

THE WICKED MAN'S LIFE, FUNERAL AND EPITAPH NO. 200

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 13, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

*“And so I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done: this is also vanity.”
Ecclesiastes 8:10.*

IT is quite certain that there are immense benefits attending our present mode of burial outside the city. It was high time that the dead should be removed from the midst of the living—that we should not worship in the midst of corpses and sit in the Lord's house on the Sabbath, breathing the noxious odor of decaying bodies. But when we have said this, we must remember that there are some advantages which we have lost by the removal of the dead, and more especially by the wholesale mode of burial which now seems very likely to become general.

We are not so often met by the array of dead in the midst of our crowded cities. We sometimes see the sable hearse bearing the relics of men to their last homes, but the funeral ceremonies are now mostly confined to those sweet sleeping places beyond our walks, where rest the bodies of those who are very dear to us. Now I believe the sight of a funeral is a very healthful thing for the soul. Whatever harm may come to the body by walking through the vault and the catacomb—the soul can there find much food for contemplation—and much excitement for thought.

In the great villages, where some of us were wont to dwell, we remember how when the funeral came now and then, the tolling of the bell preached to all the villagers a better sermon than they had heard in the Church for many a day. And we remember how as children, we used to cluster around the grave and look at that which was not so frequent an occurrence in the midst of a rare and sparse population. And we remember the solemn thoughts which used to arise even in our young hearts when we heard the words uttered, “Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.” The solemn falling of the few grains of ashes upon the coffin lid was the sowing of good seed in our hearts.

And afterwards, when we have in our childish play climbed over those nettle-bound graves and seated ourselves upon those moss-grown tombstones, we have had many a lesson preached to us by the dull cold tongue of death—more eloquent than anything we have heard from the lip of living man and more likely to abide with us for many years. But now we see little of death. We have fulfilled Abraham's wish beyond what he desired—we “bury the dead out of our sight.” It is rarely that we see them and a stranger passing through our streets might say, “Do these live always? For I see no funerals among the millions of this city, I see no signs of death.”

We shall this morning want you, first of all, to *walk with a living man*. It is said of him that he did “come and go from the place of the holy.” Next, I shall want you to *attend his funeral*. And then, in conclusion I shall ask you to *assist in writing his epitaph*—“and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done: this also is vanity.”

I. In the first place, **HERE IS SOME GOOD COMPANY FOR YOU**. Some with whom you may walk to the House of God, for it is said of them that they did come and go from the place of the holy. By this I think we may understand the place where the righteous meet to worship God. God's House may be called “the place of the holy.” Still, if we confine ourselves strictly to the Hebrew, and to the connection, it appears that by the “place of the holy” is intended the judgment-seat—the place where the magistrate dispenses justice. And alas, there are some wicked who come and go even to the place of judgment, to judge their fellow sinners. And we may with equal propriety consider it in a third sense to represent the pulpit which should be “the place of the holy.” But we have seen the wicked come and go even from the pulpit, though God had never commanded them to declare His statutes.

In the first place we will take this as representing the *House of God*. What a sight it is to see the great crowds coming up to the sanctuary of the Lord. I am sure, as we saw the multitudes coming up to the House of God, there must have been a peculiar thrill of joy pass through our hearts. It reminds us of the ancient gathering in Zion's temple when there the tribes went up, the tribes of the Lord, to worship at the sanctuary of God. Oh, it is a noble sight when with joy and

gladness we see the young and the old, the gray-headed and the children, all of them pressing forward in one eager throng to worship the Lord of Hosts and listen to the voice of His sacred oracle. But your pleasure must have a great deal of alloy if you stop for a moment and dissect the congregation.

Pull the goodly mass in sunder—in a heap it sparkles like gold. Pull aside the threads, and alas, you will see that there are some not made of the precious metal, for, “we have seen the wicked come and go from the place of the holy.” Gathered in this throng this morning we have here men and women who almost profane the spot in which they are found. Last night's revelry has left its impression upon their countenances. We have others who will, before this day is closed, be cursing God in the house of Satan. There are many to be found here who have during this week been spending their time in lying, cheating, and swindling in the midst of their business.

