

DO NOT SIN AGAINST THE CHILD

NO. 840

A SERMON
 DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 8, 1868,
 BY C. H. SPURGEON,
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE NEWINGTON.

“Spoke I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child?”
Genesis 42:22.

THUS Reuben reminded his brothers of his admonition concerning Joseph—thus would I address you with regard to your own children.

I thought it meet, beloved friends, as our friend Mr. Hammond is coming among us to labor for the conversion of the young, that I should as it were, this morning, deliver the preface to his series of services. Perhaps by enlisting the consideration, and the affectionate prayers of God's people for the young, I may be doing more to help my friend in his work than it would be possible for me to do by any other means.

Note the words of the text. “Spoke I not unto you, saying, *Do not sin against the child?*” The essence of sin lies in its being committed against *God*. When men are fully convinced that they have disobeyed the Lord, and that this is “the head and front of their offending,” then they are brought to a true perception of the character of sin. Hence David's penitential psalm has for its acutest cry, “Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight.” Yet the sword of sin cuts both ways; it not only contends against God, but against His creatures, too. It is a double evil. Like a bursting shell, it scatters evil on every side; every relationship which we sustain involves duty, and consequently may be perverted into an occasion for sin. We are no sooner in this world than, as children we sin against our parents; as members of a family we sin against brothers and sisters, and against playmates, and acquaintances; we launch into the outside world, and around our ship sins dash like raging billows! As our various relations are multiplied, our sins also increase; we sin against a husband or against a wife, against a servant or against a master, against a buyer or a seller. On all sides the roots of our soul suck up sin from the earth in which they spread. We sin in public and sin in private; we sin against our poverty, and against our wealth; our evil nature, like the deadly upas tree, distils its venom—the poison of sin drops on all who come under our shadow. As the sea surrounds all shores, so sin beats with deadly waves upon all connected with our life; our sin assails both heaven and earth, time and eternity, great and small, old men and children.

The text calls us to consider one particular form of sin, namely, sinning against a child, and it is of that I intend to speak this morning, looking up to the great Father of spirits that He would teach me to speak aright. First, what is this which has been spoken to us? “Do not sin against the child.” Secondly, *who said it?* And, thirdly, *what then?*

I. First—and this will occupy most of our time this morning—WHAT IS THIS WHICH HAS BEEN SAID TO US? “*Do not sin against the child.*”

This warning may be suitable for every one of us without exception; those who are not parents, and who are not teachers of the young are, nevertheless, bound to remember that they are in a commonwealth of which young people make up a very considerable part; little eyes are quick to observe the actions of those who are grown up—adults should be careful what they do. Every man by his own conduct is, more or less, educating the rising generation of the nation. If a man acts amiss; if his speech is foul; if his conversation is polluted, he helps to educate children in the school of Belial. If on the other hand, his ways are right, and by the grace of God he is made to act morally, and to speak truthfully, he is doing something, it may be unconsciously, but still he is doing something to train up one for virtue and holiness. The exhalations of our moral conduct sweeten or defile the general atmosphere of society, and

in this children as well as others are partakers. I would say to every man who is giving full swing to his passions, if nothing else will check you, at any rate pause awhile when yonder fair-haired girls, and lisping children are gazing upon you; if you care not for angels, stop for the sake of yon blue-eyed boy; let not the leprosy of your sin pollute your offspring more than must be. Were you about to utter a lascivious sentence? Withhold it, I pray you, for it is not right that little ears should so soon be desecrated by that which has become common enough to *you*, but will as yet be shocking to them. Were you about to blaspheme? Is it not enough to curse your Maker? Why need you bring a second curse upon that harmless little one? Why teach those lips that will be all too ready to learn to speak the hideous word? Man, if any feeling is left in you, respect the purity of childhood, and let the presence of youth, if it is not a motive for sanctity, at any rate be a reason for *restraint* in open sin! Do not sin cruelly and wantonly against the child.

