

TO THE THOUGHTLESS

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A SERMON

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*“The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master’s crib:
but Israel does not know, my people do not consider.”
Isaiah 1:3.*

IT is clear from this chapter that the Lord views the sin of mankind with intense regret. We are obliged to speak of Him after the manner of men, and in doing so we are clearly authorized to say that He does not look upon human sin merely with the eye of a judge who condemns it, but with the eye of a friend who, while He censures the offender, deeply laments that there should be such faults to condemn. “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me,” is not merely an exclamation of surprise, or an accusation of injured justice, but it contains a note of grief, as though the Most High represented Himself to us as mourning like an ill-treated parent, and deploring that after having dealt so well with His offspring they had made Him so base a return.

God is grieved that man should sin. That thought should encourage everyone who is conscious of having offended God to come back to Him. If you lament your transgression, the Lord laments it too. Here is a point of sympathy. He will not meet you upon rigid terms and say to you, “By your own choice you have sinned, and now what remains to you but to bear the penalty?” No, He will rejoice when you return, even as He has sorrowed that you departed from Him. Let that thought of His love be the keynote of our discourse this morning.

The point immediately in hand is the inconsiderateness of mankind towards God. Israel in this case is not so much a type of believers as a representative of sinners in general. The accusation will lie against all ungodly men, they do not know, they will not consider. The greatest difficulty in the world is to make men think, I mean, think about spiritual things, think about their souls, think about their God. You can bring them to any other point but this. They will listen to holy words, but they will not lay them to heart; they will go through a round of ceremonial performances, but to worship in spirit the God who is a Spirit is far from them. Thoughtfully and carefully to consider their way is what they will never do until the Spirit of the living God comes upon them and teaches them true wisdom.

I shall this morning speak about this inconsiderateness of men, first, as *a serious fault*, and then as *attended in many cases with most solemn aggravations*. I shall next try, if I can, to find out *the secret causes* of this fault, and then we shall close with mingled *expostulation and invitation*.

I. We have to speak of A SERIOUS FAULT, common, yea, universal. “Israel does not know, my people do not consider.”

Men are most inconsiderate *towards God*. One would pardon them if they forgot many minor things, and neglected many inferior persons, but to be inconsiderate to their Creator, to their Preserver, to Him in whose hand their everlasting destiny is placed, this is a strange folly as well as a great sin. Whoever a courtier may neglect he is sure to consider his king. Men, when they start their sons in business will bid them mind the main chance, and attend to the principal point, and especially take care that they stand well with such a man, who has the power to help or to ruin them. Men, as a general rule, are far too ready to seek the assistance of those who are in power, and this makes it the more strange that the all-powerful God who lifts up and casts down should be altogether forgotten, or where remembered should still be dishonored by mankind. If it were only because He is so great, and therefore we are so dependent

upon Him, one would have thought that a rational man would have acquainted himself with God and been at peace, but when we reflect that God is supremely good, kind, tender and gracious, as well as great, the marvel of man's thoughtlessness is much increased.

Every good man desires to be on good terms with the good, unusual goodness wins admiration, and an invitation to associate with the eminently excellent is generally accepted with pleasure, yet in the case of the thrice holy God whose name is love, it is not so. All attractions are in the character of God, and yet man shuns his Maker. If God were a demon, man could hardly be more cold towards Him. Why is this? Why should I neglect one who is superlatively glorious, who has done me no evil, but has bestowed upon me boundless good? If I reflect upon the way in which He provides for me day after day, if I remember how He spares me, notwithstanding the provocations of my sin, and consider how He still entreats me to be at peace with Him, I may well hear Him ask me the question, "For which of these good things do you neglect me, and on account of which of these benefits do you forget me?" Strange freak of the madness of sin, that it should make a man forgetful of the everywhere-present God, and unmindful of the being whose bounties are constant and countless as the moments of the day. Oh, grief upon grief, Israel does not consider her God!

Then, again, man is inconsiderate *towards himself* in reference to his best interests. Alas, that in a matter of the greatest possible importance, involving his all, man fails to use his thoughtful reason. Most men trifle with their past history, they do not sit down and look it in the face, and mark with repenting eyes what sins they have committed. They are often wantonly thoughtless with regard to the present, they waste life as though it had no relation to eternity, as though time were only meant for pastime, or for earthly task work, neither its mercies nor its judgments, nor its obligations nor its sins, will they worthily think upon, but like men in a thick darkness they travel onward unobservant of the solemnities which surround them.