I doubt not there are some here who have taken every advantage that was possible of their fellow men—and if they have not come within the clutches of the law it certainly has not been their fault. We have, too, I doubt not, in such a multitude—yea, I may speak with confidence—we have people here who have, during the past week and at other times defiled themselves with sins that we will not mention, for it were a shame for us to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. Little do we know when we look here from this pulpit—it looks like one great field of flowers, fair to look upon—how many a root of deadly henbane and noxious nightshade grows here. And though you all look fair and goodly, yet, “I have seen the wicked come and go from the place of the holy.”

Shall we just take the wicked man's arm and walk with him to the House of God? When he begins to go, if he is one who has neglected going in his childhood, which perhaps is not extremely likely—when he begins to go even in his childhood, or whenever you choose to mention—you will notice that he is not often affected by the sound of the ministry. He goes up to the Chapel with flippancy and mirth. He goes to it as he would to a theater or any other place of amusement, as a means of passing away his Sabbath and killing time.

Merrily he trips *in* there—but I have seen the wicked man, when he went away look far differently from what he did when he entered. His plumes had been trailed in the dust. As he walks home there is no more flippancy and lightness, for he says, “Surely the Lord God has been in that place and I have been compelled to tremble. I went to scoff but I am obliged, in coming away, to confess that there is a power in religion and the services of God's House are not all dullness after all.” Perhaps you have hoped good of this man. But, alas, he forgot it all and cast away all his impressions. And he came again the next Sunday and that time he felt again. Again the arrow of the Lord seemed to stick fast in his heart. But, alas, it was like the rushing of water. There was a mark for a moment, but his heart was soon healed, he felt not the blow. And as for persuading him to salvation, he was like the deaf adder, “charm we never so wisely,” he would not regard us so as to turn from his ways.

And I have seen him come and go till years have rolled over his head—and he has still filled his seat and the minister is still preaching—but in his case preaching in vain. Still are the tears of mercy flowing for him. Still are the thunders of justice launched against him. But he abides just as he was. In him there is no change except this—that now he grows hard and callous. You do not now hear him say that he trembles under the Word—not he. He is like a horse that has been in the battle—he fears not the noise of the drum nor the rolling of the smoke and cares not for the din of the cannon. He comes up, he hears a faithful warning and he says, “What of it? This is for the wicked.”

He hears an affectionate invitation and he says, “Go your way, when I have a more convenient season I will send for you.” And so he comes and goes up to the House of God and back again. Like the door upon its hinges he turns into the sanctuary today, and out of it tomorrow. “He comes and goes from the place of the holy.” It may be, however, he goes even further. Almost persuaded to be a Christian by some sermon from a Paul, he trembles at his feet. He thinks he really repents. He unites himself with the Christian Church—he makes a profession of religion—but, alas, his heart has never been changed.

The sow is washed, but it is the sow still. The dog has been driven from its vomit, but its doggish nature is there the same. The Ethiopian is clothed in a white garment, but he has not changed his skin. The leopard has been covered all over, but he has not washed his spots away. He is the same as ever he was. He goes to the baptismal pool a black sinner and he comes out of it the same. He goes to the Table of the Lord a deceiver. He eats the bread and drinks the wine and he returns the same. Sacrament after Sacrament passes away. The Holy Eucharist is broken in his presence, he receives it—

but he comes and he goes—for he receives it not in the love of it. He is a stranger to vital godliness. As a wicked man “he comes and he goes from the place of the holy.”

But is it not a marvellous thing that men should be able to do this? I have sometimes heard a preacher so earnestly put the matter of salvation before men, that I have said, “Surely they must see this.” I have heard him plead as though he pleaded for his own life and I have said, “Surely they must feel this.” And I have turned round and I have seen the handkerchief used to brush away the tear. And I have said, “Good must follow this.” You have brought your own friends under the sound of the Word and you have prayed the whole sermon through that the arrow may reach the white and penetrate the center of the mark. And you said to yourself, “What an appropriate discourse.” Still you kept on praying and you were pleased to see that there was some emotion. You said “Oh, it will touch his heart at last.”