But I would not merely put it in a light which may suit the vilest. You, dear friend, whoever you may be, owe a service to your neighbor; you are to love him as yourself, and that word, “neighbor,” includes all mankind! The bond of the command is not limited to those who are over twenty-one, and have assumed the responsibilities of manhood; when God wrote this law, He meant it to take in the whole sweep of our race. The religion of Christ is a religion of love to mankind as such—it bids us regard the baby upon its mother’s knee as well as the gray-beard leaning upon his staff—to all it speaks of love. You are bound, therefore, by the universal law, to have a love towards children, and as in the first place you are to refrain from doing or saying anything which would injure their morals for this life, so are you bound, as much as lies in you, to do all you can to train them by your own example for excellence, and happiness in the path of right. I put forth God’s claim and man’s claim this morning, to all of you—a claim from which you cannot escape by any pretense whatever; a claim which cannot be forgotten without *sin*. We are all under obligations, both to old and young, to rich and poor, and especially I urge the claims of those who as yet cannot speak for themselves; to each and every child you are under an obligation as a member of the great human family, as a citizen in one great kingdom to do nothing which may injure, and everything which may promote his future welfare. I summon before you all, the host who gather at their mothers’ knees, and beseech you by the heart of humanity not to drag these little ones down to hell!

To the *parent* the text speaks with a still small voice, to which I trust none of us will be deaf, “*Do not sin against the child*”—against your own dear child! Yet how many parents do! If as I now speak, unconverted parents will be compelled to acknowledge the truthfulness of the accusations I shall lay against them, I hope they will be led to deep and true repentance. There are many parents who neglect altogether the religious education of their children; were their children born *without souls*, they could not be more indifferent to their welfare than they now are; if it were revealed to them that their little ones, when they slept in their coffins, would be as the offspring of dogs, and horses which have no hereafter, they could not treat them in a more thoughtless fashion than they now do! Why, are there not many of you who when you have sent your children to Sunday school, think you have done all that is to be done for them? And even if this little is neglected, you are content; you never prayed for your babies, how can you? You do not yet know what it is to pray for *yourselves* in sincerity and truth; you never pointed your Samuels and Hannahs to the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” How could you? Your own sin lies upon you unforgiven! You have never instructed the dear little ones in the danger of rebellion against God, and in the necessity of being reconciled to Him through faith in the precious blood of Christ—how can we expect you to do this while you yourselves remain aliens and strangers to the blessed God, and have not submitted *yourselves* to the gospel of Jesus Christ? I remember a woman who was converted at an advanced age, who had been left years before a widow with many children; she was a most exemplary, moral, and industrious woman, and earned her living by most laborious work; yet she managed to bring up all her family, and settle them in a suitable manner. But after her conversion I think I never saw more bitter tears than those which she shed when she said, “I took care to feed them, and clothe their bodies, but I never thought of their souls! Alas for me, I knew no better! But alas for them, I left the chief thing undone! The other day I spoke to my eldest son about the things of

God, and he told me religion was all a farce; he did not listen to a word I said, and well," she said, "might he be an infidel, when his mother never said a word by which he could have been led to the Savior." Words were spoken by way of comfort to her, but like Rachel, she refused to be comforted because, she said, and said truly, her great opportunity had been wasted! The best time of effort for a mother had been allowed to pass away unused; her harvest was passed, and her summer was ended, and her children were not saved! Some of you who are now godless, I trust may be brought to the same repentance, but I would have you saved such bitter regret by being led *now* to give your hearts to Christ while yet your children are about you.