The future too, is equally unthought upon, the bright or the terrible future, the heaven eternal, or the hell unending. 'Tis strange, 'tis passing strange, 'tis a wonder, that immortal man should press on towards unspeakable misery with closed eyes, regardless of the wrath to come. He will not weigh his soul in the balances of truth, and learn thereby what its end will be. A thousand voices call to him and bid him pause and think awhile, but he lashes still the steeds of life, and like another Phaeton drives on, madly on, towards his own destruction.

Man is inconsiderate towards himself. When we ask men to attend to matters which do not concern them, we are not astonished if they plead that they have little time, and no thought to spare. If I were this morning to address you, my dear hearers, upon a matter which affected the interests of the dwellers in the Dog Star, or had some relation to the inhabitants of the moon, I would not marvel if you were to say, "Go to those whom it may concern and talk to them, but as for us, the matter is so remote that we take no interest in it."

But how shall we account for it that man will not know about himself, and will not consider about his own soul? Any trifle will attract him, but he will not consider his own immortality, or meditate upon the joy or the misery which must be his portion. I state the fact in far too cold a manner, and you also hear it with mournful indifference, this must surely be because we have heard it so often, and the fact is so universal. Yet, it is in very truth a miracle of human depravity—what if I say insanity—that man should be unmindful of his best self.

Here we must add that thoughtless man is inconsiderate *of the claims of justice and of gratitude*, and this makes him appear base as well as foolish. I have known men who have said, "Let the heavens fall, but let justice be done," and they have scorned in their dealings with their fellow men to take any unrighteous advantage, even though it were as little as the turning of a hair. I believe there are such present. I have known some also who, if they were called ungrateful, would indignantly spurn the charge. They would count themselves to be utterly loathsome if they did not return good to those who have done them good. They feel that the obligations of gratitude cannot be disputed, nor do they wish to

avoid them, and yet it may be these very same persons have been throughout life unjust towards God, and ungrateful towards Him to whom they owe their being, and all that makes it endurable.

Think of it. God created you, and ought He not to be the object of your worship? Besides creating you, He has preserved you in being, ought He not to have some service in return for this? You have been indulged, perhaps, with a smooth pathway, you are not today amongst the poorest of the poor, you have not been deprived of the use of your limbs, you have your reasoning faculties, you have not been smitten down with a stroke of paralysis, you are still able to mingle with men, and go about your business, and for all this ought not God to be thanked? His service is a delight to those who are in it, ought you not to render service to Him? His law is the most just law that can be conceived, it contains the essence of all honest law, yet you have not observed His commands nor loved Him with all your heart and strength. Is this right? You discharge right willingly the obligations due to man, but will you rob God? You would think it shameful to be dishonest to your fellow creature, and yet will you be a robber to your God? Will you withhold the honor and glory which you ought to render to Him?

You will observe that the text says, "*Israel* does not know." Now, *Israel* is a name of nobility, it signifies a prince, and there are some here whose position in society, whose condition amongst their fellow men should oblige them to the service of God. That motto is true, "*noblesse oblige*"—nobility has its obligations, and where the Lord elevates a man into a position of wealth and influence, he ought to feel that he is under peculiar bonds to serve the Lord.

I speak also to those who are the sons of pious parents, I address myself to those who have been trained in the fear of God, you have been nourished and brought up with the children of God, you have often been looked upon as belonging to them, surely you ought not to have been unmindful of your gracious benefactor. To you more is given, and therefore of you more is required. Does it not disgrace you as a man of godly lineage to be no better than the sons of Belial in the matter of earnest consideration? You should, at this moment, feel a deep regret that up to this present you have been false to your pedigree, and traitorous to your God. Man is forgetful of what is due to his position and his ancestry.

