

THE SMOKE OF THEIR TORMENTS

NO. 602

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BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the Lord. Then he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain; and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the country went up like the smoke of a furnace.”
Genesis 19:27, 28.

EARLY in the morning Abraham sought that favored spot where but yesterday God had been pleased to manifest Himself, and where he had been favored with a season of extraordinary communion. Where should the believer go, but to that choice place, dear to his heart, where he has communed with the Lord?—

*“Who that knows the worth of prayer,
But wishes to be often there?”*

It is a high privilege, the highest which mortals can enjoy, to talk with God, to plead with Him, to use arguments, and to prevail. Such divine grace had Abraham found. No marvel that he goes back to the place where God had thus drawn near to him. Doubtless one reason why he rose early, and went to the place, and looked towards Sodom, was an anxious desire to know how his prayers had speeded. You remember he put a last “perhaps” to the Lord—“Perhaps ten shall be found there. And He said, I will not destroy it for ten’s sake.” He hopes, perhaps, that he need not go any further. He stops, for he feels sure in his heart that there must be *ten* righteous there; he turns his eyes to the quarter of the horizon where Sodom and Gomorrah should stand. So, when *you* have prayed, look for answers. Elijah said to his servant, “Go, and look towards the sea”—so say to your hopes—“Go, and look towards the sea.” If you have asked for rain, expect a cloud; if you have sought mercy, expect that God will stretch out His hand, and bestow it upon you. But God does not always answer His children’s prayers just as they would desire. Besides, His children are sometimes slack in asking, and therefore they do not get what they desire. So Abraham, as he looked towards Sodom—instead of seeing the green well-watered plain, and the roofs and spires of the city, saw nothing but black smoke and a lurid glare going up to heaven like the smoke of a furnace. It is remarkable that he does not appear to have observed the storm as it came down from heaven. From this fact we may infer how *rapid* the destruction of the cities must have been. God rained fire out of heaven upon Sodom—it seems to have been done in a moment; the whole plain was destroyed; and all that Abraham saw after he rose up, which was probably just at sunrise, was merely the smoke that followed the conflagration. So does God drive His enemies away. As wax is melted before the fire, as the smoke is driven before the wind, so does the enemy perish before the breath of God, when He comes forth out of His hiding place to punish sin. Can you now picture to yourselves the reverent patriarch, as he leans upon his staff, and looks with wondering gaze towards the smoking furnace? What must have been his thoughts? What a spectacle for him to gaze upon, from the very spot where he had held communion with God! Perhaps he could not have looked upon it from any other spot. He would have been too much afraid, too full of trembling; but *there* he felt safe. Standing where the Lord had talked with him, he felt secure; and he could look even into that gruesome glare, and that terrible blackness without dismay.

And now I want to summon you, my dear Christian friends, to the scene of your own most hallowed privileges—to the spot, as it were, on which divine grace has been shown most clearly to your souls, and intercessions have been poured out most freely from your hearts. From there I would have you lift up your eyes. To what, do you ask, would I draw your attention? Ah, then I need you to look upon the

smoke of the torments of lost spirits. I want believing eyes to gaze upon that place, “where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched.” Only mind that you stand in the place where God has communed with you, beneath the cross, where the blood shall drop upon you, and you shall feel the sense of pardoned sin. From no other place can we view the wrath of God with proper and profitable emotions. But standing there, our spirits shall be chastened, our souls comforted, and with tears standing in our eyes—tears of gratitude and contrition—we shall venture to look upon that dark and terrible gulf where the wicked lie, and shall derive some profit from the sight, even as Abraham doubtless did.