In speaking to parents I put the charge in the mildest terms, and have said that some have done nothing to train their families for the Savior, but graver accusations may be brought. Are there not some here who have done much the other way, much to *quench* the motions of the Spirit in the juvenile mind; done much to harden the children's hearts, and to lull their consciences to sleep? It is a disgraceful fact that many fathers educate their children for the service of Satan. They are the devil's lackeys, introducing their sons into the courts of the evil one. When parents take their children to the theater, what can they expect to be the result? When they send them to the beer shop, or let them see their drunkenness, what surer school of vice can they send them to? Parents, who teach their children to sing the silly, frivolous, and perhaps licentious songs, are sacrificing them to Moloch! Shame is it when from a father's lips the boy hears the first oath, and learns the alphabet of blasphemy! There are crowds of parents upon whose head the blood of their children will certainly descend because they have launched them on the sea of life with the rudder set towards the rocks—with a false chart, a deceitful compass, and every other appliance for securing eternal shipwreck. Doubtless there are some unconverted men and women here whose example has already come home to them in the ungrateful conduct of their sons. They have seen their children grow up to be estranged from them, and if they are, therefore, blaming the providence of God, let them pause awhile, and ask themselves whether they ought not rather to blame *themselves*—are they not reaping according to their sowing? What are our children, for the most part, but what we make them by our training? And if they have grown up like ourselves and our faults are mirrored in their characters, let us repent in dust and ashes before God! Never think it a hard law that our sins against our children should recoil upon ourselves; fathers and mothers who sin against your children, I fear you will be lost yourselves, but before that doom overtakes you, I pray you remember that you will not perish *alone* in your iniquity—your household will suffer with you! If you have no care about your own souls, yet think, I pray you, of the little ones entrusted to you; you have some in heaven whom sovereign mercy has caught away from the cradle and the breast, that they may sing the praises of God forever. I cannot bear to think that you should drag the others down to the pit of hell! For your own sake, for *their* sake, pause awhile—murder not your own flesh and blood! Repent of your own personal sins, and seek mercy at the hands of Jesus that you may from now on never more sin against the child!

If these things come home forcibly to you who are unsaved, much more to Christian parents! Do Christian parents ever sin against their children? We answer, Christian parents are not perfect; they are yet in the body, and have yet to mourn over sins and shortcomings, and so, not condemning you who fear God—for who shall condemn whom Christ has justified?—yet let me, for the awakening of your consciences, and to drive you again to the blood of Jesus for pardon, remind you that we, alas, too often *do* sin against our children! We are under a double responsibility, not only because they are our children, but because God has given us salvation. We are bound, having the light of God, to give that light to all around us, and bound by other ties to first give the light to those who have sprung from our loins. If we deny our most loving efforts to our own households, we must surely be inhuman! Not only may we not talk of divine grace, we can scarcely boast of fulfilling the promptings of nature itself, if we have no compassion for our children's souls. Yet what do you think—may not our inconsistencies be the reason why our children are not converted? Is the boy compelled to say, "My father hardly believes what he says, or else he would not act as he does"? Do you not think that in many families where the parents are worldly, and conformed to the world, it would be a great wonder if the sons and daughters were not ungodly? Are there not many Christians so busy about making money that they have no time to speak

about *soul* concerns to their children? And if those children were to die, do you think those parents could excuse themselves? If their children died without hope, how would their parents quiet their consciences? Do we as a rule pray for our own children as we ought? Do we wrestle with God for them night and day? Do we ever spend an hour in pleading with the Most High that they might live in His sight? And if we *have* prayed, do we use such efforts for our children as dying beds will make us wish that we *had* used? Have we spoken personally to them about their salvation? Having done it once, have we repeated it? If we fear that we have not touched the right chord of the heart, have we made up our minds to persevere in affectionate admonitions, and earnest entreaties until every one of them shall be saved? I know that some of you have done so. I rejoice in some fathers and mothers in this congregation, that they do lay themselves out for the conversion of their children, and of these I may also add that for the most part, they have seen the desire of their hearts. But where there has been no desire, and no prayer, and no effort—if the children die unsaved, what balm can heal the mother's wounds? O you who have been baptized into Christ, and profess to have put on Christ! O you who claim to love your Lord and Master, what shall we say to you if your sons shall be unchastened like those of Eli, and shall die in their sins? If your sons turn out to be Nadabs and Abihahs, and not Samuels, how can we console you if you have not wept over them? If they rebel like Absalom, who can wonder if their father never poured out his heart before the Lord on their account? Do you expect to reap without sowing, or to gather where you have not planted? Parental care can alone preserve household piety, and if that is gone, the pillars of the nation are removed! It is an ill day for any church when family piety is on the decline; household religion has been the great defense of England against Popery! Do not tell me of your State-paid clergy, and their lofty prelates; give me family prayer, and the Pope may curse away as long as he likes! Give us the open catechism, and the children made to understand it! Give us the Bible read from day to day, and godly parents inculcating gospel truths upon their little ones' minds, and we may laugh to scorn all the powers of Pope or Satan! But once let the family altar be forsaken, and let parents forget the natural duty of ordering their households before the Lord, and you may guard the church as you will, your labor will be in vain! You have cast down her hedges; the bear out of the woods shall waste her! You have taken away the tower of the flock, and when the wolf comes, he will find the sheep an easy prey! Christian parents, though I cannot address you this morning as I would, yet with all my heart would I say to you—do not sin against the child by your bad example, or by your negligence as to his salvation—but seek of the Holy Spirit that to your own offspring you may fully discharge the solemn duties which providence and grace have thrown upon you!