One sad point about this inconsiderateness is that man lives without consideration upon a matter *where nothing but consideration will avail*. Nothing can stand in lieu of thoughtfulness in religion. There are some who say, "Well, I cannot think about it, but I will pay a man to do it for me, I will find out a priest, and give him so much money that he may see to my soul, just as my doctor attends to my body." This is an invention of a rebellious heart to quiet conscience, but it is both idle and wicked. Personal love of the heart the Lord demands and He will be content with nothing less.

"But I go up to the house of God regularly, I sit with God's people, I give of my substance." Just so, but God demands your heart, and if the heart be not given, if you do not love Him with your soul, and mind, and strength, you have done nothing whatsoever in religion. In vain is your baptism, in vain is your coming to the sacramental table, true religion is not a bodily exercise, nor a manual performance. The soul, the mind, the heart, with all their intents and faculties, must think of God, and yield submission to Him, otherwise, though all the ceremonies ordained of God Himself were rightly performed upon you, yet would they yield you not one particle grace. Religion is a spiritual business, and if man lives and dies refusing to consider, he has put away from him altogether all hope of being saved, for grace comes not into us by mechanical process, but the Holy Spirit works upon the mind and soul.

This inconsideration, also, it should be remarked, occurs upon a subject where, by the testimony of tens of thousands, *consideration would be abundantly remunerative*, and would yield the happiest results. We should not marvel at men if they would not think upon topics which made them unhappy, it would not seem strange if subjects, known to deprive men henceforth of joy and gladness, were avoided by wise men, but albeit there are some who have suffered frightful depression of spirits in connection with true religion, yet its general and ultimate fruit has ever been peace and joy through believing in Christ Jesus, and even the exceptions could be easily accounted for.

In some melancholy spirits their godliness is too shallow to make them happy, they breathe so little of the heavenly air that they are distressed for need of more. In others the sorrows occasioned by gracious reflection is but a preliminary and passing stage of grace, there must be a plowing before there can be a harvest, there must be medicine for the disease before health returns, and the newly-awakened are just in the stage of plowing and the condition of drinking bitter medicine. This will soon be over, and the results will be most admirable. A great cloud of witnesses, among whom we joyfully take our place, bear testimony to the fact that the ways of the Lord are ways of pleasantness. Our deepest joy lies in knowing our God and considering Him. God in Christ Jesus is to us an unfailing fountain of peace, joy, content, and blessedness.

O, that you would hearken unto the Lord, for then would your peace be as a river and your righteousness as the waves of the sea. Thus says the Lord, "O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied them." Even here below godliness has the promise of the life that now is, and after death its weight of glory is unspeakable. O that you thoughtless ones knew the joy which you are losing, and were aroused from apathy.

II. Thus have I spoken upon the serious fault. Let us note next, AGGRAVATIONS WHICH ATTEND IT, in many cases.

And first, remember that some of these careless persons *have had their attention earnestly directed* to the topics which still they neglect. Observe in this passage that these people had been summoned by God to consider. The heavens and the earth were called to bear witness that they had been nourished and brought up by the good Father, and in the fourth verse they are rebuked, they are earnestly chidden because they continue to be so unmindful of their God.

Now, if a person should for a while forget an important thing, we would not be surprised, for the memory is not perfect, but when attention is called to it again and again, when consideration is requested kindly, tenderly, earnestly, and when because the warning is neglected, that attention is demanded with authority, and possibly with a degree of sharpness, one feels that a man who is still unmindful is altogether without excuse, and must be negligent of set purpose and with determined design. Some of you now present have thought of everything except your souls and your God, and though this morning I would, even with tears beg you to give an hour before the sun goes down to serious reflection upon spiritual matters, the probabilities are that you will do no such thing. Here is the aggravation of your folly, that you have again, and again, and again been reminded of this weighty business, and all in vain. When you were running on in childish waywardness parents plucked you by the sleeve, and said, "Consider your ways." They exhorted you when you were rejoicing in your youth, to look forward to the day when for all this God would bring you into judgment.

