

SCOURGE FOR SLUMBERING SOULS

NO. 417

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

“Woe to them that are at ease in Zion.”
Amos 6:1

IN itself considered, it is no ill thing to be at ease—nay, it is a great blessing to be at ease in Zion in the healthy sense and meaning of that word. Is it not one of the invitations of Christ, “Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest”? Is not this one of the promises made to the believer, “His soul shall dwell at ease, and his seed shall inherit the earth”? (Psa 25:13).

Is not this the privilege which is accorded to the church of God, in the words of Isaiah, “Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a *quiet* habitation”? (Isa 33:20). And still more in the prophecy of Jeremiah, chapter 46, verse 27, “Jacob shall return, and be in rest and at ease, and none shall make him afraid”?

To have perfect quietness in Christ is indeed a privilege which only belongs to those who have entered into that which is within the veil! Oh to enter into our rest! for “They that have believed do enter into rest and have ceased from their own works as God did from his.”

They have found in the finished work of Christ enough for their soul’s repose. They see in the faithfulness and power of God enough support for the future, whatever troubles it may bring. They see in the precious blood of Christ sufficient atonement for the past, whatever its sins may have been. And in communion and fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, abundant joy for the present, whatever may be its trials, its difficulties, its straits, or its fears.

It is a blessed thing then, understanding the word “ease” in its good sense, to be at ease in Zion. So good a thing that it is denied to the wicked, for “The wicked are like the troubled sea which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.” And of the wicked it may be said, “And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest; but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind” (Deu 28:65).

Oh, beloved brothers and sisters, it is a thing worth praying for, and worth striving after, that our spirit may have perfect rest, for the kingdom of God is peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Jesus is King of Salem and Prince of Peace, “and the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever” (Isa 32:17). Peace, peace to you, you troubled one. In the world you shall have tribulation, but in Christ you shall have peace.

But it seems there is an ill sense in which the word “ease” may be used, for the text says, “Woe to them that are at ease in Zion.” This is a carnal ease, a fleshly security. It is not the confidence of a man who is pardoned, but the ease of a hardened wretch who has learned to despise the gibbet. It is not the assurance of one who is on the rock, but the ease of a senseless drunkard, whose house is tottering from its sandy foundations, and yet he riots at full speed.

It is not the calm of a soul at peace with God, but the ease of a madman, who, because he has hidden his sin from his own eyes, thinks he has concealed it from God. It is the ease and peace of one who has grown callous, hardened, brutalized, stupid, sullen, and careless, who has begun a sleep which God grant may soon be broken, or else it will surely bring him where he shall make his bed in hell.

As I know there are many in this congregation who are at ease in Zion—I shall not draw the bow at a venture this morning, but in the name of God shall aim straight at the heart. I shall first of all—laboring all the morning long as God’s servant, to wake up those who are at ease in Zion—try to wake them *by calling out their names*, for that is said to be an admirable method of waking sleeping men.

Secondly, *by shedding a light upon their eyes*, for there be many who can sleep in the night who will not sleep so comfortably in the day. And then, thirdly, *by sounding the trumpet in their ears*. Ay, and such a trumpet, that if God the Holy Spirit be here, it shall sound like the blast of the archangel, and make them quiver with fright, even if they turn not unto God. But all these things will fail unless the Holy Spirit, who quickens those that be dead in trespasses and sins, shall be present to wake and to save these sleepers.

I. First, in order to the arousing of the many that are at ease in Zion, we will CALL OUT THEIR NAMES—which are to be found in the chapter before us.

1. The name of the first sleeper in Zion is *Presumptuous*. His character is described in the first verse, “They trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came.”

Alas, proud heart, you come to this house, and you go from it quite content and easy because you say to yourself, “I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing.” “Let the drunkard tremble,” say you, “I have always been moral. Let the dishonest bow their heads, I have always walked in integrity before men.”

And so you wrap yourselves in your good works, and hope thus to stand complete before God. So you trust in your mountain of Samaria and say, “My mountain standeth firm; I shall never be moved.” I can hardly understand your being at ease in self-righteousness, if you occupy these seats often, for there are none against whom we hurl such thunderbolts as those workmongers, those merit-trusters, who boast of themselves that they are righteous, and deceive both themselves and others. Against no man do we utter sterner denunciations than against him who, going about to establish his own righteousness, has not submitted himself to the righteousness of Christ.