The text has a word next to *teachers*, teachers especially of our Sunday schools, though I hold that teachers of weekday schools ought not to consider themselves exempted from seeking the good of the souls entrusted to them. Teachers of Sunday schools, you have voluntarily assumed a position, the responsibility of which is not to be laid aside as long as you continue in the office. I beseech you, do not sin against the child! He comes to you, this afternoon, to learn something; do not be cold and sleepy over your work, but tell him of Jesus lovingly, simply, earnestly; do not lead him to feel that you have yourself no faith in what you teach, but be so earnest that he may see conviction gleaming from your eyes, and may soon, in return, feel it flashing into his heart! Remember, other teachers have been prayerful over their children; they have brought their boys and girls to Jesus, and have won a blessing from the Master—will not you be prayerful, too? If not, it would be better for those children that you had never been born, and that some better teacher had been set over them! Do not sin against the child, therefore, by cumbering the ground, and occupying a place which might have been far more profitably filled by a more earnest spirit. In the weekday do not sin against the child by conduct inconsistent with your profession; do not sin against the child by neglecting him during the six days if you have opportunities for visitation; seek his good at all times, follow him with your prayers and tears if you cannot with your personal visits, and loving words. As God gives you opportunity, let importunate entreaties, and fervent prayers go together—entreaties to him and prayers to God—and who knows, God may give you his soul as a seal to your faithful ministry! Teacher, do not sin against the child by failure in anything to which conscience calls you. I am afraid, in looking back upon our own Sunday school

experience, some of us will have to acknowledge that we *did* sin against the children a great deal, that we made our class rather a school for teaching, reading, and repeating texts, and singing hymns than an occasion for aiming at heart-renewal, and *immediate* salvation. By the way, let me say while I am speaking to teachers, the word is equally applicable to some of you who are not teachers, but ought to be. In many of our churches the work of teaching the young is left to the very youngest, and advanced Christians usually decline the service. Is this as it should be? I take it that for this work, the church ought to send forth her picked men and women. If any of you have ability for the teaching of youth, and are not using the talent, you are sinning against the child quite as much as if you undertook the work, and did not perform it thoroughly. There are schools in this neighborhood languishing for lack of teachers; we have letters constantly sent to us, "Can you send us help?" And it is a crying shame that in a neighborhood so blessed with the gospel, there should be any Sunday school pining for lack of teachers to instruct the children! I am told that in some schools near this Tabernacle, there are sometimes 50 or 100 children without teachers! I charge you, men and women who know Christ, while such spheres are before you, do not stand back from them lest it be charged upon you in the Day of Judgment, concerning these little ones, that you withheld from them the bread of life, and left them to die in the dark!