Since then, if you have been a sermon-hearer, you have often and often been called earnestly and urgently by men who spoke with all sincerity, to amend your ways, and turn unto the Most High. Yes, and God's voice has come to you in the very midst of your business. When you have had a quiet interval, and have been sitting down for awhile, a voice, silent, but not unheard, has said to you, "Will you never think? Will you plunge into eternity without consideration? Will you never open your eyes and look about you till you are in hell?" Your conscience, by fits and starts, has troubled you. The Bible in your house, which you have not read, has yet from the very fact of its being there upbraided you, and the mere presence of godly men has been a rebuke to you. When you have recollected how family prayer used to be offered in your father's house when you were a child and how it is neglected in your own house, the neglect has rebuked you. Can you deny this? And can you doubt this also, that he who is often reprov'd and hardens his neck, deserves that he shall be suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy?

The prophet then mentions the second aggravation, namely, that in addition to being called and admonished, these people *had been chastened*. They had been chastised, indeed, so often and so

severely that the Lord wearied of it. He saw no use in striking them anymore. Their whole body was covered with bruises, they had been so sorely smitten. The nation as a nation had been so invaded and trodden down by its enemies that it was utterly desolate, and the Lord says, "Why should you be stricken anymore? You will revolt more and more." Of course I cannot tell what has been the history of all of you, but I may be addressing some one this morning whose life of late has been a series of sorrows. You have plunged from one calamity to another. You have sailed over every known sea of affliction. You know what sickness means, there are in your body the scars of old diseases. You have known what perils mean on the waters and perils on land. Perhaps you have been brought down from competence to poverty, you have been deserted by those who should have comforted you, you know almost all the pangs which wring the human heart with anguish.

Know you not that all these are sent to wean you from the world? Will you still cling to it? All these are calls from heaven, like the voice of hunger in the prodigal when he could not fill his belly with the husks, and therefore said, "I will arise and go to my father." Will you never say the same? How shall God afflict you now? Is your wife dead? Would you like to lose your child? Is one child gone? Shall death take away the other? Shall the last darling be taken from you? What stroke would touch your hard heart? Must the Lord strike again and again, and again and again, before you will hear Him? If He be resolved to save you depend upon it He will not spare you, He will bring you somehow or other to Himself if He means to bless you. Be you not as the horse and the mule which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, but yield now to the afflictions you have already suffered, or else you will certainly enhance your guiltiness by despising the chastening of the Lord.

It was an additional piece of guilt that these people were, all the while that they would not consider, *very zealous in an outward religion*. They would not serve God in His own way, but they were very diligent in a way of their own. As you read the chapter, you will notice how attentive they were to burnt offerings, and new moons and feast days, and yet they would not consider. Certain individuals will become out-and-out Ritualists, and yet will not think upon the Lord. They will go the whole hog with Popery, and yet they will not turn unto the Most High and confess their sin, and seek mercy at His hand, and yield their souls to His truth. Strange, but yet it is so.

There are persons here who seldom miss a service, and even come to prayer meetings, and yet are not a bit the better for it, men of bad lives, and yet they love the preacher, ay, and would stand up for him if any spoke against him, and yet they are regardless of that preacher's warnings, and what is worse, they are careless concerning God and the world to come. They live, and I fear they will die, without Christ and without hope.

Oh, sirs, how can I reason with you, your inconsistency is so glaring. You stand up today and sing the praises of God, yet tomorrow you will blaspheme Him. What, will you shut your eyes when we are praying, and pretend to join with us, when you know that tomorrow you will act wantonly or do unjustly? How can you habitually sit with the people of God, ay, and in some measure, feel at home with them, and yet afterwards keep company with the children of darkness, and find yourselves at home at the bar of the alehouse, on the settle of the gin palace, in the theater, or in other places where blasphemy is on all sides to be heard, and iniquity on all sides to be seen? Will a man mock God and insult Him to His face? I beseech you, yea, I implore you, to think of this, for it greatly aggravates your thoughtlessness that you still continue in the midst of the people of God. To be in a man's house and not to think of him, to sing a man's praises and not respect him, to mix up with that man's children and yet not care about him, why, surely this would be most provoking. Shall such conduct be shown towards the Most High?

Yet, further, I want you to notice that there was an aggravation to Israel's forgetfulness of God because she was most earnestly and affectionately *invited to turn to God by gracious promises*. Let me read you that word, "Come now, and let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

A man might say, "Why should I think of God? He is my enemy. Why should I meditate upon my sinfulness, for it cannot be forgiven, and wherefore should I think of righteousness when I know I can never attain to it?" O man, you know better. You know that God is love, you know that there is forgiveness with Him that He may be feared, you know that a change of heart is possible, and the Spirit of God can make a new man of you. If the case were hopeless I would not wonder if you refused to enter into such dreadful contemplations, but when the brightness of JEHOVAH'S grace invites you, how can you turn your back upon Him and still continue unmindful of Him?