But is it not strange that, though wooed by love Divine, man will not melt. Though thundered at by Sinai's own terrific thunderbolts they will not tremble. Yes, though Christ Himself, Incarnate in the flesh, should preach again, yet would they not regard Him, and perhaps would treat Him today as their parent did but yesterday, when they dragged Him out of the city and would have cast Him headlong from the summit of the mount on which the city was built. I have seen the wicked come and go from the place of the holy till his conscience was seared as with a hot iron. I have seen him come and go from the place of the holy till he had become harder than the nether millstone—till he was past feeling—given up “to work all manner of uncleanness with greediness.”

But now we are going to change our journey. Instead of going to the House of God we will go another way. I have seen the wicked go to the place of the holy, that is to the *judgment bench*. We have had glaring instances even in the criminal calendar of men who have been seen sitting on a judgment bench one day and in a short time they have been standing at the dock themselves. I have wondered what must be the peculiar feelings of a man who officiates as a judge, knowing that he who judges has been a law-breaker himself. A wicked man, a greedy, lustful, drunken man—you know such are to be discovered among petty magistrates.

We have known these sit and condemn the drunkard, when, had the world known how they went to bed the night before, they would have said of them, “you that judges another does the same things yourself.” There have been instances known of men who have condemned a poor wretch for shooting a rabbit or stealing a few pheasants' eggs, or some enormous crime like that—and they themselves have been robbing the coffers of the bank, embezzling funds to an immense extent—and cheating everybody. How singular they must feel. One would think it must be a very strange emotion that passes over a man when he executes the law upon one which he knows ought to be executed upon himself.

And yet, I have seen the wicked come and go from the holy place, until he came to think that his sins were no sins—that the poor must be severely upbraided for their iniquities—that what he called the lower classes must be kept in check, not thinking that there are none so low as those who condemn others while they do the same things themselves. Speaking about checks and barriers, when neither check nor barrier were of any use to himself—talking of curbing others and of judging righteous judgment—when had righteous judgment been carried out to the letter, he would himself have been the prisoner and not have been honored with a commission from government. Ah, is it not a sight that we may well look at, when we see justice perverted and the law turned upside down by men who “come and go from the place of the holy”?

But the third case is worse still. “I have seen the wicked come and go from the place of the holy”—that is, the *pulpit*. If there is a place under high Heaven more holy than another, it is the pulpit where the Gospel is preached. This is the battlefield of Christendom. Here must the great battle be fought between Christ's Church and the invading hosts of a wicked world. This is the last vestige of anything sacred that is left to us. We have no altars now. Christ is our altar—but we have a pulpit still left, a place which, when a man enters, he might well put off his shoes from his feet—for the place whereon he stands is holy.

Consecrated by a Savior's presence, established by the clearness and the force of an Apostle's eloquence, maintained and upheld by the faithfulness and fervor of a succession of Evangelists who, like stars, have marked the era in which they lived and stamped it with their names—the pulpit is handed down to those of us who occupy it now with a prestige of everything that is great and holy.

Yet I have seen the wicked come and go from it. Alas, if there is a sinner that is hardened, it is the man that sins and occupies his pulpit. We have heard of such a man living in the commission of the foulest sins and at length has been discovered. And yet such is the filthiness of mankind, that when he began to preach to the people again, they clustered

round the beast for the mere sake of hearing what he would say to them. We have known cases, too, where men, when convicted to their own forehead, have unblushingly persevered in proclaiming a Gospel which their lives denied.

And perhaps these are the hardest of all sinners to deal with! But if the garment is once defiled, away with all thoughts of the pulpit then. He must be clean who ministers at the altar. Every saint must be holy, but he, holiest of all, who seeks to serve his God. Yet, we must mourn to say it, the Church of God every now and then has had a sun that was black instead of white—and a moon that was as a clot of blood, instead of being full of fairness and beauty.

Happy the Church when God gives her holy ministers. But unhappy the Church where wicked men preside. I know ministers to this day, however, who know more about fishing rods than they do about chapters in the Bible—more about fox-hounds than about hunting after men's souls. They understand a great deal more of the spring and the net than they do of the net for catching souls, or earnest exhortations for men to flee from the wrath to come. We know such even now—still uproarious at a farmer's dinner, still the very loudest to give the toast and clash the glass—still mightiest among the mighty, of the reckless, the wild and the dissolute. Pity on the Church that still allows it! Happy the day when all such persons shall be purged from the pulpit. Then shall it stand forth “clear as the sun, fair as the moon and terrible as an army with banners.” “I have seen the wicked come and go from the place of the holy.”