The text further bears with equal severity upon the preacher; I feel it chides and chastens me. Preaching is full often too obscure for children; the words are too long, the sentences too involved, the matter too mysterious. Well might the sermon be styled like matrimony in the prayer-book, "an excellent mystery." I believe I have as much as most of my brothers, sought out simple words, and many dear children have heard the word from me, and have been profited, while many others of them delight to come to the Tabernacle to listen to the minister. Still, we who occupy the pulpit do not feed the lambs as we should; we should give them not merely a word now and then, but if possible the whole discourse should be such as they can understand. Sacred simplicity should be so cultivated by the ambassador of Christ that lads and lasses should hear intelligently under a good shepherd and the least lamb should be able to find food. Is it always so with ministers? I have my confessions to make, and some of my brothers, if they are ever awakened to a sense of sin about the matter, will have even longer confessions to offer, since in our pulpits we too often sin against the child.

But we must push on. I want the *church of God*, and especially this church, to attend carefully to the next few remarks. When teachers and others are earnest about the conversion of children, and some of them are converted, they then come into relationship with the church, and too often the *Lord's people need the advice*, "Do not sin against the child." How can a *church* so offend? It can do so by not believing in the conversion of children at all! I am persuaded there are hundreds of Christians who in their hearts altogether mistrust the worth of regeneration unless the party born-again is over 16 or 18 years of age! If the inmost thoughts of many professors could be spoken, it would be seen that they are at once suspicious of a conversion if the convert is only 13 years of age, and yet would cheerfully endorse the same conversion if the person were 30 or seventy! There is a sad respect of persons among us still—a lingering belief that a certain period of years spent *in sin must have elapsed* before a work can be commenced! And yet, if you were to think, the conversion of a child is, in itself, no more difficult than the conversion of a full-grown man! With God all things are possible! If it were right to compare two equally divine works, it should seem to be an easier thing to renew the child than the man! There is less of the dire force of habit to overcome; there is less to forget, less to repent of! Though there is nothing spiritually good in us by nature, yet there is a certain simplicity about the child—a readiness of belief, an absence of cautiousness and questioning, which is exceedingly helpful in receiving the truth of God. Where two things are both impossible, except with God, we may draw comparisons. I would really say that the conversion of the child appears to be the simpler work of the two—and how then, have we come to imagine it not to be so, I can scarcely tell! Surely that same Holy Spirit who can enter into the man of 70, and overcome his sins, and make him to become like a little child, can enter, also, into the *child* and overcome *his* natural depravity, and make him willing, in the day of God's power, and lead him to faith in Jesus! If salvation had to do with mysterious doctrines hard to be understood; if to be a Christian one needed to comprehend the Hebrew and the Greek languages, we might admit the difficulty

of the conversion of little children, but if it is all so simple that he that runs may read, and he that reads may still continue to run; if it is all so plain as to be nothing more than this, “He who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved”—why not a *child* as capable of faith as an *adult*? And why may it not be as probable that we may see numbers of children converted to God, as that numbers of adults may give their allegiance to the faith? Get rid of this base idea then, lest you be found sinning against the child! God can save children! He has saved many! He has proved to His unbelieving church the greatness of His power towards the little ones; thrust out the thought then, and *expect* from this day forward, that God will save the children as well as others!