As a last aggravation, carefully note that these very people *had ability enough* to consider other things, for we find that they considered how to get bribes, and were very sharp and shrewd in following after rewards, yet they did not know and did not consider their God. Oh, how quick are some men in the ways of evil, and yet, if you talk to them about religion, they say it is mysterious, and beyond their power of apprehension. Those same persons will discuss with you the knottiest points of politics, or unravel the mysteries of science, and yet they pretend they cannot understand the simplicities of revelation. "I am a poor man," says one, "I am a poor man, and you cannot expect me to know much," yet, if anybody were to meet that same "poor man" in the street and tell him he was a fool, he would be indignant at such an accusation, and would zealously prove that he was not inferior in common sense. "I cannot," says one, "vex my brain about such things as these," yet that very man wears his brain far more in pursuit of wealth or pleasure.

Oh, if men were idiots, then were they exempt from blame, if they were physically blind they would be excused from seeing, but when men have eyes they are to be blamed if they will not see. If a man has an understanding, and can exercise it well upon minor matters, how shall we apologize for his neglect of his God. I can invent no excuse for them, though I would gladly be their advocate. I can only beseech them to repent of this their wickedness, and no longer have it said of them that they will not know, that they will not consider.

III. We shall now investigate some of THE SECRET CAUSES of human indifference to topics so important.

In the case of many thoughtless persons we must lay the blame to the sheer *frivolity of their nature*. Some individuals appear to have a brain-case which was never properly filled. Like butterflies, they flit from flower to flower, but gather no honey. Look at the life of many in the West End, who pass all their existence in dressing and undressing, distributing bits of cardboard, riding in carriages, bowing and scraping, and eating and drinking. These notable do-nothings remind me of a set of butterflies flitting about a field of poppies.

Nor are the poorer districts clear of such beings. Note the many fellows who go loafing from public-house to public-house, lolling and dawdling about from morning till night, as if they had nothing whatever to live for but to talk and booze. I hope that is not the case with any of you, if so, let me remind you that you may live in jest but you will have to die in earnest. You may waste this life in frivolity, but you will have to spend the next in eternal damnation. The moth may play, but the candle burns it, and then it suffers in earnest. You will come to be earnest enough when you wake up and find yourself condemned of God. Oh, if you are a fool, or have been a fool up to this moment, may God sober you and make you wise to number your days.

I have no doubt that in every case, however, the bottom reason is *opposition to God Himself*. You do not think of God, because you do not like Him. Nothing will persuade you to consider, because you do not love the subject to be considered. If you are called to consider a topic which is pleasurable to you, you very readily turn to it, but in this case, for fifty or sixty years or more you have shunned this subject, though it has been forced upon you in all sorts of ways. You have either huffed it off in bad temper, or smiled it off in pleasantry, and when it has come upon you in the cool of the evening, when you have been alone, you have called it "having the blues," and have gone off into company to get rid of it. The real reason is that you have no love to your God. Now this argues a base mind. It is disgraceful that you should not love one so infinitely good, noble, generous, and just. His character engrosses the admiration

of all honorable spirits, and would commend itself to you if you were not bad at heart. Consider how depraved you must be not to love the Perfect One.

Upon some minds the tendency to *delay* operates fearfully. Probably if I went round this place I should not find a single person who intends always to remain indifferent towards God and the world to come. Nobody here intends to be lost. I do not suppose that any one of you has chosen to make his bed in hell. You have all good intentions, and you mean one of these days to carry them out. Ah, and out of those who are now shut up in Tophet, there are very few, if any, who resolved to be there. The most of them meant one day to seek the Lord, but death came and found them still sleeping, as I fear he will find many of you. Do you know that you are in the presence of death now? He spreads his wing even now over your head, out of this vast company some of us must soon feel his dart.