II. And now WE ARE GOING TO HIS FUNERAL. I shall want you to attend it. You need not be particular about having on a hat band, or being arrayed in garments of mourning. It does not signify for the wretch we are going to bury. There is no need for any very great outward signs of mourning, for he will be forgotten even in the city where he has done this—therefore we need not particularly mourn for him. Let us first go to the funeral and look at the outward ceremony. We will suppose one or two cases.

There is a man who has come and gone from the place of the holy. He has made a very blazing profession. He has been a county magistrate. Now, do you see what a stir is made about his poor bones? There is the hearse covered with plumes, and there follows a long string of carriages. The country people stare to see such a long train of carriages coming to follow one poor worm to its resting place. What pomp! What grandeur! See how the place of worship is hung with black. There seems to be intense mourning made over this man. Will you just think of it for a minute—and who are they mourning for?

A hypocrite! Whom is all this pomp for? For one who was a wicked man, a man who made a pretension of religion, a man who judged others and who ought to have been condemned himself. All this pomp for putrid clay. And what is it more or better than that? When such a man dies, ought he not to be buried with the burial of an ass? Let him be drawn and dragged from the gates of the city. What has he to do with pomp? At the head of the mournful cavalcade is Beelzebub, leading the procession. And looking back with twinkling eye and leer of malicious joy, says, “Here is fine pomp to conduct a soul to Hell with!” Ah, plumes and hearse for the man who is being conducted to his last abode in Tophet! A string of carriages to do honor to the man whom God has cursed in life and cursed in death—for the hope of the hypocrite is evermore an accursed one.

And a bell is ringing and the clergyman is reading the funeral service and is burying the man “in sure and certain hope.” Oh, what a laugh rings up from somewhere a little lower down than the grave! “In sure and certain hope,” says Satan, “Ha! Ha! Your sure and certain hope is folly, indeed. Trust to a bubble and hope to fly to the stars—trust to the wild winds, that they shall conduct you safely to Heaven—but trust to such a hope as that and you are a madman indeed.”

Oh, if we judged rightly, when a hypocrite died, we should do him no honor. If men could but see a little deeper than the skin and read the thoughts of the heart, they would not patronize this great, black lie and lead a long string of carriages through the streets. They would say, “No, the man was good for nothing. He was the outward skin without the life. He professed to be what he was not, he lived the scornful life of a deceiver. Let him have the burial of Jeconiah. Let him not have a funeral at all. Let him be cast away as loathsome carrion, for that is all he is.”

Ah, when a godly man dies, you may make lamentation over him, you may well carry him with solemn pomp unto his grave, for there is an odor in his bones, there is a sweet savor about him that even God delights in, for “precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.” But the gilded hypocrite, the varnished deceiver, the well-accounted wolf in sheep's clothing—away with pomp for him! Why should men bewail him? They do not do it—why should they pretend to do so, then and give the outward semblance of a grief, where they feel none?

But possibly I may have seen the wicked man buried in a more quiet way. He is taken quietly to his tomb with as little pomp as possible and he is with all decency and solemnity interred in the grave. And now listen to the minister. If he is a man of God, when he buries such a man as he ought to be buried, you do not hear a solitary word about the character of the deceased. You hear nothing at all about any hopes of everlasting life. He is put into his grave. The minister well remembers how he did “come and go from the place of the holy,” he recollects full well how he used to sit in the gallery and listen to his discourse. And there is one who weeps. And the minister stands there and weeps too, to think how all his labor has been lost. One of his hearers has been destroyed—and that without hope.

But note how cautiously he speaks, even to the wife. He would give her all the hope he could, poor widow as she is, and he speaks very gentle. She says, “I hope my husband is in Heaven.” He holds his tongue. He is very silent. If he is of a sympathetic nature he will be quiet. And when he speaks about the deceased in his next Sunday's sermon, if he mentions him at all he refers to him as a doubtful case, he uses him rather as a beacon than as an example. He bids other men beware how they presume to waste their opportunities and let the golden hours of their Sabbath-Day roll by disregarded. “I have seen the wicked buried who have come and gone from the place of the holy.”