First, then, tonight, *let me suggest the emotions which should be awakened in the Christian’s spirit when he takes a view of the wrath to come.* Secondly, *let me gather up some lessons which God teaches to His people, and to the world, from the doom of the wicked.* And then, in closing, *let me turn your eyes another way to a yet more awful display of divine vengeance, even more awful, I say, than that which is to be perceived in hell, where lost souls are shut up.*

I. WITH WHAT EMOTIONS OUGHT WE TO GAZE UPON THE TORMENTS OF UNGODLY AND IMPENITENT SOULS?

Certainly it should always be with a *humble submission to the divine will.* The assurance that God is just, even in the midst of His hot displeasure, must always be cherished. The Judge of all the earth cannot but do right. Though He is terrible and dreadful in His anger, as a consuming fire, yet is He still our God forever and ever, full of divine goodness, and full of truth. There is a deep-seated unbelief among Christians just now, about the eternity of future punishment. It is not outspoken—in many cases it is whispered—and it frequently assumes the shape of a spirit of benevolent desire that the doctrine may be disproved. I fear that at the bottom of all this there is a rebellion against the dread sovereignty of God. There is a suspicion that sin is not, after all, as bad a thing as we have dreamed. There is an apology, or a lurking wish to apologize for sinners who are looked upon rather as objects of pity than as objects of indignation, and really deserving the punishment which they have willfully brought upon themselves. I am afraid it is the old nature in us putting on the misleading garb of charity, which thus leads us to discredit a fact which is as certain as the happiness of believers. Shake the foundations upon which the eternity of hell rests and you have shaken heaven’s eternity, too. “These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.” There is precisely the same word in the original. We have it translated a little more strongly in our version, but the Word of God stands the same; and if the one is not eternal, the other is not.

Brethren, this is a fearful thing. Who can meditate upon the place appointed for the wicked without a shudder? Ungodly men seem to think we like to preach upon these topics. Far, far is it from being the case. I have had to censure myself of late for scarcely having preached at all upon them. They fancy that Christians can look with complacency upon the torment of the lost, imagining themselves to be safe. They know not what they say. The very reverse of such a spirit is common among us. We shudder so much at the thought of men being cast away forever, and horror takes so strong a hold upon us, that if we could doubt it, we would; and if we could disprove it altogether, we feel we would be glad. But we dare not attempt the task, because we know that it were to impugn the sentence of the Almighty, and provoke a quarrel against the Most High. Great Judge of all, You shall trample upon Your enemies in the day of Your wrath; yet shall You be as glorious in that act as when You pardon sin, and pass by transgression. Christian, look there, and, as you look, rebel not, but say, “True and righteous are You, O God; let Your name be honored forever!”

Surely, too, another emotion, which a glance towards the dreary doom of the ungodly can never fail to prompt, is that of gratitude. “And why am I not there? They gnaw their fire-tormented tongues in vain—and why am I not there? Did they sin? I have sinned. Did they curse God and die? I, too, have cursed God; and it was a marvel that I did not die—

*‘Oh, were it not for grace divine,
That fate so dreadful had been mine.’”*

Some of you who were accustomed to frequent the ale house, whose voices were loud in the lascivious song, who polluted eventide with sin, and spoiled the day with your ungodliness—thank God that you have been washed in the precious blood of Jesus—for as you read the list of the lascivious, and so on, you are compelled to say, “Such were some of us; but we are washed, but we are sanctified, but we are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” Let the depths of hell compel you to heights of gratitude; and let the wailing and the gnashing of teeth which come up from there, appeal to your lips, your heart, and all that is within you—for the music of thankfulness that you have escaped.

Should there not also here be deep feelings of *humility*? Look to the hole of the pit where you were lifted, and the rock where God has hewn you! What those sinners were, such were you. There was nothing in you that would carry you to heaven, but everything that would have carried you down to hell. You are a brand plucked from the burning—you would have burned in that fire as well as others; and can you lift up your head, and boast of yourself, and say, “O God, I thank You that I am not as other men”? No, not if you are in your senses; but humbled and yet thankful, you will go your way with a subdued heart, looking upon others with pity, and with love, and anxiously desiring to pluck them also from the flames, and guide their feet into the way of peace.