Why, man, your purest works are only dross and dung in the sight of God, and your best performances are defiled with the marks of your black hands. They cannot even bear the twilight of an awakened conscience—how, then, will they bear the sevenfold sunlight of God’s great judgment day, when He shall bring all things before Him, and everything shall be naked and open.

He who trusts in his own works leans upon a broken reed. As well attempt to cross the storm-tossed ocean upon a child’s paper boat, or mount to the heaven of God in the philosopher’s balloon—as well attempt to put out the fire of a blazing prairie by carrying in your hand a little water scooped from the neighboring stream, as hope by any means to get rid of your own iniquities by doing better or of your past sins by future holiness.

I tell you, man, your prayers, your alms-giving, your fastings, your repentings, your church-goings, your chapel-goings, are all as nothing in the eye of Him who demands perfect obedience, and will never accept anything short of perfect righteousness from man. Away, away, away with these gaudy rags! They will be unraveled ere long.

You may toil at the loom night and day, but your work shall be rent in pieces and not a shred shall be left, for you are spinning nothing but a spider’s web which Justice shall tear in pieces, and like Adam, whose fig leaves could never cover him, you shall cry before God, “I knew that I was naked, and I hid myself.” Woe, then, to them that are at ease in Zion, whose name is Presumptuous.

But the great mass of you escape while I speak thus. “No,” say you, “we do not belong to that class. We know the Gospel better than that. We are orthodox Protestants, and stand fast with good Martin Luther, and believe that a man is justified by faith, and not by the works of the law.” Remember, you may believe that and yet not be justified yourself. You may hold the doctrine plainly enough, but it is one thing to believe in the justification of the ungodly and quite another thing for an ungodly man to be justified.

2. A second name is put before us in the roll, and that is *Not-Now*, or *Procrastination*. Surely there are hundreds of you who will recognize your own surname. See how you are described in the third verse, “Ye that put far away the evil day.” Yes, you are only young apprentices at present, and when your time is out you think it will be early enough to attend to matters of soul-interest.

Or you are only journeymen at present, and when you have earned sufficient money to set you up in business, then will be the time to think of God. Or you are little masters, and have just begun business. You have a rising family and are struggling hard, and this is your pretense for procrastination. You promise that when you have a competence, and can quietly retire to a snug little villa in the country, and your children have grown up, then you will repent of the past, and seek of God's grace for the future.

All these are self-delusions of the grossest kind, for you will do no such thing. What you are today you will probably be tomorrow, and what you are tomorrow you will probably be the next day, and unless a miracle shall happen, that is to say, unless the supernatural grace of God shall make a new man of you, you will be at your last day what you now are—without God, without hope, and a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel.

Procrastination is the greatest of Satan's nets. In this he catches more unwary souls than in any other. "Not now, not now, not now, time enough, time enough, time enough," says he. "Taste the world's pleasure first. Come, take your swing, go to the end of your tether, and then pull up of a sudden and repent."

Well knows he that then he will have the same cry for them, "*Not now. Not now,*" until they come into the jaws of death, and then he will turn round and hiss into their ears the awful words, "Too late! Too late! Too late!" though he will be as much a liar then as he is now, for it is never too late if the Lord make bare His arm.

Now, might I not look around these galleries, and down upon these pews below, and remember many of you who for these seven or eight years have been hearers of the Gospel from my lips? There have been many times when you have trembled and been alarmed. You felt like Felix, but like him you cried, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a more convenient season I will send for thee."

Ah! that convenient season has not come yet and I fear it never will. Bless the Lord, there have been many hundreds of you whose own season never came, but the Lord made you come at *His* convenient season and not at yours. May it be so with others of you!

But alas! alas! how large a proportion of those who come into this house of prayer still say, "Not now, not now," and put off the day, and will not come, but think they they are to live forever, imagining that the judgment day will never approach, that they shall never have to give an account before God, and so they go on in their sins till the chapter shall end, and the *finis* shall be written in black letters—for, "Depart ye cursed!" shall be their sentence.

3. The third name is *Evil-doer* or *Sin-lover*. "They cause the seat of violence to come near." Into the house of God there are many come who still persevere in their sins, though not so comfortably as they would have done if they had neglected the means of grace. Many I know have come here, who at last said, "Well, this will not do. I cannot hear the Gospel and have the shop open on the Sunday. I cannot act as I have done in my business, and yet be a seat-holder there—one of the two must be given up." And God has given them grace to serve JEHOVAH and renounce Baal.