One of our city missionaries was witness to a dreadful scene, when in a poor house he found persons playing cards, using for a table a coffin covered with a white cloth, the coffin containing the father of the family. This was a mournful instance of hardness of heart, but in some aspects all triflers with religion are in much the same condition, for their souls are in jeopardy of eternal wrath, and yet they persevere in their merriment, they enjoy their frivolities while God's sword is furbished and bathed in heaven, and must ere long smite them to destruction. If they could see where they are, and what they are, they would no more be able to enjoy themselves than a man would sit down and feast beneath a gallows tree, or laugh with his neck bared and fixed beneath the knife of the guillotine. O that men were wise, and that they would consider this. Put not off reflection, for death is near, and it is this putting off, and putting off, which is Satan's most potent engine of destruction.

Some make an excuse for themselves for not considering eternity because *they are such eminently practical men*. They are living for the realities of the nature of hard cash, and they will not be induced to indulge in fancies and notions. For my part I feel great sympathy with them in their downright practicalness. I, too, am a matter-of-fact man, without speculation or fancy in me. "What I want is facts." I only wish that those who profess to be practical were more truly so, for a practical man always takes more care of his body than of his coat, certainly, then should he not take more care of his soul than of the body, which is but the garment of it? If he were truly practical he would do that.

A practical man will be sure to consider matters in due proportion, he will not give all his mind to a cricket match and neglect his business. And yet how often your practical man still more greatly errs, he devotes all his time to money making, and not a minute to the salvation of his soul and its preparation for eternity! Is this practical? Why, sir, Bedlam itself is guilty of no worse madness than that! There is not in all yon wards a single maniac who commits a more manifest act of insanity than a man who spends all his force upon this fleeting life, and lets the eternal future go by the board.

I have no doubt with a great many their reason for not thinking about soul matters is *prejudice*. They are prejudiced because some Christian professor has not lived up to his profession, or they have heard something which is said to be the doctrine of the Gospel, which they cannot approve of. Now, if this morning I stood here and said, "Attend to me, give you souls up to my guidance, be led by me," I should admire you for saying, "We shall do no such thing." But I disclaim all idea of wishing to be a priest to any one of you. My teaching always is, "There is God's Bible, read it and judge for yourselves." You have brains, use your brains. My judgment was never meant to excuse you from using your own. If any man asks you to let him put a ring in your nose so that he may lead you as a farmer does a bull, away with him! What can he be but an impostor? We say search for yourselves, come to God's Book, to God's own revealed truth. Come to Jesus Christ, and find Salvation in Him. Surely you ought not to be prejudiced against a faith which speaks after this fashion.

In most cases men *do not like to trouble themselves*, and they have an uncomfortable suspicion that if they were to look too narrowly into their affairs they would find things far from healthy. They are like the bankrupt before the court the other day who did not keep books. Not he. He did not know how his affairs stood, and moreover, he did not want to know, he did not like his books, for his books did not like him. He was going to the bad, and he therefore tried to forget it. They say of the silly ostrich that

when she hides her head in the sand and does not see her pursuers she thinks she is safe. That is the policy of many men. They spread their sails and get up the steam and go with double speed straight ahead. What, not look at the chart? No, they do not want to know whether there are rocks or breakers ahead. Arrest that captain, put him in irons, and find a sane man to take charge of the vessel. O for grace to arrest that folly which is the captain of your barque and put sound sense in command, or else a spiritual shipwreck is certain.

IV. I am going to conclude with a few words of EXPOSTULATION.

Few, I say, for if the few words I have spoken do not reach men's hearts by God's Spirit, I know that a great many cannot! My dear hearers, is not your inconsiderateness very unjustifiable? Can you excuse it in any way? Perhaps you think you will never die. Well, go to the cemetery and you will soon alter your mind. Our sires and grandsires died, how then should we expect to live? Do you hope to live to an extreme old age? I have heard of one who often boasted that he expected to be quoted at par in the life market, but he fell thirty per cent short of the hundred. Have you imbibed the idea that God will make a difference in dealing with you from what He does with other people? If so, get that out of your head too, for He has not one rule for one and another for another.

