

THE PORTION OF THE UNGODLY NO. 444

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 13, 1862,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it.”
Isaiah 47:14.*

THIS text is part of a terrible description of God’s judgment upon Babylon and Chaldea. The prophet had clearly written out the indictment of the Lord against that tyrannical people, and having proved their guilt He pronounces their sentence. He accused them of showing no mercy to the inheritance of the Lord which, in His Wrath, He had given into their hands. He charges them with pride and boastfulness, for Chaldea had said in her heart, “I am, and there is none beside me,” and Babylon had boasted, “I shall be a lady forever; I shall see no sorrow.” He testifies against their boldness and presumption, for they were given to pleasures and lived carelessly, expecting no ill. Thus said the prophet, speaking in the name of the Lord, “You have trusted in your wickedness: you have said, None see me. Your wisdom and your knowledge, it has perverted you; and you have said in your heart, I am, and none else beside me.”

On account of these iniquities the destruction of Chaldea and Babylon was to be sudden, terrible, and complete. They were to be so utterly destroyed, that there should not be one single comfortable reflection connected with their state. There should be a fire to consume, but none to warm at, the burning should not be as when wood crackles in the flame, when glowing ashes or a charred log may be left, but they should be as stubble, utterly consumed, without vestige or remembrance.

How to the very letter this has been fulfilled, let the modern discoveries of our great travelers tell. We want no better evidence of the truthfulness and divinity of Scripture than that which is furnished by prophecies which have been fulfilled, in lands concerning which we had no knowledge until of late. In the good providence of God there have been dug out from mounds of rubbish and heaps of decayed matter, slabs and stones, bearing in their carvings and inscriptions the most wonderful proofs that the Lord has said, and has fulfilled it, that He has spoken, and it has come to pass. O virgin daughter of Babylon! you have been made to sit on the ground, there is no throne: O daughter of the Chaldeans! you are no more tender and delicate, but your nakedness is uncovered, and your shame is seen. Sit you silent and get you into darkness, O daughter of Chaldea, for you shall no more be called the lady of kingdoms.

It is a truth beyond dispute, that God’s justice is not partial, that the description of the destruction which He awards to one class of sinners is a most fair picture of what He will do with others, for God has not two or three ways of dealing with men in His justice. He has not divers weights and divers measures, for these things are an abomination unto the Lord, He lays righteousness to the line, and judgment to the plummet, and He awards vengeance unto impenitent men by an established and an invariable rule. So, then, the ruin of Chaldea is to us, today, a representation and metaphorical description of the destruction which shall surely come upon impenitent sinners in that day when the Lord comes out of His place to judge His enemies, and to ease Himself of His adversaries.

It is with great trembling of heart that I come to this subject this morning. I have preached to you, lo, these many months in this Tabernacle, and I have delighted most to lift up my Master’s cross, and to speak of the sufficiency of His blood, and of the fullness and freeness of His grace, but there are times when the Lord’s hand lies upon us, and we cannot refuse to speak of His terrible things in judgment. I feel today somewhat like the apostle when he said, “Knowing therefore *the terror of Lord*, we persuade men . . . as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be you reconciled to God.” We believe that the Lord would not have said so much about the terrible things of His law and justice in

Scripture—for He has said more about them than any other subject, except the cross—if it had not been that there is a healthy use to be made of the vengeance which the Lord executes upon the wicked, and that it will be both for the benefit of the righteous and for the awakening of the ungodly, sometimes to thunder out the sentence of the Lord. Be it, therefore, known unto you, O sons of men, that Ebal and Gerizim still stand, both the blessing and the curse, and either the one or the other must be yours.

To look at our text at first sight, the figures seem contradictory, for the first metaphor is, “They shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame,” but, the next figure is apparently opposite to it, “There shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it.” We shall first *take the first figure*, and *then the second*, and thirdly, we shall close by endeavoring to dwell upon that important word with which the verse begins, which is put there like a hand in the margin to draw our attention to it, put there as a sort of signal hung out from heaven to tell us that there is something here upon which we ought to meditate with attention—I mean the word “*Behold!*”

I. With reference to the FIRST SENTENCE.

You will see in reading it over that one of the most striking thoughts which it conveys to the mind is this, *that the punishment of the wicked will be easily inflicted*. “They shall be as stubble.” Nothing can be more easy than to kindle than stubble when it is fully dry. Strike the match, and the whole is on a blaze, for it bears within itself the materials of conflagration. So shall it be with impenitent sinners, it shall not be hard for God to visit them with vengeance, for they bear in their own bowels the material of their punishment. Oh, ungodly and impenitent man, there is that in yourself today which, let alone and permitted to ripen, will bring a hell upon you.