But ah! there is a large proportion who are undecided. Where were you last night? Here you sit and who would know but that you are the greatest saints out of heaven? But perhaps, some time or other last week, you sat where none would know that you were the basest sinners out of hell.

Many attend the synagogue of Satan, as well as the synagogue of God. Some can give the right hand to religion, while the left hand clasps their iniquity. Oh, those sweet sins, those darling sins that men hug and press to them, though they might as well put a viper in their bosom and hug it there, while all the while it infused its venom into their veins.

How many *must* indulge their sins! They would have Christ, but they must have their cups too. They would follow the Savior, but they must have their chambering and wantonness. They would be Christians, but oh, it is a hard road and a narrow one, and they cannot give up their sweet lusts. O soul, am I not calling out your name now? Do I not now describe your character to the very life?

Lover of sin, the day shall come when you will hate your sin because of the punishment it shall bring you—for he that woos sin, woos punishment; he that loves iniquity drinks a cup which is sweet at the

brim, but the dregs! the dregs! the dregs! which must be drained, how direful shall be that burning draught. Oh! the draining of those dregs will last throughout eternity, an eternity of hell.

4. The next name is *Love-self*. “They lie upon beds of ivory and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flocks, and the calves out of the midst of the stall.” This was not wrong. If they had a bed of ivory there was no more objection to their lying upon that than to their lying upon a common couch.

There can be no reason why persons blest with rank in life where they can use these things should not use them, for every creature of God is good and nothing to be despised, but to be received with thankfulness. Their fault was this, that they lived only for self-indulgence. They come under the category of those described by the apostle, “whose God is their belly.” They lived only to eat and to drink, to be merry and to make merry with their friends.

You know I am no ascetic, my humor is far too warm and genial for me to claim association with John the Baptist, whose meat was locusts and wild honey. My sympathies run with the Master, of whom it is said, “The Son of man came eating and drinking.” But still I must, even as He did, inveigh against those who live only for the flesh, who are simply strainers for meat and drink, whose life-work is to provide food and raiment—who are satisfied as long as they have the richest dainties and the choicest wines.

Who even come up to the house of God because they love to have their ears regaled with sweet sounds, and even God’s prophet is to them as one that plays a goodly tune upon a pleasant instrument. Self-indulgence! Oh! this is the God of many! They live not for Christ—what do they do for Him? They live not for His church—what care they for that? They live for self and for self only.

And mark, there are such among the poor as well as among the rich, for all classes have this evil leaven. Self-honor, self-seeking, these be your gods, O Israel, and multitudes dance and sing in honor of the beloved deities. Fullness of bread often brings on emptiness of heart, and there be many who are like the Israelites in the wilderness, while their meat is yet in their mouth, the wrath of God comes upon them, because their meat is the offering which they offer at the shrine of their God and that God is their belly.

Do I not speak to some such here this morning? Probably those to whom this most applies will say, “Well I do not think that is for me.” Probably it is for you, then, for this is a charge to which no man would like to plead guilty. Among all the sins that are confessed, nobody ever confessed covetousness. No, he only exercises a proper discretion in taking care of himself.

He thinks that the excellent of the earth ought to be provided for—he puts himself down among them, and therefore takes care that he should have not only his bread and his water given him, but whatever else he may desire besides. O self-lover, remember there are no pampered tables and choice confectioneries in hell. Awake, then, from your dreamings!

5. It seems that among those who were at ease in Zion, was one called *Careless*, an individual who belongs to a very large family—we may give him another name, *Giddy*, *Light-hearted*. He is described in the fifth verse, “That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of musick, like David; that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments.”

You know how many we have, even amongst those who frequent our sanctuaries, who say, “Begone, dull care.” They never sit down for half an hour, and turn over the Word of God to see whether these things are so. “No,” they say, “let well alone.” They are happy, they are comfortable for the present, and like butterflies, while it is a bright summer’s day, they think the winter is far off.

Their whole life is spent in levity. We may call them the froth of society. There is nothing solid in them, they are not solid enough even to be desperately wicked. Even their religion is carelessness. They sing a hymn as though it were a song, when prayer is offered—and they will sometimes go to prayer meetings—they are criticizing the terms which are used before the mighty God.