Having believed that their conversion is possible, when you hear of it, be willing to believe it is so. I do not ask of children that they should be received into the church without examination; I do not claim for a youngster who declares that he is a believer in Christ, that he should be received into the church with any less rigorous examination than any adult; all I ask is that he should not be tormented with needless suspicions, and looked upon as an impostor! Brothers and sisters, it would be very greatly sinning against children if the moment their little susceptible minds were made to feel terror on account of sin, we would put *that* down as repentance; or the moment they felt some joy at the thought of the love of Christ we should assure them that they *possessed* faith; this would be to educate them in self-deception. We should not look to find in the young more than in the old, but as far as faith and repentance are concerned, we must require quite as much; I mean that the same repentance which is necessary in an adult in order to salvation is indispensable in a child. The faith of God’s elect is the same faith in the youth as in the gray-headed; nothing short of *real* repentance, and *true* faith in Christ can save anybody, and there is no difference in age at all in that respect. We ought, therefore, to expect in a child a sincere hatred of sin, a true sense of its evil, a conviction that he cannot save himself, and a simple reliance upon the work of Jesus which we expect in any other convert. Less than this will leave young or old short of eternal life. Many say, “We must hope for the best, and we must not expect too much of a child.” But I reply we would do that child most serious injury if we taught him to be *satisfied* with that which is *unsatisfactory*, and to rest anywhere but in the Lord Jesus! We must expect as much, but what I plead for is we must not expect more! I am sure that there are some ministers, and church members who discourage at once any profession of faith from boys and girls. “Oh yes,” they say, “it is the morning cloud, and the early dew; it will soon pass away.” They utter sharp and hard things which, if Satan needed instruments, would be the very ones to grieve tender hearts! They put on such frowns, and give themselves such lofty airs that humble, timid children shrink back, and are to the church for many a day, perhaps, kept outside her pale. Let us judge them *righteously*, but let us not judge them *ensoriously*; let us be willing to receive them to baptism, and to the Lord’s Table, and when they are received, instead of thinking of them as though they were less valuable than other members, let us count them to be the very pride of the flock. I hate to hear people say, “They have received a pack of children into the church.” “A pack of children,” yes, and if Jesus carries them in His bosom, surely you are not imitating Christ, nor exhibiting much of His Spirit when you look down upon them and despise them! To me, one soul is as good as another; I rejoice as much in the addition of the poorest mechanic to this church as if he were a peer of the realm; I am as grateful to God when I hear of repentance in the young as in the aged, for *souls*, after all, are not affected in value by rank or age. Immortal spirits are all priceless, and not to be weighed in the scale with worlds. I pray you, therefore, *rejoice* if the Spirit of God dwells in the lowly or in the great, in the young or in the old! He is the same Spirit; He makes each renewed person equally His temple, and each saved one is equally a jewel of Christ—dear to the heart of the Eternal Father, beloved by Him who redeemed all His people alike with His most precious blood! Let us not, therefore, as a church, sin against the child.

II. WHO SAYS THIS TO US?

Nature says it first. The instincts of humanity cry, “Do not sin against the child; it is but a child; it is little—sin not against it.” In the sacking of a town, in one of the old bloodthirsty wars, a soldier seized a little child, and was about to kill him in very wickedness when the little one cried out, “O sir, don’t kill me, sir, I am so little.” The appeal saved his life; for the same reason hurt not your child or teach it evil;

it is so little, and it is so trustful, that it is treason to lead it astray. Be careful how you behave towards a soul which reposes in you so implicitly; do not sin against the child. It is your own; you gave it birth; you see your own features in its smiling face; will you lead your own child to hell? Will you be the destroyer of your own offspring? You love it; your heart overflows with affection for your child; let divine grace turn the streams of affection in the channel of wisdom that the immortal nature of your child may receive the benefit.

Experience adds its voice to nature, “Do not sin against the child.” Hundreds of parents have been brought with sorrow to the grave through the natural result of their own failures and trespasses in reference to their children. They taught the lesson of sin, and the children having learned it, practiced it upon their parents; if you would not stuff your pillow with thorns, do not sin against the child! Experience teaches us, too, from its brighter side, the excellence of holy behavior in the household. How often parents have had the reward of well educating their children; how the father has leaned, when he has grown weak upon the son’s strong shoulder, and the mother has found her dearest comfort upon earth in the daughter whom she had trained for Christ! Experience says for your own sakes, lest you nurse an adder into your bosom, sin not against the child! And for your own sake that as arrows are in the hands of a mighty man, so may your sons and daughters be in later life. Sin not against the child!

Conscience repeats the same advice. That inward monitor ceases not to remind us of what is due to God, and to His peculiar charge, the weak and feeble. Conscience tells us plainly that we must not sport with responsibilities so vast. “Take this child and nurse it for me,” said the daughter of Pharaoh to Moses’ mother, “and I will give you your wages.” And even so every babe that is cast into our lap by providence is put there for the same reason—that we may train it for God, and obtain a reward of divine grace at the last.