We do read in Scripture of the worm that dies not, but that worm may be bred in the corruption of the sinner’s lusts. We do read of the fire that never shall be quenched, but that fire will find its fuel in the hearts of lost spirits. We do read of the pit that has no bottom, but sin has dug a pit for itself of fathomless depth. Sinner, the Lord needs not to forge huge chains of iron, or build cells of darkness, He shall find in sinners the means of their punishment. He needs not to make tormentors for you, you shall be your own executioner, from no bitter herbs need He distil your draught of woe, you yourself shall mingle the cup which you shall drink, the racks of torture and the whips of torment your own soul shall make.

Hear me, man, *you have in yourself the power of memory*, and that power shall become a vehicle of sorrow to you. Memory shall look back upon all your past sins, and each of these, though now they seem to you to be glossy as the scales of the serpent, shall sting you and infuse into your veins a worse poison than the viper ever knew. Your memory shall recall the pleasures which you did once enjoy, but from which you are banished forever. Your memory shall remind you of the warnings you did once receive, and of the loving invitations which sounded in your ears. When it is all over with you, your memory shall be stronger than it is now. You shall have abundant leisure to recollect every circumstance of your ruin, and your memory, enlarged and strengthened, shall bring up the record of every neglected Sabbath, of every secret sin, ay, of those forgotten words of profanity, those secret iniquities which have been buried deep by time, but which shall be disinterred by the hand of eternity.

Even now, at the very recollection of your sin, your cheek reddens with shame, but when memory gets a voice that will be heard, then shall you indeed become pale, and your knees shall knock together with very fear. The voice which says, “Son, remember,” is as terrible as the pouring out of the vials of the wrath of Almighty God.

You have, besides your memory, *a conscience*, a conscience which you have striven to silence, but, even drugged and gagged as it is, it sometimes makes you feel unhappy. When conscience smote the heart of Judas, you remember, he went out and hanged himself, but even the conscience of Judas was not so awake as will be the understanding and judgment of the sinner when condemned forever. You will then find, sinner, that you cannot palliate the guilt of sin. You will then see sin in its true colors. You will not then be so apt at making excuses for it, the hand of truth shall rend all those rags away. You will find then that conscience will not be trifled with as it is now. Now you try to make it hold the scales with an unjust hand, but then it will deliberately award you the due reward of your deeds. O, man!

your memory and your conscience shall be as two great millstones grinding you to powder, or as two contending winds which shall with their tempestuous strivings break you in pieces, as the ships of Tarshish are broken by the north wind.

Then, added to your memory and to your conscience, there shall come *your increased knowledge*. You know enough now to leave you without excuse, but then your knowledge shall increase so as to leave you without pretense of apology. You shall then perceive the craft of the tempter who deluded you. You shall then see the blackness and the filthiness of sin as you do not see it now. Then shall you understand the greatness and the goodness of the God whom you have despised, you shall then discern the glory of the heaven which you have lost, you shall then begin to get an idea of that eternity which shall roll over your head forever. Your knowledge shall swell, your mind shall be strengthened, you shall grow, you shall have time enough for development, and all this increased light shall be but an increase of pain to your eyes, and all this increase of wisdom shall be but a fresh source of misery for your impenitent spirit.

Believe me, man, I speak not thus that I may agitate you merely for the sake of causing you pain. God forbid I should thus do, but oh! if I can but arouse you, if but some thunder-clap may awaken you ere you have slept yourself into hell, I shall be but too happy, and you will not think my words too rough if they are the means of bringing you to the knowledge of Christ, and of eternal life. Why, do you not know, man, that your sin, itself, without aught besides, will be enough to make you as stubble to the flame? What is sin on earth? Is it not the mother of misery? Does a man ever do wrong without smarting for it? And those sins which are committed by the body, do they not entail, even on earth, their own punishment and doom? Then if sin in the bud here is bitter, what will it be when it is full-blown? Sin bears its punishment in its own bowels!