If you die without Christ, you will die without hope, and if you have never repented of sin, God is no respecter of persons—there will be the same punishment for you as for other impenitents. Are you so mad as to hope that after all there will be no future? Then I can understand your thoughtlessness. If you are you like a certain poor rambler who calls himself a philosopher, and lately said, "The only immortality is that when the body has disintegrated its ammonia, carbonic acid, and lime which serve to enrich the soil and to nourish plants which feed other generations of men"? Here the ox and the ass of my text are outdone in stupidity. The man confesses that he is no better than a beast, and has no soul, as it would be useless to argue with a compound of ammonia and lime, he must not wonder if we hold no further debate with him.

Now, my hearer, if you are such an ox or ass as that, your thoughtlessness is accounted for, but if you are not so far gone I am at a loss to make your conduct consistent. Do you think you will be able to brazen it out with God at last? You are as wax and He is the fire, you are stubble and He is the flame, how can you hope to fight it out with Him? There are stranger things in this world than my philosophy has dreamed of, but I cannot invent an excuse for you, nor do I think you can yourself devise a justification.

Let me ask you again if you do not think that many a man's good opinion of himself would collapse if he were to consider, his opinion of himself would fall to zero if he would but think.

Yon spendthrift, who squanders his gold so freely, scattering with a fork what his miserly father gathered with a rake, could he go on as he did if he did not stupefy himself into thoughtlessness? Do you think money-grubbers who toil and slave, and starve to amass wealth, would think it worth their while to do so if they really thought about it? For is the result worth the trouble? merely to have people say "He died worth a plum"? Perhaps you have not chick nor child to leave it to, and the stranger who will inherit it every time he drinks his wine will jest about the old fellow who fretted and stewed to provide for a stranger's son.

When men think they are so good that they will go to heaven by their works, would not that bladder burst if they pricked it with a little thought? It looks very fine. Look at it, "I have always been a stanch Dissenter, or an orthodox Churchman, and I have done my duty." Is not that boast like a beautiful bubble which a boy blows from his pipe with a little soap? What charming colors! It is beautiful as a rainbow! But if we touch it with a little meditation it is dissolved. The same may be said of nominal religion, if a man thinks God will take him to heaven because he calls himself a Christian, and has taken the sacrament, and paid his pew rent, and sat with God's people, he must surely have but a scanty brain, if he would exercise what little mind he has, he would see that his hopes do not hold water.

Do you want to be deceived? Do any of you really want to mislead yourselves? If so, shut your eyes and dream yourselves into destruction, but if in earnest, and you would be right now, and right at last,

then awake at once. How is it that you will not know, and that you will not consider? May the Holy Spirit save you from this desperate state.

Let us just consider for half a minute one or two things. If a man will resolutely and prayerfully turn these things over in his mind, God may help him to come right.

If I consider for awhile, I see that I have not lived as I ought to have lived, I have often done wrong. That is quite clear to me, and it is equally clear that the ruler of the world ought to punish sin. The letting off of certain atrocious murderers of late, and the easy way in which certain criminals have escaped, makes us all demand a little more vigorous dispensation of justice, or else we shall have our land made a pandemonium. Even thus if God did not punish sin, He would not be a wise and efficient moral governor for the world.

Then if God must punish sin, He must punish *me*, and I must expect to suffer. But when I turn to this Book I find He has devised a way by which to save me. He has laid sin upon Christ that so I may escape. If I am puzzled to see how the sin of one could be laid upon another, I find in the word of truth that Christ Jesus is one with His people, and it is right enough that He should take their sin and suffer in their stead. I find that Christ actually did take the sins of all those who trust Him, and really suffered in their stead. That seems to me to be a glorious truth. It meets the case of justice, and leaves a door for mercy.

How can I avail myself of what Christ has done? I find in the Word that I am commanded to trust Him. Trust Him! That does not seem to be a harsh demand. He is true, He is great, He is God. I will trust Him. God help me to trust Him. I learn that whoever trusts Him is saved. That is a glorious truth. I am saved and pardoned now, for I believe in Jesus. Will not some of you turn these things over in your minds? I pray God the Holy Spirit to lead you to do so. I believe it is often the way of salvation to men to be made to hearken diligently to the Gospel, and to consider and meditate upon it, and with that view I have preached to you this morning, hoping that the Lord may incline you towards Himself, and bring you to consider Him, that you may now enter into His salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 1.

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