And there is another sensation which must go through every nerve—and the thought will sometimes blanch our cheeks with terror—*lest we also should go there*. I think a glance of the eye towards the smoke of Gehenna would always prompt a holy jealousy over one’s own heart, and a diligent watchfulness of one’s own walk. What do you say to this, professor? You see the smoke going up forever—*what if you should go there after all?* Remember, it is one thing to *profess* to be a Christian, and quite another thing to be truly converted. You may go to the gates of heaven by profession; but there is a back door to hell. High professor, take care. If your wings are made of wax, they will melt; and the higher they soar, the greater your fall will be. It will be a dreary day for any of us if we have to go from the pulpit to perdition, from the Lord’s table to communion with devils, and from drinking the cup in which we commemorate the sacrifice of Christ to the drinking of the cup of trembling—in which the dregs of God’s wrath are to be found! If I must perish, I would rather perish as an openly-avowed sinner than as a hypocrite—for the doom of a man who has made a fair show in the flesh, and a fine pretense of godliness must be increased by the loss which he suffers, the hopes which are disappointed, the professions which have turned out to be lies. Members of this Church, I speak to you hoping that you will put the question among yourselves, “Is it I, Lord? Is it I?” My fellow laborers in this Church, deacons and elders, let us search ourselves! Let not your gray heads exempt you from the duty of self-examination. Let not your office screen you from the suspicion that, after all, you may be deceived. Come, let us go together as if we never went before to the cross of Jesus; let us look up to Him as He hangs bleeding there, and if up to this moment we never have been saved, let us say, “Jesus, accept us now.”—

*“A guilty, weak and helpless worm,
On Your kind arm I fall—
Be You my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all.”*

These at least are some of the feelings with which we, like Abraham, standing in the place where God has communed with us, may look towards Sodom and see the smoke going up as the smoke of a furnace. We shall pause awhile, and then notice the teaching which seems to come from the dreadful doctrine of the wrath to come.

II. Look, Christian, if you can look, and see there THE EVIL OF SIN.

Are you startled? That is the true harvest of the sowing of iniquity. Come, sinner, I charge you look at it. This is what sin brings forth—this is the full-grown child. You have cradled it on your knee; you have kissed and caressed it; see what it comes to. Hell is but sin, full-grown, that is all. You played with that young lion—see how it ravishes, and how it tears in pieces now that it has come to its strength. Did you not smile at the azure scales of the serpent? See its poison! See to what its stings have brought those who have never looked to the brazen serpent for healing! Next time the enemy says to you, “Is it not a

little one?" answer him, "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindles." Remind him that the mustard is the smallest among seeds, but yet it grows to a great tree. Is it so? Do you account for sin as a trifle, a flaw scarcely to be noticed, a mere joke, a piece of fun? But see the tree which springs from it! There is no joke *there*—no *fun* in hell. Fools make a mockery of sin, which is but an egg; but when the egg is hatched, and the bird full-fledged, they will find that they must laugh on the other side of their mouths, if they laugh at all. My God, from this day forward help me to see through the thin curtain which covers up sin, and whenever Satan tells me that such-and-such a thing is for my pleasure, let me remember the pain of that penalty wrapped up in it! When he tells me that such a thing is for my profit, let me know that it can never profit me to gain the whole world and lose my own soul. Let me feel it is no sport to sin, for only a madman would scatter firebrands and death, and say it is sport.

You did not know that sin was so evil. Some of you will never know how evil it is, till the sweetness of honey has passed from your mouth, and the bitterness of death preys at your organs! You will count it harmless till you are hopelessly stricken with its sting. What? Is there no way to teach you the evil of sin but to cast you into hell to learn the lesson, where you cannot profit but only perish by the knowledge acquired too late? O that you were wise, you thoughtless ones, and looking at the smoke of the ruin of others, would learn how dreadful is that sin which will before long ruin *you*, as it has already ruined them! Do you think that God struck Sodom, and that He will not strike you? Drunkard, swearer, shall Gomorrah perish and shall you escape? No! He is the same God today to punish sin as He was then. I say, see the blackness of your sin by the light of hell's fire, and as the smoke goes up forever, ask yourself will you sin when such is the inevitable result? Will you dwell with sin if this involves dwelling with tormenting fire? This doctrine I would to God we could learn in our hearts! It is hard for me to preach it, it is harder still, for you to learn it; but none ever know the love of Christ till they know something of the evil of sin.