The church adds her voice to that of conscience. “Do not sin against the child,” for the children are the church’s hope; bring them to Christ that He may put His hands upon them and bless them, that they may become the future teachers and preachers, the pillars and defense of Christ’s church below. Though some of us have lived but a few years in this world, we have lived long enough to see some of our most esteemed non-conforming families seduced by various motives into communion with the world’s religion, and the world’s church. The mystery is not at all difficult to solve. The parents grew rich, and though they were still *among* us, they were not *of* us; pride separated them in spirit, and their sons and daughters were introduced into a society that could not be found among the humbler followers of Jesus; to such fashionable company they became united, and now the descendants of Dissenters are among the fiercest revilers of our holy faith! Better far were it for us to see our children carried to their graves as infants—to be mourned over with the resignation which a sure hope begets, than they should live to forsake the Lord God of their fathers, and to pull down what their fathers built up! That the sons of the Puritans should degenerate into Cavaliers; that the sturdy Protestant family should be led away with Puseyism; that the godly sire should be followed by a reckless son is most deplorable; but so it has been in all generations, and so it still will be, while parents sin against the child.

God himself speaking from the excellent glory, this morning, says to each one of His servants here, “Do not sin against the child,” and I ask that if no other voice is heard, we may all bow before His glorious Majesty, and ask for divine grace to be willing and obedient.

III. Thirdly, having heard the message, WHAT THEN? Only two things.

Does not that exhortation startle some of the unconverted and unawakened here? I think if I were as you are, sir, if I had lived to be 60 years of age, and my son had died through drunkenness, or my daughter were at this time living a godless life, and I were unconverted, it would shoot a pang through my heart to think that I should have brought such misery upon them through my neglect of divine things! A man often hesitates before he will plunge his family into the speculation which he would not shudder at himself. To be damned yourself, is something terrible—condemned of God, withered and blasted forever with His anger, cast away where hope can never come! Well, you may gird up your loins, and make your brow as brass, and say, “I will even run the risk of that, and bear the eternal, and defy the fierceness of His wrath,” but can you bear to think that your seed will probably fall into the

same condemnation? Eyes will peer at you through the smoke of hell, and shall recognize you—then some such words as these shall be hissed into your ears—“A curse on you, O man, the author of my miserable being, and the cause of my endless ruin! A curse on you, and a sevenfold hell on you, my sire, and on you, O woman, who gave me birth, for you trained me in the service of Satan, and everlasting destruction fell on me through you! Only inhuman wretches consign their own children to the flames; O fiends that you were to teach me the ways of vanity and irreligious; both by your example, and your precepts.” Ah, sinner, this will multiply your torments! You shall be dragged down by your own children’s hands to lower depths of misery! I pray you stop and think, and if you cannot redeem the mischief which you have already done, yet *repent* of it! Fly to the cross! Be saved yourself, and maybe those of your house who still are spared, may with yourself be saved. O that divine grace might lead you, like the Philippian jailor, to cry out, “What must I do to be saved?” and then to hear the voice of promise, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house.” Oh, if my words could be as flashes of lightning! If every syllable I drop was a flame of fire, I would rejoice if thoughtless ungodly ones would but turn to God and live!

Does not this command of this morning press upon every Christian here, not alone upbraiding us, but as awakening our laggard energies, exciting us to something more of diligence and effort? Will you not dear friends, this afternoon, pray that Mr. Hammond’s words may be powerful among the throng of boys and girls? Will it not be a matter of conscience with everyone here that at home you will plead with God for a blessing? And during this week will you not maintain a gracious concert of earnest prayer that the benediction may descend like showers of gracious rain upon these young plants? Will you not give us your best help if you see any movements of God’s Spirit? Will you not join to cheer, and to instruct the newborn converts? Will you not consider whether you could not take a class in one of the surrounding Sunday schools? Will you not roll away that reproach which I mentioned just now, which rests upon some of you because there are schools without teachers? Parents, will you not pray for your children, and even today seek to hold up Jesus before them? Will we not all, God helping us, say within ourselves that we will no longer sin against the child, but in Jesus’ name seek to gather His lambs and feed them for Him? Amen.

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