Besides, *think of your companions*. Shut up fifty drunkards and profane men together, and would they not soon make a hell for themselves without any interposition of divine power? What will it be when they are bound up in bundles, when the tens of thousands of those who obey not Christ shall find themselves in their own place? Oh, they will be as the flesh in the seething-pot, as the oil in the cauldron, as the kindling in the flame, as the coals in the fire. They shall be tormenting and be tormented; exciting one another to worse sins and direr blasphemies, and so increasing in each other the horror of the great darkness which results from separation from God and enmity against Him. You shall find, sinner, that God needs send no devils to torment you, your sins shall be devils enough, your companions in the pit shall be fiends enough, while your memory, your conscience, and your knowledge, shall add such fuel to the flame that you shall indeed be as stubble cast into the fire.

That is the first truth clearly set forth in the text, but secondly, and solemnly, there is also another very plainly taught, namely, *that this punishment shall be most searching and terrible*. The metaphor of fire is used in Scripture because it is that which of all things causes the most pain, and is the most searching and trying. One would suppose that death by fire must be one of the most painful that can be endured, and the pangs of burning reach to the very inwards of human life. The judgment of God is quick and powerful, it shall search your inwards, it shall reach the secret parts of your belly, there shall be no part of your frame or of your heart that shall be free from its inroads. As fire consumes, and so reaches to the very essence of things, so shall the wrath to come reach to the very essence and subsistence of the soul. It shall be utter and overwhelming destruction which shall totally consume everything like joy and hope, it shall be a penetrating and a piercing of the very veins and the marrow of the man, and he shall not be able to escape therefrom. In Scripture this wrath to come is sometimes spoken of as the second death. Imagine a man dying, dying in pangs, and then rising again to die again, and so continually dying and yet living, expiring and yet breathing, perishing and yet existing, being dissolved, but yet being still in the body. You have now before you, then, the Biblical view of punishment—"the second death."—

***"To linger in eternal death,
Yet death forever fly."***

O soul, there are no words that human eloquence can ever find, however dreadful, that can reach the thousandth part of this great argument! No language that was ever uttered by the sternest prophet, no dreadful denunciations that ever flowed from the most burning lips, could ever attain to the tremendous terror of the wrath to come. I know men say of God's preachers that at times they speak too harshly. Sirs, we cannot speak half harshly enough. We tell you again, even weeping, that our poor feeble words cannot portray your danger, that we cannot ourselves even feel the danger as we would wish, but oh! if our lips had language, if we could but speak as sometimes we feel, we would move you till you should neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep, until you had sought and found a refuge in the wounds of Christ. But we are so dull, or else your hearts are so hard, that when we speak we are like men who throw stones against a wall, and the stones come back upon us. Oh that instead, thereof we might be this morning like the man who drew the bow at a venture, that the arrow may find a place in the joints of your harness, where your heart may be wounded with the arrows of the King!

Thirdly, when we look at our text we see most evidently that this destruction *will be most inevitable*, for the express words of the prophet are, "They shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame." There *is* hope now, there shall be no hope then. There is a new and living way now, there shall be no way then. The gate of mercy is open now, it shall be fast bolted forever then. There is a ladder which reaches from earth to heaven, but there is no ladder which reaches from hell to heaven. There is a great gulf fixed, so that they who would pass from them to us cannot, neither could we go to them even if we should wish to venture there—

*“Fix'd is their everlasting state,
Could man repent, 'tis then too late;
Justice has closed mercy's door,
And God's long-suffering is no more.”*

It is inevitable, we say. How can they avoid it? Man, have you strength to match with the Most High? Can you defy the Eternal God to battle, and go forth in your weakness to meet the Lord God of Hosts? If so, *then* might you hope to escape, but then you would be God yourself, and JEHOVAH would be no God. But you are a puny man, a tooth-ache makes you tremble, a little feather in the wind makes you shake. You are a dying man, you have not power to keep yourself in life, your breath is in your nostrils, and wherein are you to be accounted of? Certain is it, then, that by your own power you will not be able to escape out of the power of the flame. And can you escape by your wit? Why, you have not wit enough now to fly to Christ, you have not wisdom enough now to look to Him, where, then, could you find the wisdom that could invent another plan of salvation? The way of salvation by Christ is the only one that even God's wisdom has revealed to us. No! Fool, you can never find another, nor in hell will you ever have the comfort of the hope of another, for there shall you understand that no other foundation can man lay than that which is laid—Jesus Christ the Righteous.