As the Christian, with downcast and blushing face, looks to the place where their worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched, *he is awe-struck with the justice of God*. What? Is God so just as this? He swears, "As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he should turn unto Me and live." He is a God so good that He delights in mercy, and never is His soul more glad than when He passes by transgression, iniquity, and sin, and receives His Ephraims to His bosom. But is this God so severely just? Shall men, made in His own image, be broken by Him as with a rod of iron? Will He consign them to that Tophet, the pile where there is fire and much wood? Shall the ire of the Almighty be the flame that kindles it? Can He be a God of love, and yet treat sinners thus? Then how awfully just must God be! How stern this attribute of unimpeachable justice! Some talk of God as though mercy was the sole quality of the divine character, and He had no other attribute. But the God of Scripture is to be adored in every attribute by which He is revealed. "God is love." But know, too, that His justice shall beam forth with ineffable splendor when He whets His glittering sword, and says, "Ah, I will ease Me of My adversaries, and avenge Me of My enemies." My God, when He came on Sinai, touched the mountains and they smoked; coals of fire went before Him. He did ride upon the wings of the wind. Thick darkness was round about Him. His voice was thunder, and He spoke in lightning. Even Moses did exceedingly fear and quake. What will He be when He comes to punish for offenses, if He is thus dreadful when He comes merely to give the law? May we never know the weight of the eternal arm, when it shall come down upon a guilty conscience. May we never feel in body and in soul how strict, how severe, how unflinching is that mighty God who has unsheathed His sword forever, and bathed it in heaven, and made this as His solemn oath that He will by no means spare the guilty, but will cut them off, root and branch, and destroy them forever! Admire the justice of God. Muse upon it much. Think with what solemn pomp it shall be vindicated. Oh, what a holocaust of victims shall burn forever in attestation of His majesty! Let your soul be humbled, boast no more, bow at His feet, submit yourself to Him! "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little."

Another lesson now comes to us, and one which I hope will be more pleasing, and affect some minds that may not be moved by what we have, up to now, said. Looking at the destruction of the wicked, this reflection crosses our minds. *We, His people, have been redeemed from destruction!* What a price must that have been which redeemed us from such woe, and rescued us from such a place of torment! You have learned from this pulpit the doctrine of substitution, how the Lord Jesus Christ took the sins of His people and stood to suffer in their place. We do not say that Christ endured the hell of His people—the precise torment which His people ought to have suffered—but we do say upon Scriptural warrant that Christ endured a pain and agony which was tantamount, and accepted by God as the proper substitution for all the griefs which were due to the sins of His people. Who can form an idea of what the torment of one soul must be that is cast away forever? Not, remember, the torment of an hour, a day, a month, a year, a century, a thousand years, but forever—FOREVER! You cannot measure that; but you will have to multiply that by ten thousand times ten thousand when you remember that Jesus laid down His life for many, and gave Himself a ransom for His sheep. Nor are these a few, but a great multitude which no man can number. Well did the psalmist say, as he typified the Messiah, “All Your waves and Your billows are gone over Me.” One soul that is lost cannot feel all the waves and billows, but Jehovah Jesus did! None but a God could bear what He endured. Beneath that ocean of tremendous fire, the mighty substitute bowed His majestic head—that very head which heaven worshipped, and which is crowned with everlasting splendor—bowed Himself in the great baptism of Almighty wrath that the waves of swelling grief might roll over it. Yes, every wave and every drop of every wave of divine wrath that was due to His people!