Sometimes they venture to make a profession of religion, but you might hope to build a palace with pillars of smoke, or adorn a queen’s brow with dewdrops, sooner than find any truth in their godliness.

Their convictions are always superficial—a sort of scratching of the soil as with the old ploughs, but there is no sub-soil ploughing, no turning up and breaking the clods, no tearing up of the vitals of their consciences, no revelation of themselves to themselves.

Like stony-ground hearers, they receive the Word with gladness, but they have no depth of earth, and after a little while, when the seed springs up, it withers away. Not here and there do we find such, but there are very many careless souls who will never give themselves the healthy exercise of thought. Woe unto you, woe unto you, if thus you are at ease in Zion!

6. And now, to call out the last name in the list, there is one called *Crossless*. He is described in the sixth verse, “And they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.” It is an awful thing to live in this world without a cross! I have heard of one who, being told of another that he had never any trials, said he should not like to live in the same town, for he was sure something terrible would happen to him.

I was once preaching in a country village where there was an estimable pastor who seemed to have a very quiet and nourishing little church, and I said to him, “Now, yours is the course of life I should prefer, to be quiet and secluded, and not to have an excess of labor. You,” I said, “seem to have no trials.”

Ah! it was not long after, he had the most crushing of trials that could happen to man and his brain reeled beneath it. And so, no doubt, if a child of God should be a little while without a trial, it is only because there is another one coming, and he is having a little respite because a very heavy blow is about to fall upon him.

As John Bunyan says in his doggerel rhyme—

*“A Christian man is seldom long at ease,
When one trouble’s gone another doth him seize.”*

It is written of the ungodly, “Moab has been at ease from his youth; he hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel.” There are such in this congregation. You never had a great trouble in your lives. Some little things that you have elevated into trials by sentimentalism have fallen upon you, but you have never had any great rackings of mind, no great temptations, or trials, or losses, or crosses, and you are comfortably saying, “I am favored because I have none of these.”

Methinks I may add that you are highly abhorred, for only they escape the rod whom God disowns, just as a man dares not chasten another man’s child, but is sure to chastise his own, if he loves him. You have escaped crossless hitherto, take care, your being at ease in Zion on this account is very dangerous. Oh! may God arouse you as I thus describe your case and call out your name.

II. And now, having thus passed through their names, we come to SHED SOME LIGHT UPON THESE SLEEPERS’ EYES.

Ah! brethren, this time we have a hopeless errand! It is of no use shedding any light upon these people’s eyes—that will not wake them, for, truth to tell, they are sleeping with the sun of heaven shining upon their eyelids, for the text says they are “at ease *in Zion*.” They were not at ease in Ethiopia, where they have never heard the Gospel. They were not at ease in Sheba, or the ends of the earth where no warning prophets had been sent. They were at ease *in Zion*, where Wisdom cried aloud in the streets, where her oracles were in every house, and where her servitors stand at every door.

What is the use of bringing light to these people? We shall not waken them so, but perhaps we may do it by reminding them of this light. And oh! while I do this, my dear hearer, if there is any value in your soul, and if it is worth while to be saved, I pray you hear for yourself. “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear,” whilst I do in God’s name, perform the sorrowful task of endeavoring to shake you in your sleep.

In the first place, you are asleep, *but you know your danger*. Ah! how many of you foster the sins which *you know* will destroy your souls. You put your hands into the fire knowing it will burn you, ay, and you have the festering blisters still upon you where you were burnt aforetime. You leap into the

furnace knowing that you must be consumed, while you can hear the cries of those who, as your companions, have already felt the heat.

Oh, I beseech you to remember that to sin in the light is to sin with vengeance, to sin against knowledge is to sin seven times over. He that sins in Sidon or in Tyre is but a petty offender compared with sinners in Chorazin or Bethsaida. According to the degree of privilege is the degree of sin. He that leaps over hedge, and bar, and post, to destroy himself, is a self-destroyer indeed.

He that starves with bread in his hand deserves to starve. He that dies of sickness when the physician lives next door, and he refuses to call him in, deserves to die. He that perishes when Christ's cross is lifted up, when the brazen serpent is held up before his eyes, and he is bidden to look to it, deserves that the fiery serpent should bite him, and that the poison should rankle in his veins.

Oh! sin not, I pray you, for you cannot sin so cheaply as others. Strange paradox—to die in the light is to die in the thickest darkness.

