, that afterwards he sat down and cried. Said he, “Why, if all the cows in the field were sold, and I had lost the money, they were not worth the bother I made about them, nor worth one moment of the grief which I have to suffer.”

Oh, what fools we all are! Let us, however, write ourselves fools in capital letters, if when conscience is tender, we yet go and do the very thing which we hate, and choose the very cup which was so bitter to our taste, so nauseous to us just now.

And then, convinced sinner, another question. You are under conviction of sin, and you have been lately—as it is a festive season—you have been frequenting the dancing-room or the theater. Now these are amusements for worldlings. Let them have them. I would not prevent them for a moment. Let every man have his own amusement and his own joy.

But what is this to you? What have you to do with it? Why, you know you thought the place would fall down while you were sitting there. What business had you there? Suppose the devil had come in to take one of his own away and had taken you? He might have been forgiven for his mistake—for he found you on his grounds. You were trespassing, and therefore if the old Giant Grim had taken you away to Despair’s castle, who could have blamed him?

Were you not for the time in his own limits? Had he not therefore a right to do as he would with you! But you who have a tender conscience, how could you be merry there—listening to light music while you had a heavy heart? I never like to see a newly-made widow at a wedding, and I do not like to see a convinced sinner where others are making merry.

When you have joy in your heart, you may join with the kindred sympathy of other men’s joys. But while your soul is bleeding, what a mockery, what a farce it is for you to be pretending to find joy in the very thing which has given you the pain!

You have heard the old and oft-repeated story of the celebrated clown who was under conviction of sin. He went to a certain doctor, and told him he was exceeding melancholy, and he wished that he could advise him something that would cheer his spirits. The doctor prescribed for him some remedies, but they failed.

He went at last to a celebrated popular preacher—who ought not to have been a preacher, for he did not understand the Gospel at all—and he, fool that he was, said to the poor man, “Well, I do not know

what will cheer you up, but I should say if you were to go and see the tricks and antics of such and such a person, the clown at such and such a theater, if anything would make you merry, that would.”

“Alas, sir,” said he, “I am that man myself!” So strange must have been his position, making others roar with laughter while he himself was roaring with terror. And yet this is just your position, convinced sinner, if you can find merriment in the world. Let other men have it. It is not the place for you—stand aloof from it and go not there.

And then, again, take care, convinced sinner, that you do not trust in yourself in any degree. What have you to do to go to Egypt to drink the waters of the muddy river? Your works have ruined you. How can they save you? Your works have damned you. How can they wipe out the sentence of damnation? Fly to Christ, fly to the flowing wounds, and to the open heart. There is hope for you there.

But at the foot of Sinai there is thunder, and fire, and smoke, and if Moses did exceeding fear and quake, how much more should you when the mountain seems as though it would roll upon you and crush you, and bury your spirit in eternal destruction? God help you, convinced sinner, never to go in that way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor, for these are not things for you.

III. Lastly, to any here present who are CARELESS.

I have a hard task, and but a few moments for the attempt to bring a reasonable question to unreasonable men. You tell me, sirs, that you love the vanities of this world and that they content you. I look you in the face and remind you that there have been many madmen in this world besides yourselves. Yet as there is some spark of reason left, let me see if I can kindle a flame of thought therewith.

Sinner, God is angry with the wicked every day. What have you to do with joy? you are condemned already, because you believe not on the Son of God. What have you to do with peace—a condemned man dancing in his cell at Newgate with chains about his wrists? You’re a dying man. You may drop down dead in this hall. What have you to do with merriment?

You! if you were sure you should live a week, you might spend six days, if you would, in sin, but you are not sure you will live an hour. What have you to do with sin and its pleasures? God is furbishing His sword today. It is sharp and strong as the arm which shall wield it. That sword is meant for you except you repent.

What have you to do with taking your ease, and eating, and drinking, and being happy? That man yonder, with his neck in the noose, and his feet upon the treacherous drop—is it fitting that he should sing songs and call himself a happy man? This is your position, sir!

Sinner, you are standing over the mouth of hell upon a single plank and that plank is rotten! Your hope is as the spider’s web—your confidence is as a dream. Death follows you, not as the slow-paced footman, but on horseback. The skeleton rider on his pale horse is rattling after you with speed tremendous!

And ah! hell follows him! Hell follows Death—the sure and certain consequence of sin! And what have you to do with making merry? Have you made appointments for the next week? Keep them if you dare, if in the name of God you can make it consistent. If you can make it consistent with reason to be busy about the body, and neglect the soul—to fritter away that time on which eternity depends—then go and do it.

If it be a wise thing for you to leap before you look, if it be a prudent thing to damn your soul eternally, for the sake of a few hours of mirth—say so—go and do it like an honest man. But if it be unwise to forget *forever* and only think of *today*, if it be the strongest madness to lose your life to gain the mere apparel with which the body is to be covered, if it be madness to fling away jewels, and hoard up dust as you are doing, then I pray you, I beseech you, answer the question—“What hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor?”

Turn ye, turn ye, “For why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the LORD God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.” “Let the wicked forsake his

way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”

Lo, the cross is lifted up before you. Jesus bleeds. His wounds are streaming with His life-blood, ay, and with yours too. Believe, sinner. Trust Him—with your whole heart trust Him. Come to Him, come to Him. With weeping and supplication I pray you come. Knowing the terrors of the Lord, I beseech you. As one who pleads for his own life, I plead with you.

By heaven, by hell, by time flying so swiftly, by eternity approaching so silently, by death, by judgment, by the awful soul-reading eye, by the rocks whose stony bowels shall refuse your prayer to fall upon you, by the trumpet, and the thunders of the resurrection morning, by the pit and by the flame—I pray you think and believe in Him who is the Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world.

God bless my words to you through His Spirit’s energy, and He shall have the praise forever and ever. Amen.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.