Think, think, Christian, as you hear that solemn trampling, as you hear the wailing of the lost, as your eyes seek to penetrate that land of death, as your whole soul is alarmed with gloomy forebodings of that wrath—think what must have been in the tremendous cup—the hells of all His people, not actually, but virtually condensed into the pangs of an hour! He did but drink it, and all His veins were flushed with hot blood. Every nerve became a high road for the hot chariots of pain to drive along. He cried, “If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.” It was not possible; He set it to His lips, He drank, He drank right on, His back was scourged, but still He drank. His head was pierced with the crown of thorns, but He took not away His lips. The spittle flowed down His cheeks; they were black with the bruising of mailed fists. Reproach had broken His heart, and shame had covered His face—but on, still on He drank. They pierced His hands and His feet; they offered Him vinegar to drink; they tore away His clothes; they stripped Him naked; they left Him without a comforter. Devils surrounded Him with mockery, and men with scorn; but on, still on, He drank, O blessed Savior, till at last He had swallowed every bitter drop—and turning the chalice upside down, not so much as one black drop trembled on its brim, for—

*“At one tremendous draught of love,
He drained destruction dry.”*

For every one of His people He exhausted the cup, and there was not a pang, nor a grief, nor a penal groan left for any one of His elect. He suffered, the just for the unjust, that He might bring them to God. Here is a plummet to fathom the depths of the Savior’s griefs; but who can throw the lead, and who can tell when it strikes the bottom! God only knows the griefs of His dear Son. Even lost spirits can scarcely guess it; and oh, as you look into that smoke, ascending forever and ever, say, “Hallelujah, Jesus! For You have redeemed us unto God by Your blood, and we shall reign with You forever and ever.”

That fearful vision which tears my eyes and makes them feel heavy, at the same time presses upon me with a tremendous weight, while I mention another truth of God. *Behold here the solemnity of the gospel ministry, the responsibility of those who listen to it, and the need there is for earnestness in handling divine things.* Have I to deal with immortal souls? Then let me not trifle. Have I to talk with men who must spend eternity in heaven or in hell? Then wake up, sluggish flesh, and bear not down my spirit; and you, my soul, be stirred up to the highest degree of intensity of love, and of earnest devotedness, that men may be, by some means, or by any means, brought to escape from the wrath to come! I would to God I could preach as Baxter did. That man, the victim of many diseases, but sane and healthy in his

mind, said he never came to his pulpit without tears and his knees knocking together, for he had to speak for God with men who must soon appear before His bar, and he, himself, must appear there, too, to give an account of his preaching to them. O sirs, it is perhaps but a matter of amusement for some of you to come on a Sunday evening into this place, or any other; but believe us, it is no matter of amusement for us who have to preach to you! We would not have accepted our office if it had not been thrust upon us. Woe is unto us if we preach not the gospel! But if we do preach the gospel, still terrors seize hold upon us, for our heart is ready to break when we think how the multitude reject that gospel, and go their way to their farms and their merchandise, and will not come to the gospel-supper to be fed. Preaching will seem dreadful work to the preacher when he comes to die, if he has not been faithful; and it will not seem slight work to you when you come to die, if you have heard in vain! What would you give for another Sunday, for another invitation to hear those faithful sermons once more—to be moved by divine love once more? What would you give when inexorable death shall tell you that your hour-glass is empty, that your candle is burnt out, and that your soul must speed its way to stand before God? My brothers in the faith, with what earnestness should this alarm you! You are dealing, remember, again, with souls that must sink to hell unless they find mercy in Christ Jesus!