But again, *you frequently have arousings*. Oh! I pray God I may never be found among the list of those sleepy preachers, who will let their congregations continue peacefully in their sins. I appeal to you, what man's smile have I ever courted or what man's frown among you have I feared? Have I always been harping upon some sweet doctrine, saying, "Peace, peace, where there is no peace"? Have I not told you what sin will bring upon you? Have not these eyes wept over you, while I have cried, "Oh! that you knew your end, that you would consider these things"? Has not this throat been hoarse when I have called out after you in God's name, as you were going along the downward path?

I have heard of a preacher, who in order to be spiritual gave up his ministry, because he said it was written, "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread." Little was he fit for a minister, for he would soon have known that ministry is the hardest of toil. He who does not know how to combine the two things, to minister and yet to eat his bread with the sweat of his brow, is not a minister of God. If I have preached in such a way that I have found my ministry a light labor, if the preaching of a sermon has been to me but a trifle to be played with, then God be merciful to me for this great evil!

But be assured it is not so. I have come forth some Sunday mornings with the burden of the Lord upon my heart, till I have been bowed down with the weight, and there is not a Sunday night, and has not been for many a day, when I do not come on this platform in such a state both of body and soul, that I pity a dog who has to suffer what I have, under the terror and the weight of the awful responsibility of having to preach to such a crowd as this.

If you perish, any one of you, it is not because I have not warned you, it is not because I have not shunned to use plain language, or have selected courtly phrases to make you think me eloquent. I have come down upon your consciences as with a sledge hammer. I have sought to dash at your hearts that you might turn unto the Lord my God. Woe, then, to those that are at ease under a faithful, laborious, and earnest ministry! God have mercy on such! They need it. O Lord! we pray You lay not this to their charge!

But more than this. Have you never thought of it—you who are unsaved in this congregation, and yet are so continually here—that *everything in this place cries out against you*? As often as the pool beneath me is opened, and the ordinance of baptism is administered, every candidate descending into the pool bears witness against you, for as they say, "I am on the Lord's side," they leave you behind, and you have this reflection—oh, that you would let it work in you—that you dare not confess Christ.

And tonight, when that table shall be spread with the blessed emblems of His body and of His blood, they will cry out against you. The bread will say to you, "You have never eaten the flesh of Christ." The blood will cry to you, "You have never been able to drink of His blood." The whole communion as it sets forth the dying of the Lord, will say to you, "You have no interest in Calvary, you have no part nor lot in this matter, you are still in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity."

And as each shall partake of that ordinance, you will see the hoary-head receive it, and he will speak to you hoary-headed sinners, old in sin but not yet babes in grace, growing, like sere-wood, only the

more ready for the fire. And as the young come and take it, they will say to you, "I am young and I know the Savior. You are twice my age and yet you are strangers to Him."

Post-haste are you onwards, but not staying to think of Him who shed His blood for men. But perhaps you say that there are hypocrites among them. Then the very hypocrites warn you and silently testify. Watch yourself, that you be not a hypocrite.

Why, look at this morning's service, if you are still at ease in Zion, every part of it has been accusing you. We sung this morning, "Welcome sweet day of rest." Is it the day of rest to you? That is to say, in a spiritual sense can you rest yourself in Christ? Do you feel any comfort in the rising of the Lord from the tomb? Could you join in the last verse—

*—"sit and sing myself away,
To everlasting bliss?"*

Why, was it not a lie upon your lips, unless you are a believer in Christ?

And then came the reading of the Word, was not every verse a thunderclap against those who are at ease in Zion? And then came the prayer, and while we prayed for God's people, and your heart wandered, was not the prayer an accusation before Almighty Heaven against you? And now comes the sermon, and oh! if that too should be slighted and despised, think you God shall despise it and slight it? No, verily, "We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life."

And do you not see, my dear hearers, that this very house of prayer, if you are at ease in Zion, accuses you? When last Sabbath evening, I saw the crowds outside—the many hundreds—I might say the thousands who stood waiting there, and never gained an entrance, though they were willing to tug and strive, and have their garments rent from their backs in the struggle, if they might but enter and hear the Word—I thought of some of you who come so comfortably into your seats and yet grow none the better by it.

Oh! it were better for you that you had never been born, if you thus sit and hear the Word, and hear it ringing in your very soul, and yet go away and despise it. Many of those outside will rise up in judgment against you. "That man," say they, "had a seat I might have had—that man kept me out, and I, hearing the Word—who can tell?—I might have received it, but I could not hear, and he heard it and despised it."