As for the pompous funeral, that was ludicrous. A man might almost laugh to see the folly of honoring the man who deserved to be dishonored. But as for the still and silent and truthful funeral, how sad it is! But Brethren, after all, we ought to judge ourselves very much in the light of our funerals. That is the way we judge other things. Look at your fields tomorrow. There is the flaunting poppy and there by the hedgerows are many flowers that lift their heads to the sun. Judging them by their leaf you might prefer them to the sober colored wheat. But wait until the funeral. Then the poppy shall be gathered and the weeds shall be bound up in a bundle to be burned—gathered into a heap in the field to be consumed, to be made into manure for the soil.

But see the funeral of the wheat. What a magnificent funeral has the sheaf of wheat. “Harvest home” is shouted as it is carried to the garner, for it is a precious thing. Even so let each of us so live, as considering that we must die. Oh, I would desire to live that when I leave this mortal state, men may say, “There is one gone who sought to make the world better. However rough his efforts might have been, he was an honest man. He sought to serve God and there lies he that feared not the face of man.” I would have every Christian seek to win such a funeral as this—a funeral like Stephen's—“And devout men carried him to his sepulcher and made great lamentation over him.” I remember the funeral of one pastor—I attended it. Many ministers of the Gospel walked behind the coffin to attend their Brother and pay honor to him. And then came a ton of the Church, everyone of whom wept as if they had lost a father. And I remember the solemn sermon that was preached in the Chapel all hung with black, when all of us wept because a great man had fallen that day in Israel. We felt that a prince had been taken from us and we all said, like Elijah's servant, “My father, my father, the horses of Israel and the chariots thereof.”

But I have seen the wicked buried that have come and gone from the place of the holy and I saw nothing of this sort. I saw a flickering kind of sorrow, like the dying of a wick that is almost consumed. I saw that those who paid a decent respect to the corpse did it for the widow's sake, and for the sake of them that were left behind. But if they could have dealt with the corpse as their nature seemed to dictate, they ought to have dealt with the man when living, they would have said, “Let him be buried at the dead of night. Let him have some unhallowed corner in the Churchyard where the nettle long has grown.

“Let the frog croak over his tomb. Let the owl make her resting place over his sepulcher and let her hoot all night long, for hooted he well deserves to be. Let no laurel and no cypress grow upon his grave, and let no rose twine itself as a sweet bower around the place where he sleeps. Let no cowslip and no lily of the valley deck the grass that covers him. There let him lie. Let not the green sward grow, but let the place be accursed where sleeps the hypocrite—for he deserves it—and even so let it be.” “I have seen the wicked buried who have come and gone from the place of the holy.”

But there is a sad thing yet to come. We must look a little deeper than the mere ceremonial of the burial and we shall see that there is a great deal more in some people's coffins besides their corpses. When old Robert Flockart was buried a few weeks ago in Edinburgh, he was buried, as I think a Christian minister should be. His old Bible and hymn book were placed upon the top of the coffin. Had he been a soldier, I suppose he would have had his sword put there. But he had been a Christian soldier and so they buried with him his Bible and hymn book as his trophies.

It was well that such a trophy should be *on* that coffin. But there is a great deal, as I have said, *inside* some people's coffins. If we had eyes to see invisible things and we could break the lid of the hypocrite's coffin, we should see a great deal there. There lie all his hopes. The wicked man may come and go from the place of the holy, but he has no hope of being saved. He thought, because he had attended the place of the holy regularly, therefore he was safe for another world. There lie his hopes and they are to be buried with him. Of all the frightful things that a man can look upon, the face of a dead hope is the most horrible.

A dead child is a pang indeed to a mother's heart. A dead wife or a dead husband, to the heart of the bereaved must be sorrowful indeed. But a coffin full of dead hopes—did you ever see such a load of misery carried to the grave as that? Wrapped in the same shroud, there lie all his dead pretensions. When he was here he made a pretension of being respectable. There lies his respect, he shall be a hissing and a reproach forever. He made a pretension of being sanctified, but the mask is off now and he stands in all his native blackness. He made pretensions about being God's elect, but his election is discovered now to be a rejection. He thought himself to be clothed in the Savior's righteousness, but he finds that he justified himself—Christ had never given him His imputed righteousness. The tongue that prattled once so pleasantly concerning godliness is now silent.