It is said that when Michelangelo painted his celebrated picture of the resurrection, he went by permission to the graveyard, and took out the newly-buried dead, and piled up the corpses by his bedside. He then slept in the midst of them, that he might get his mind into something like a proper frame for picturing the horrors of that tremendous day. I would not have you do such a thing as that; but living as you do in the midst of lost souls, I pray and beseech you to realize the prospect of their speedy perdition as a vivid fact. As you go to your bed, remember the despair and the dismay of those who dared to live in sin, and have already died without hope, and I think you will, then, be in a proper frame to paint that life-picture which I hope each and all of us have set our hearts upon—of the conversion of the souls of many by our means. Oh, we are not alive, we are half dead! Whitefield could say, “When I think of these things, I wish I could stand upon the top of every hackney coach in London, and preach to the passersby.” We do not preach as if we meant it! I am afraid that we make infidels by our lethargy, and that you Christian people help to prevent the usefulness of the Word of God by the apparent indifference with which you treat eternal things. If hell is a fiction, say so, and honestly play the infidel; but if it is real, and you believe it, wake up, you that so believe, and leave no stone unturned, no means untried, by which through the power of the Holy Spirit sinners may be saved! Pledge yourselves this night, as with your hands upon the horns of the altar; pledge yourselves as you sit in the place where God has often met with you, that from this hour you will seek, God helping you, to love your neighbor as yourself, and prove your love by pitying earnestness in seeking his salvation. That truth seems to be written clearly enough in letters of fire in the midst of the smoke that comes up from the desolation of lost souls.

And yet, it is not merely preaching, important as that is. It is not merely warning our friends and our neighbors, though we should never lose an opportunity of telling them of their danger with more feeling than mere fidelity can inspire—yes, with that repeated earnestness which deep convictions from the very Word of the Lord, and strong affection for the souls of men, alone can prompt. Let me entreat you—consider the use that Abraham made of that extraordinary revelation, “Shall I hide from Abraham,” said the Lord, “the things which I do?” “And shall I cease to use the precious opportunity of pleading for my neighbors?” appears to have been the old patriarch’s spontaneous thought, “My poor brother! Ah, poor Lot! His wife! His daughters! The city with its inhabitants!” A thousand thoughts of melting pity come rushing up at once. He does not stand mute with astonishment. He immediately opens his heart with intercessions, and fills his mouth with arguments. Oh brethren! That is just such a response to the secret of the Lord which He shows to His servants, as you should have always ready at hand. You need not wait for an opportunity. You have it now! Pray, pray, pray—pray without ceasing. Let the breath of prayer be fervent with heat. Let the prayer be so eager that it repeats itself, as Abraham’s did, each time waxing hotter, drawing nearer, growing bolder—till, you verily tremble at the venture. “Who can tell?” This we know, we are in no danger of offending God by crying for mercy, even when we see the two-edged

sword flaming from His mouth! You have no cause to lay limits upon your importunity, or to check the rising passion of your vehement desire. Prayer is a fire that needs stirring. And intercession is a holy wrestling in which practice alone can make you adept. Christians! Some of you may look at a doomed Sodom with other eyes than Abraham did. Lot is called a righteous man; and he was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked. He frowned at the men of Sodom, and expostulated with them, and wished that sinners would restrain their follies, and not go to quite such lengths in sin. That is the sort of man Lot was.

Have I not many a Lot before me now? The father of the faithful went a great deal beyond this. He lived far away from the scenes of vice, and the haunts of impiety. I suppose he did not think it necessary to sleep a night in that cage of uncleanness, that he might familiarize himself with the profane customs of the people. But he stood on hallowed ground, and prayed with a tender heart. He interceded with God; he multiplied his intercessions. Every time he prayed, and with each fresh note of prayer, his spirit grew more ardent. Impressed with God's severity, he takes courage from His goodness. Here is a fitting example for us. It is an example which I know will not be lost on some of you. The courage, that can rebuke man, must come from the strength that takes hold upon God. When your face shines like an angel with the radiance that the mercy seat reflects upon it, then it shall come to pass that the scorner will not be able to resist the wisdom or the spirit by which you speak!