Or do you think to escape from God by hiding from His presence? Ah, whither will you go? Could you seek the bowels of the mountains, God is there, for He, by His strength, sets them fast. If you could dive into the depths of the sea to seek its deep cavernous recesses, even there would He reach you, for His hand dug the channels of the ocean, and the strength of the sea is His also. Would you try to escape behind the clouds of darkness?—

*“Darkness and light in this agree;
Great God, they're both alike to Thee;
Thine eyes can reach Thy foes as soon
Through midnight shades as blazing noon.”*

Or would you hope to fly beyond the range of the known universe? Man, He is there, for He fills all things, and, as it was said of the world in the days of the Caesars—that it was only one great prison for the offender, so that go where he might Caesar would track him—so shall you find the universe, even could you escape from your prison house, to be but one great den where the Eternal eye should see you,

and the Eternal hand should reach you. No, there is no escape, there is no deliverance, there is no means of avoiding sin's penalty when life is over. It is "Escape from the wrath to come" today, but then escape shall be a thing unknown.

These three truths stand clearly enough in our text, that the punishment of the wicked will be easily inflicted, that it will be most dreadful in its character, and that it will be most inevitable. Do I speak to any here who say they do not believe it? Well, sir, I might only say this much to you, you profess to be a Christian nominally, do you not? and you say you live in a Christian land. Now, if so, if you do really believe this Book to be the Word of God, then what can you say in denial of a future judgment? You must believe in the wrath to come, and in the general judgment. If not, turn Turk, say so at once, turn infidel, or something of that kind, but never again pretend to be called a Christian, and live in a Christian land, and to be one of a Christian people, never profess that, while you object to that which is one of the fundamental truths of revelation—one of these great things about which there can be no dispute among those who receive this Book as being a revelation from God.

But, you will tell me again, that you think I speak too harshly of it. O sirs, not half so harshly as Isaiah, not half so plaintively as Jeremiah or Ezekiel, nor in such telling words as did my blessed Master. The Lord Jesus, though the most loving of spirits, was the most awful of preachers, and in His sermons, while there is everything that could melt and woo, there is no lack of the great and terrible thunderbolt, and the sounding forth of wrath to come, and the judgment which must await the impenitent.

But again, you will say to me, wherefore speak you speak thus? why not dwell upon more pleasant themes? Because, as the Lord, my God, lives, before whom I stand, I would be free of the blood of all men. What is it to win your applause today? or, what is it to gain your censure? Think you, sirs, that the breath of your applause is that on which we live? Fancy you that your opinion of our ministry is aught to us? Nay, not if God has sent us. If we be but what you may think us to be—impostors to please you—then, indeed, we should eschew all such subjects as these, we should be silent upon the hard sayings, and only prophesy smooth things. If we cared for popularity and such like, we should put these doctrines behind and cry, "Peace, peace, and sew pillows to your armholes."

But, as God has sent us, and as we know we must give an account of our ministry, we tell you that if you perish, it shall not be for want of warning, and if you must go down to the pit, it shall be with your eyes open. If you will have your sins, you shall know that you must have the punishment with them, and if you will reject Christ, and if you will despise Him, it shall be with this fact before you, that you did it willfully, knowing what you did, knowing that those who do such things shall not escape the just vengeance of God. Oh! may God but convince you by the spirit of His truth and the solemn realities of the judgment, and the wrath to come, and we shall need no excuse, and no apology, but you would rather think us to be false traitors to your souls if we did not boldly speak on these matters.