That hypocritical eye that once flashed with the pretended fire of joy—it is all now dark, dark. That brain that thought of inventions to deceive—the worm shall feed on it. And that heart of his that once throbbed beneath ribs that were scarcely thick enough to hide the transparency of his hypocrisy shall now be devoured by demons. There are dead pretensions inside that rotting skeleton, and dead hopes, too. But there is one thing that sleeps with him in his coffin that he had set his heart upon. He had set his heart upon being known after he was gone. He thought surely after he had departed this life, he would be handed down to posterity and be remembered.

Now read the text—“And they were forgotten in the city where they had so done.” There is his hope of fame. Every man likes to live a little longer than his life—Englishmen especially—for there is scarcely to be found a rock in all England up which even a goat might scarcely climb where there may not be discovered the initials of the names of men, who never had any other mode of attaining to fame—and therefore thought they would inscribe their names there. Go where you will, you find men attempting to be known. And this is the reason why many people write in newspapers, else they never would be known.

A hundred little inventions we all of us have for keeping our names going after we are dead. But with the wicked man it is all in vain. He shall be forgotten. He has done nothing to make anybody remember him. Ask the poor; “Do you remember So-and-So?” “Hard master, Sir, very. He always cut us down to the last sixpence. And we do not wish to remember him.” Their children won't hear his name. They will forget him entirely. Ask the Church, “Do you remember So-and-So? He was a member.” “Well,” says one, “I remember him certainly, his name was on the books, but we never had his heart. He used to come and go, but I never could talk with him.

“There was nothing spiritual in him. There was a great deal of sounding bell—metal and brass—but no gold. I never could discover that he had the ‘root of the matter in him.’ No one thinks of him and he will soon be forgotten.” The Chapel grows old, there comes up another congregation and somehow or other they talk about the odd deacons that used to be there—who were good and holy men. They talk about the old lady that used to be so eminently useful in visiting the sick, about the young man who rose out of that Church, who was so useful in the cause of God. But you never hear mention made of his name. He is quite forgotten. When he died his name was struck out of the books, he was reported as being dead and all remembrance of him died with him. I have often noticed how soon wicked things die when the man dies who originated them.

Look at Voltaire's philosophy. With all the noise it made in his time—where is it now? There is just a little of it lingering, but it seems to have gone. And there was Tom Paine—who did his best to write his name in letters of damnation. One would think he might have been remembered. But who cares for him now? Except among a few, here and there, his name has passed away. And all the names of error, and heresy, and schism—where do they go? You hear about St. Austin to this day, but you never hear about the heretics he attacked.

Everybody knows about Athanasius and how he stood up for the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. But we have almost forgotten the life of Arius and scarcely ever think of those men who aided and abetted him in his folly. Bad men die out quickly, for the world feels it is a good thing to be rid of them. They are not worth remembering. But the death of a

good man—the man who was sincerely a Christian—how different is that! And when you see the body of a saint, if he has served God with all his might, how sweet it is to look upon him—ah and to look upon his coffin, too, or upon his tomb in later years!

Go into Bunhill fields and stand by the memorial of John Bunyan and you will say, “Ah, there lies the head that contained the brain which thought out that wondrous dream of the Pilgrim’s Progress from the City of Destruction to the Better Land. There lies the finger that wrote those wondrous lines which depict the story of him who came at last to the land Beulah, and waded through the flood, and entered into the Celestial City. And there are the eyelids which he once spoke of, when he said, “If I lie in prison until the moss grows on my eyelids, I will never make a promise to withhold from preaching.”

And there is that bold eye that penetrated the judge, when he said, “If you will let me out of prison today, I will preach again tomorrow, by the help of God.” And there lies that loving hand that was ever ready to receive into communion all them that loved the Lord Jesus Christ. I love the hand that wrote the book, “*Water Baptism no Bar to Christian Communion.*” I love him for that sake alone—and if he had written nothing else but that, I would say—“John Bunyan, be honored forever.” And there lies the foot that carried him up Snow Hill to go and make peace between a father and a son, in that cold day, which cost him his life. Peace to his ashes.