Oh how dreadful the jeopardy of the souls of unconverted men and women! Jonathan Edwards was once called upon to preach a sermon quite unexpectedly. I believe he had the habit of holding his manuscript close to his eyes, a most ungainly and apparently most inappropriate mode of uttering a discourse. He read it word for word; but as he read it, terror took hold upon his congregation; weeping and sobbing were heard on every side, for the Holy Spirit was with him, and each word came with power upon their souls. I cannot speak such language as he used; but if I could, I might be the means of making some feel in what a state of jeopardy they now are. You stand over the mouth of hell upon a single plank, and that plank is rotten! You hang over the jaws of hell by a solitary rope, and the strands of that rope are snapping, one by one! Frailer than the spider's web is your life, and yet that is the only thing which divides you from a world of despair! The slightest insect commissioned by God's providence may end your unhappy life. You know not where, or when, or how disease may overtake you. Death often floats in the atmosphere of the house of God. He may be looking through those stony eye sockets now! The skeleton monarch may be looking at, and marking you, as his prey. Could Xerxes stand here tonight, could he have a little Christianity mingled with his philosophy, then doubtless the tears he wept as he saw his army, and remembered that in 50 years all would be dead, were nothing to those he would weep as he remembered that thousands this day found within the walls of churches and chapels, and tens of thousands who are not found in any sanctuary, within less time than that, will not only be dead, but damned! Here is, indeed, subject for mourning, lamentation, and woe.

You stand upon the brink of that precipice, and yet you play! You have heard the story of the monarch tyrant who invited one to a feast. When he came, the table was loaded with dainties, and there was his chair on which he must sit, but just above him hung a sword suspended by a single hair. "Why do you not eat, man? Is not the wine rich and rare? Fill your bowl, and drink it merrily." But he looks up. "Why do you not help yourself to all those dainty cakes which make the table groan; why, man, what ails you?" He looks up. And right wise is he in looking up, for on that hair his life depends. Would that you were as wise as he, for you will go your way and eat the fat, and drink the sweet, but you forget that hair, that sword. The sword of Damocles could only kill the body, but this sword will kill both soul and body, and kill them both forever—and but a hair keeps it from you now.

III. I am weary with my picture; I am weary with looking into that thick darkness. Let me turn your eyes another way. Would you be saved? See yonder little hill outside Jerusalem's streets? God has become Man. He is bearing sin upon His shoulders. Here He comes, all faint and weary with a ponderous beam upon His back. He struggles on. They remove the load a moment. But they force Him on with spears and goads, and He, all willingly, leads the procession. They come outside the city, and while the

sobbing daughters of Jerusalem stand looking on, they fling Him back upon the transverse piece of wood. I see the rough executioners, each man taking hold of a hand or of a foot, holding the nail in his mouth a moment till he gets that blessed palm all ready, and then with his hammer driving in the nails through the hands and feet of the Son of God! He is fastened to the wood. They roughly lift up the cross. A place has been dug for it. They dash it down. That jar has dislocated all His bones! What pain He endures in that moment when He is lifted up between earth and heaven! And now He has a long season of suffering before Him. They sit down; they mock Him; they point to His wounds, scoff at His prayers, gloat their eyes upon His miseries. It is the Son of God suffering there. He shrieks, "I thirst!" and they give Him vinegar to drink. He cries, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Heaven is black above His head; fever comes on—His tongue cleaves to the roof of His mouth—that mouth becomes hot as an oven; blood comes streaming down from all His pores.

Why do I picture this? Why, here is your salvation! You must have an interest in the sufferings of that Man, *or you must suffer for yourself forever!* Would you not desire to have Him as your substitute? Then remember, whoever believes in Him is not condemned. Can you believe in Him now? To believe on Him is to *trust* Him. Will you trust yourself with Jesus? Now, if you do trust, your sins are forgiven, your soul is accepted, your eternal state is blessed, and you are delivered from the wrath to come! Go your way at peace with God, and at rest in your conscience, and rejoice forevermore!

May the Master bless even my feebleness tonight to your profit, and may we meet in heaven to His praise. Amen.

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

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