II. But, our text now changes its figure, and therefore we, still keeping to the same subject, change our mode of address. "Thus says the Lord, There shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it," by which is meant that there shall be nothing in hell that can give the sinner a moment's comfort, nothing. Let me picture him there. The text says, "Behold," as though it were a thing to be seen with the eyes, and to be heard with the ears.

Behold you, then, for a moment, a spirit cast away from God, and receiving the due reward of its deeds. That spirit we say, has not a coal to warm at, nor a single thing that can yield it a ray of joy. The soul lifts its eye to *heaven*, there are the glorified spirits before the throne, but the sight of heaven affords no comfort to the lost in hell, for they say, "See what glory we have lost! What transcendent joys we have missed! What bliss we renounced, that we might have the mirth of an hour, and the misery of eternity!"

And as they look up, they shall see some of their old companions there, some who were once sinners like themselves, but who have sought for mercy through the precious blood, and having washed their robes in it, stand before the throne, and then the lost ones shall wring their hands, and curse the day in which they were born, that they should have rejected the mercy which they heard proclaimed in their hearing, while others were saved, and this shall tend to make the contrast of their condition appear the more dreadful. And then they will see there the poor tried saints of the Lord whom they were

accustomed to mock at, and they will say, “Ah, there is the man whom we despised, he reigns and we suffer, Lazarus the beggar that lay at our gate full of sores, and was licked of the dogs, is there in Abraham’s bosom, and we are tormented in this flame.”

Soul, the thought of heaven shall fan the flames of hell, the sense of the glory of the righteous shall depress the spirit with a double woe, and at the thought of what you have lost there shall always be in your ears a sound, “How are you fallen, O you son of the morning! How are you cast down from heaven and brought into the depths of hell!” Nor when the spirit turns its eyes around upon *hell itself*, shall it see any reason for comfort there. I know there are some who say, “Well, if I am lost, there will be many more that will be.” Ah, but the multitude of the damned will be no consolation to them. The more there are, the more wretched shall they be, for perhaps, O reprobate, as you shall cast your eye around, you will meet the eyes of the woman whom you did lead astray, and she will curse you to your face. Perhaps, drunkard, as you are in your musings you will see the lad whom you first took to the ale-house and taught to be a beast like yourself. Knaves, there shall you meet your partners in your trade! There shall the ungodly see eyes which shall look upon them glaring like eyes of fire, which they can never avoid—the eyes of those whom they duped, and deceived, and misled.

Most horrible of all, must be the position of the professed minister of Christ who did not preach the Gospel, or who never cared for the souls of men. Oh, if such a lot should ever be mine! Think of the million eyes of those in perdition, every one of them darting flames of fire at the false preacher who did not care for their souls! Better to be a devil than to be a preacher who was untrue to his Master, better to sink to hell as a prostitute, or as a thief, than to go to perdition as a clergyman or a minister who has not preached the Word of God with all his might! There shall be no comfort in the company that they find there, neither heaven nor hell shall yield them a coal to warm at, nor, indeed, will they be able to find any comfort *in themselves, nor in their thoughts*.

Now, we sometimes find men who get comfort to themselves out of the doctrines of God’s Gospel. I have known a man come up to this house of prayer, and under some soul-searching sermon, he has been alarmed, and he has gone home and sat with his finger upon his brow in thought, for a little season, and said, “Almost you persuaded me to be a Christian.” His heart seemed ready to break, but at last he has risen up and said, “If I am to be damned I shall be damned, and if I am to be saved, I shall be saved,” and he has made the doctrine of predestination a coverlet in which he might wrap himself and sleep comfortably. Souls, you shall not be able to do that then, in the world to come, no doctrine will be able to yield you a moment’s comfort, instead of it, your thoughts shall be a case of knives, cutting and piercing your souls, and every truth you have ever known, ay, and every falsehood that you have once believed shall be spikes upon the un-resting bed where you seek to find some peace.

Indeed, there is never any real joy to the sinner even here, when his mind is awake, and certainly there will be none hereafter. Why, the greatest torture to which you could put some men would be to make them think. How do some of our men live? They drink hard and go to bed drunk, they wake up in the morning, and they are very low and miserable, and then they must have a little drink again to lift their spirits up, and when they have lost their reason, they get happy, but if they would sit down and think awhile over their present estate, they would kill themselves.