Wait, O John Bunyan, till your Master sends His angel to blow the trumpet and methinks, when the archangel sounds it, He will almost think of you, and this shall be a part of His joy, that honest John Bunyan, the greatest of all Englishmen, shall rise from his tomb at the blowing of that great trump. You cannot say so of the wicked. What is a wicked man’s body but a rotten piece of noisomeness? Put it away and thank God there are worms to eat such a thing up. And thank Him still more that there is a worm called Time, to eat up the evil influence and the accursed memory which such a man leaves behind him. All this have I seen and applied my heart unto every work that is done.

III. We are to WRITE HIS EPITAPH and his epitaph is contained in these short words—“this also is vanity.” And now in a few words I will endeavor to show that it is vanity for a man to come and go from the House of God and yet have no true religion. If I made up my mind to hate God, to sin against Him and to be lost at last, I would do it thoroughly, out and out. If I had determined to be damned and had calculated the chances, and made up my mind that it would be better to be cast away forever, I know there is one thing I would not do, I would *not* go to the House of God. Why, if I made up my mind to be lost, what is the good of going there to be teased about it?

If the preacher is faithful he will prick my conscience and wake me up. If I am determined and have made up my mind to be lost, let me go to Hell as easily as I can—what need is there that my conscience should be pricked and this great stone laid in my way to keep me from going there? Besides, I hold that for a man who has no love for the House of God, regularly to attend because he thinks it is respectable, is just one of the most pitiful kinds of drudgery that can be met with. If I did not love the House of God, I would not go there.

If it were not a delight to me to be found in the sanctuary of God, singing of His praise and hearing of His Word, I would stop. To be seen going to Chapel twice on the Sabbath, sitting as God’s people sit, rising when they rise and singing about what you do not feel—hearing that which pricks your conscience and listening to the reading of promises that do not belong to you—hearing about Heaven, that is not yours, being frightened with Hell, which is to be yours forever—why, the man is just a born fool that goes to the House of God, unless he has got an interest in it.

We may commend him for going. It is a respectable thing, perhaps, and right that it should be so—but I submit it is an intolerable drudgery to go always to the House of God, if you have made up your mind to be lost. Now, on this man’s tomb must be written at last—“there was a man who would not serve God, but who had not courage enough to stand out against God. There is a man so silly that he pretended to be religious and so wicked that he was a hypocrite to his pretensions.”

Why, although you must deplore a wicked man’s wickedness as a fearful crime, yet there is some kind of respect to be paid to the man who is downright honest in it. But not an atom of respect to the man who wants to be a cant and a hypocrite. He wishes, if he can, just to save his neck at last—just as he thinks to do enough to let him get off free when he comes to lay dying—enough to keep his conscience quiet, enough to look respectable. Enough, as he thinks, when he dies will give him a little chance of entering Heaven, though it is, as it were, neck or nothing. Ah, poor thing! Well may we write over him, “This also is vanity!” But, Sir, you will be more laughed at for your pretensions than if you had made

none. Having professed to be religious, and having pretended to carry it out—you shall have more scorn than if you had came out in your right colors and have said—“Who is the Lord, that I should fear Him? Who is Jehovah, that I should obey His voice?”

And now, are there any here who are so wicked as to choose eternal wrath? Have I any here so besotted as to choose destruction? Yes, yes, many. For if today, my Hearer, you are choosing sin. If you are choosing self-righteousness. If you are choosing pride, or lust, or the pleasures of this world, remember, you are choosing *damnation*, for the two things go together. Sin is the guilt and Hell is the bread beneath it. If you choose sin, you have virtually chosen perdition. Think of this, I beseech you—

***“O Lord! Do You the sinner turn!
Now rouse him from his senseless state.
O let him not Your counsel spurn,
Nor rue his fatal choice too late.”***

May the Lord lead you to Jesus Christ, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life! And when you are buried, may you be buried with the righteous—and may your last end be like his!

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