He that has the child's bread and treads it under foot deserves to starve. He that has the river of the water of life and will not drink it, but mudds it with his foot, deserves to die of thirst. And what shall we say of many here present? Do they despise their privileges?

Look at the very seat you are sitting on. Why, it cries out against you. How many times have you sat upon it and how many times have you gone away unblessed! On the week-night, when you were absent, there has been a sinner sat there and was saved. You have occupied that place—well, not so very many times, for we have not been in this house long, but add up the times when you occupied your seat in Park Street, and at the Surrey Music Hall, or Exeter Hall, and how many sermons have been wasted on you. How many invitations to dead ears, warnings to stony hearts, the cries of God to ears that would not hear, the weeping of an earnest ministry over souls that were as flints, and the earnest exhortation and admonition of a tender heart to hearts that were as adamant and would not feel.

Ah! to be at ease in Zion is to be damnably at ease. To be at ease under a faithful ministry is to be at ease in the jaws of hell. To be at ease when the house, and the Gospel, and the Sabbath are all crying out against us, is to be at ease while God is making ready His sword against us.

But I cannot stay longer, nor do I wish to do so! Oh, that my heart had language and could speak without my lips! Oh, that I might fling myself at your feet and say to you, "Why will ye die, O house of Israel, why will ye die?" I call you to witness that in putting the things of God far from you, you are

guilty of willful and aggravated wickedness, for you have been warned, not once nor twice, nor twenty times, but so many times as there be Sabbaths in the year.

But this is not enough for me merely to say that I am clear from your blood. Oh, that you may be clear of it yourselves! Oh! sovereign grace, renew the heart! Oh! Jesus, Conqueror, lead them captive at the chariot-wheels of Your love and make them bow! No human power can do it, but You can. Do it, Lord, do it for Your glory's sake!

III. And now, I come to my last point. God give me strength to urge it and may the Holy Spirit send it home. The last point is this—TO SOUND THE TRUMPET IN THE EARS OF THE SLEEPERS.

My trumpet has no great variety of sound, it has but one note—not one which *I* give to it, but one which is ordained of God in the text. It sounds, “*Woe! Woe! Woe!*” There is not a man living among us that knows the full meaning of that word, “Woe.” Nay, there is not a damned spirit in hell who has got to the bottom of that word, for there is an eternity of duration, as well as an infinity of misery. “Woe, woe to them that are at ease in Zion.”

I shall bring out but the gentler parts of the note, and first I say—Woe to you, woe to you, *for how is it at all likely that you will ever be saved?* When a man has not attended the house of God, and is suddenly brought in, we say, “Well, I am glad to see that man come in, who can tell?—the ministry may be blessed.”

I have noticed that in the innumerable cases of conversion which we have had in this place, the majority have been persons who had not heard the Word long. There have been some few persons who have for five, or six, or ten years, been regular attendants, but these are not many. The majority of cases are those out of the streets and the world, who had lived in the habitual neglect of the Word of God. They came in and the Word was with power to their souls. I am not to account for fact! I have only noticed it and I state it as the result of a pretty wide observation.

Now how are you to expect to be blessed? I know God can do all things. We are not to limit the Holy One of Israel, but what are the means to be used with you? “Sickness,” say you, “perhaps will bless me.” But you have been sick, you have had a fever, perhaps the cholera, and you thought you repented, but you did not. Why should you be smitten any more? You will revolt more and more.

Perhaps you say, “If I had another ministry, it might be blessed to me.” Oh! I pray you to go and find another. I pray you for your souls' sake find another if you think so, but if it be that you have heard a faithful and earnest ministry already, then remember, God's great means has been used, His greatest means—the preaching of the Word. How then can you hope to be saved at all?

And then, another thought comes in. You say you have been twenty years a hearer and you are not saved—now is there any probability that you ever will be? God is Sovereign, He can save you—we are only speaking now of probabilities—does it not seem very probable that if when the Gospel was very new to you, and you took a lively interest in it, still it was not blessed to you, that now when your ears have got accustomed to our voice till you can go to sleep under it—does it not seem probable that you will never have a blessing under it at all, but that the next twenty years, if you live so long, will be as profitless as the twenty that are passed, and so you will go unsaved to your graves?