This is how many a one has been made a suicide. When they have had a moment’s sober thought, they have looked at themselves, and if this on earth has brought men to the halter, and to the knife, what will it do in hell when, forever, forever, and forever, their thoughts shall revolve and revolve, and revolve again upon sin and its punishment, upon grace despised, upon mercy rejected, upon an angry God, and upon the all-devouring wrath which has come forth from His presence?

But again, the sinner shall certainly find *no comfort in God*. Mark you, if the sinner could say *there* what he now says *here*, he would have comfort in God, for now he says, “If God is to treat me thus in the world to come, it will be unjust.” Ah, you will not think so *then*, for this shall be the sting of it all—“I deserve it, I deserve it, I brought this on myself!” You may mutter now about the hardness of God, and call Him a cruel taskmaster, but when your better sense gets the upper hand, as it will do, then you will be compelled against your will to acknowledge that He is not too severe, that He is not too hard with you,

Oh, if the lost spirits in hell could but believe God to be unjust, their pains would cease, but it is the conviction that He is awfully just, and that every pang and every throe they have willfully brought upon themselves by despising Him and running in a false way—it is that conviction which will be the hell of hell. Nay, more, sinner, when you are there, you will not be able to say that God has broken a single promise that He ever made to you. If there be a soul in hell that could say, “I sought the Lord, but He would not be found of me”—if he could say—“I did trust Christ, but He did not save me.” If he could say, “I did seek and pray, but He would not hear”—if he could say, “I did humble myself and leave my sin, I did come to Him and say, Jesus, Savior, pity me, have mercy upon me through Your precious blood.”—if he could say that and then add, “And yet I was not saved”—then that man would have no hell, because he would always have some excuse.

But there is not one among you that will ever have an excuse. If you are lost, it will be because you did not pray, and if you perish, it will be because you did not repent, and if you are cast away, it will be because you would not believe in Christ. You shall find no comfort in any broken promises, but those which are now the hope and joy of the penitent, shall then be your dread and fear. Moreover, you sometimes comfort yourselves with the thought that you cannot help it, that it must be so, and therefore you are comforted in it, but you will get no comfort in that thought in the world to come, for then you will clearly perceive that your sin was willfully undertaken, that you did it to please yourself, that you followed your own wayward, headstrong will, instead of bowing to the will of God. Oh! there is nothing in God, nothing in His promises, nothing in His threatenings, nothing in His Word, which will at the last great day yield a coal for the sinner to warm at, or a fire by which he can sit down. It will be blank, black despair, and not a solitary ray of light shall come from God to that soul.

But further, the sinner shall then find no comfort *in the past*. I know he will look back upon his past joys, but what will he say of them? He will call himself ten-thousand fools to think that for such little paltry joys as those, he should have lost eternal bliss. The drunkard will doubtless remember his cups, but it will be to call himself an idiot to think for a little drink and the sweet excitement of his palate for an hour, he should have damned himself to all eternity. Ah, and the very thought of those enjoyments will act as a foil to set forth the present state in which he is, he will have the sin without the pleasure of it, the dregs, but not the wine, the bitterness, the worm-wood, and the gall, but not the froth upon the cup, *that* he has had in time, but now he has to drink the bitterness to all eternity.

As he looks back, instead of comfort, O sirs, what agony the past will give him! Should I be so unhappy as to have in my congregation this morning one man who shall at last perish, I do not doubt that this present assembly will flash before his eyes. Ah, then he will say, “I remember how the preacher spoke, whatever he did not say, he did warn me to flee from the wrath to come, however feebly he put it, I ought not to have thought of that, but I should have remembered the truth and my interest in it.”

Oh, by these tears which these eyes must shed, and by the emotions which this heart does feel for your soul’s salvation, I conjure you do not remain in such a state that when you die you will have to say, “He cared more for me than I cared for myself, he thought more of my conversion than I ever thought of it, and wished more to see me brought to eternal life than I have ever done.” Oh, let not the past become so bitter as this!