I think it was Christmas Evans who used the simile of the blacksmith's dog, which when his master first set up in trade was very much frightened with the sparks, but at last he got to be so used to them that he went to sleep under the anvil. “And so,” said the good preacher, “there be many that go to sleep under the Gospel, with the sparks of damnation flying about their nostrils.” And certainly there be such.

I am told that when they are making the great boilers at Bankside, when a man has to go inside for the first time and hold the hammer, the noise is so frightful that his head aches and his ears seem to have lost all power of hearing for a long time afterwards. But I also am told that, after a week or two, a person can go to sleep in the midst of these boilers while the workmen are hammering outside, and he would sleep none the less soundly for the noise!

So I know there is such a thing as going to sleep under the most thundering ministry. I know that men get used to these things—used to being invited, used to being warned, used to being thundered at.

They have been pleaded with until they sleep under it. Ay, I doubt not they would sleep even if the world were blazing, if the sun were turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, and I think that even the trumpet of the archangel would not suffice to wake them from their lethargy, if they heard it long enough to be accustomed to it.

Oh! then, shall we give you up as hopeless? I think we almost may. If you have heard so long and been unblest, there is no great likelihood that you ever will be blessed, but you will go on as you have been going, till at last you perish.

But remember, for I must sound this trumpet one moment longer, that being at ease in Zion, you are at ease where God will come *first*. Judgment must begin at the house of God, His fan is in His hand and He will thoroughly purge His floor. He begins with His own floor, He shall purify the sons of Levi. He will begin with those that are in His house, so that judgment will have to begin with you.

What a place to be asleep in! Not asleep in the far ends of that country, where the invasion can only come after due and proper notice, but asleep on the coast, when justice is on board its vessel, and is ready to land on the shore. This is to sleep indeed.

Remember too, you are asleep where God is most severe, for certain it is, according to Scripture, that it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah at the day of judgment than for Capernaum, where Christ was preached.

Why, you are asleep where Justice deals its heaviest blow—asleep where its sword is keenest, where its battle is hottest, and its doom is the most dreadful. Well, if you are sleeping here, methinks you will sleep anywhere, and if the thundering of God's great woe cannot suffice to wake you up, what can? O God Almighty! what can? You can do it Yourself. O that You would do it! But it shall be a miracle indeed and a wonder of grace, if these sleepers shall be made to wake.

And now I send you not home with the word "woe" in your ears alone. Do you feel the force of what has been said? O my hearers! Do you feel that it is a solemn thing to have been at ease so long? Do you tremble? Are you saying, "O that I might be saved! O that God would have mercy upon me"? He will do it. He will.

The Gospel is free to you still as it always has been, and lo, we preach it to you. All He asks of you is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. He has not asked an impossible thing, a hard thing—that which takes weeks to do. It is done in an instant, and when His Spirit is present, it is done at once and completely.

"But what is it to believe in Christ?" say you. It is to trust Him—trust Him with your soul—trust Him with your soul just as it is. Trust Him with it now. I do not say to you, "Go home and pray," though I hope you will—that is not my errand. I have to say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." That is the way to salvation, and you have no need to go home to do that. If the Spirit of God has shown you your need of Christ, that can be done where you are—in the pew.

O may the Spirit enable you in your soul thus to cry to God, "I am guilty of all that has been said. I am guilty. I acknowledge it with sorrow. I feel I cannot save myself, and that the means of grace cannot save me, for they have been tried and they have failed. Lord, I have such a stony heart that nothing can break it but Yourself. I am such a careless, good-for-nothing sinner, that the most earnest ministry is lost upon me.

"I have been pleaded with long, but I have not turned. I confess that all this has aggravated my guilt, I acknowledge it, and now, if You destroy me, Lord, You would be just. But O save me! save me!—not for any good thing I have, for, 'All unholy and unclean, I am nothing else but sin.' But Father, Jesus died, I believe that He is able, and that He is willing to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. Just as I am, I put my case into His hands, I am guilty. Lord, I feel it. Oh! that I could feel it more, but Lord, I trust in Him."

Are you touching the hem of His garment, and putting your trust in what He did and what He is? Then your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you. Go in peace. "There is therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." You are saved the moment you believe in Christ. You

are saved. His finished work is yours. It needs not a stitch to be added to it. His complete atonement is yours. It needs no blood of bulls, no tears of man, to complete it. It is done. You are saved. Clap your hands and go in peace.

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.