Young man, shall your mother’s tears and your father’s prayers, when they sought to bring you to Christ, make a part of the bitter remembrances of eternity? And you, my dear hearers, who sit here constantly, must these seats cry out against you? Must this house of prayer bear witness against you? Must I appear at the great bar of God, and say “My Lord, it is just, I did warn them, they *were* prayed for, they *were* wept over, they *were* wooed, as a mother loves her children, so has my soul loved them”? Must it be so? God forbid, but it must except you repent. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,” and what remains then, but that he must be driven from the presence of God to the place where hope can never come? God have mercy on you, for if He does not, you shall find not a coal to warm at in the recollections of the past.

Then, when that soul is lost, it certainly shall find no coal to warm at in its *condition in the present*. Now, ungodly men get some degree of comfort from the very ruin of their state, I mean this—some of them are presumptuous. They say, “What care I? I will defy all this. Who is the Lord that I should obey

His voice?” and this gives some sort of comfort here, but you will not be able to face it out thus in eternity. The most brazen among the ungodly crew shall then hide his face for shame, like Belshazzar, his knees shall knock together, and his loins be loosed, then shall the stout-hearted fail, and the soul of the mighty shall be bowed down.

Ignorance, too, gives many men comfort here. They do not know their state, and so they are at peace, but you will have no ignorance then, you will know, even as you are known, so that this also shall be taken away. Here also stupidity often gives men peace. They will not feel, you may hammer them with the law, but they are not moved, you may preach as though you would move a heart of stone, but they are not moved. Ah, but hearts of stone shall be no more in hell, they shall be hearts of flesh to suffer, though not hearts of flesh to repent. Then the stout heart shall be taken away, and the proud spirit shall quail, so that there shall be nothing in the present condition of the lost that can yield them any comfort.

Nor will there be anything to comfort them in their *future condition*. They may look on through the long vista of the eternal ages, and never see the shadow of a hope. Forever, forever, forever, wave after wave, stream after stream of sorrow—forever, forever, forever! Oh! it would make holiday in hell, if it could be proved that the pains were not eternal, but it stands, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment,” “Where their worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched.” No hope! When a woman has no hope, we wonder not that she seeks the cold river, when a man has no hope, we wonder not that he is taken to the asylum as a lunatic, but when the soul has no hope, then it will be death and madness combined forever, forever, forever!

III. And now our text bids us “BEHOLD,” therefore I pray you, beloved, turn not away your eyes from this meditation. Children of God, behold it, it will make you grateful—

*“Oh, were it not for grace Divine,
This case so dreadful had been mine.”*

Does not the thought of the misery from which you have escaped make you love your Savior? And oh, Christian, will it not make you love poor sinners too? Do you not feel as if you wanted to be doing something to pluck them as brands from the burning? Knowing the terrors of the Lord, do you not wish to be the saviors of men? Wake, you sleepers! Woe unto you if you can think of these things and still be quiet! “Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion,” who can see men perish without doing anything to rescue them! Woe unto you! Woe unto you! How can you be the servants of God?

But especially, you that are unconverted, the text says, “Behold.” It is a gloomy subject for you to think upon, but better to think of it now than to think of it forever. Better to weep the tears of penitence than the tears of despair, and better the pangs of conviction than the pangs of condemnation. Better for a little season to lose your mirth and your merriment to get heaven and eternal life, than it is to have your joys now, and then to be driven forever from the presence of the Lord. I am about to close the sermon, and you will go your way, and there will be some few blessed by the Holy Spirit, in whom God’s Word will abide, but oh! for the many of you, for the many of you, we do but preach in vain, we do but speak to ears that are dull of hearing, and to hearts that will not feel.

If I have told you what is false, reject it, laugh at it, if I have tried to stir you up about a theme which does not concern you, turn on your heel and go your way. But oh, sirs, if these things be real, if they be true, if there be but a step between us and death, I conjure you by the love you bear to your own selves, if not by any care for God or Christ, to meditate upon these things, and may God lead you out of self to Christ, away from your sin to Him who is the great sin-bearer, that you may find in Him eternal life. “Turn you, turn you, why will you die, O house of Israel?” Why will you perish? Why will you go down to destruction? Wherefore will you make your bed in hell, and dwell with everlasting burnings? God turn you! May God turn you now, and by His grace save you, and to Him shall be the glory forever and ever! Amen.

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