

MEN WITHOUT HEART, SIGHT, OR HEARING NO. 1638

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*Yet the Lord has not given you a heart to perceive,
and eyes to see and ears to hear, unto this day.”
Deuteronomy 29:4.*

FEELING, sight, hearing! What wonderful things these are. If we could exist without them what a wretched condition ours would be. The outer world would be unknown to us if the gates of the senses were shut, and the soul would be famished, like Samaria when it was shut up, and there was no going in nor coming out. Take away from us the power of perception by touch, smell, taste, sight, and hearing, and it would be of small account to us that the world was beautiful, for to our consciousness there would scarcely be a world at all. All the colors of the rainbow, the warmth of the sun, the freshness of the breeze, the sweetness of honey, the charms of music, and even the terrors of storms would cease, the soul would be shut up within the body as within a prison which had neither doors nor windows. The dreariest dungeon of the Bastille would be liberty compared with such a state. Perhaps the mind might exist, but certainly it could not live. It would be a misuse of language to call it life. When any one of the senses is gone it involves great deprivation, and subjects the person enduring it to the pity of his fellows. But if *all* were absent what wretchedness must ensue. Loss of sight or hearing creates among us a large number of sufferers who deserve our sympathy, but what mourning would suffice for those, if there were indeed any such, who physically had neither heart to perceive, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear!

Transfer your thoughts now from these external senses by which we become conscious of the external world to those spiritual senses by which we perceive the spiritual world, the kingdom of heaven, the Lord of that kingdom, and all the powers of the world to come. There is a heart which should be tender, by which we perceive the presence of God and feel His operations, and even behold the Lord Himself, as it is written, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” There is a spiritual eye by which the things invisible are discerned, blessed are they to whom the Lord has given to see the things of His kingdom, which to the unrenewed remain hidden in parables. There is a spiritual ear by which we hear the gentle whispers of the Spirit, which frequently come to us internally, without the medium of sounds that can affect the ears. Blessed are those who have the ear which the Lord has purged, and cleansed, and opened, so that it listens to the divine call. But there is no blessedness in the case of men devoid of spiritual feeling, sight, and hearing. Theirs is a miserable plight. Just what the blind man, and the deaf man, and the man who is destitute of feeling would be in the outer world, which is what many men are as to the spiritual world. Alas, there are among us in this congregation this day, and all around us in myriads, poor souls of whom this text is true, “The Lord has not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, to this day.”

This is a very, very mournful case. But perhaps the most lamentable aspect of it is that the persons who are thus devoid of the spiritual senses, by which they can converse with the best and highest world, are not conscious of their incapacity, or, if partially conscious of it, seem to be stupidly contented to remain as they are. The naturally blind man would see if he could. What shall I say of those whose inability to see spiritually is willful, and lies more in their will than anywhere else? The man who cannot hear the voice of his fellow would greatly rejoice if the gates of sound once opened to him. But there are none as deaf as those who will not hear, whose deafness is moral, whose inability to hear the voice of God lies in this fact, that they deliberately close their ears to the voice of holy exhortation. They are ready enough to listen to the siren songs of temptation, and they bend a willing ear to the subtle deceit of the serpent, but they will not regard the tender, loving wisdom of the good Shepherd. They are quick of hearing to evil, but deaf to good. This is the sad part of it, they are blind, and do not want to see, they are deaf, and do not wish to hear. Our poet says—

“How helpless guilty nature lies,

Unconscious of its load.”

In this unconsciousness lies the heart of the mischief. Helpless man is unconscious of his own helplessness. Because they say, “We see,” therefore their sin remains. If they were blind and knew it, it was another matter, and signs of hope would be visible. But to be blind and yet to boast of having superior sight, and to ridicule those who see, is the lamentable condition of not a few. They will not thank us for our pity, but much they need it. Eyes have they, but they see not, and yet they glory in their farsightedness. Multitudes around us are in this plight. When the prophet says, “Bring forth the blind people that have eyes,” we can only wonder where we should put them all if they were willing to assemble in one place. My own spirit feels very heavy in having to preach upon this subject this morning, but I would do so with great tenderness of heart, lamenting while I blame. It seems to me that Moses felt very tenderly to the people whom he here addresses, he puts his meaning in the gentlest conceivable shape when he says, “The Lord has not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, to this day.” He does not excuse, but yet he softly chides. He speaks not with the stern severity of Isaiah when he cried in the name of the Lord, “Go and tell this people, Hear you indeed, but understand not; and see you indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.”

What a sad thing it is that so many are rich in all things except the one thing necessary. God has given them abundance of earthly possessions, but He has not given them eyes to see His bounty, nor ears to hear His voice of love, nor a heart to perceive His presence in the mercies which they enjoy. Such see the harvest, but not the Great Farmer. They enjoy the fruitful seasons, but take no delight in the giver of the rain and the sender of the sunshine. What a sad condition to be in! Alas, poor rich man! He has so much and yet so little! And what a lamentable sight is the educated man of this world who is learned in all the lore of the ancients, and versed in all the science of the moderns, who has pried into the secret chambers of knowledge, and has observed the skill of the Eternal in the starry heavens and in microscopic life, and yet with all his attainments has no knowledge of his Maker, and will not accept the evidence of His presence. How sad that we should have to say to such, “Yes, you know all the facts, and yet cannot see beneath their surface. You allow prejudice to blind your eyes to the plain teaching of creation and Providence. You walk through the studio and admire the pictures, and deny the artist’s existence, whereas if you were candid you would believe in him from his works, and then go on to spell out his character from them. Alas, you have not a heart to perceive, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear to this day.” Well spoke the apostle when he said, “Not many great men after the flesh, not many learned are called.” Often those that know the most of the secular know the least of the sacred. Eyes that seem as if they could pierce through rocks, and read the mysteries of primeval night, turn out to be mere sightless eyeballs as to divine things. Yet they know it not, neither do they guess at their folly. How sad it is that there should be so many who are quick in reasoning, and ready in invention, which cannot see that the visible argues an invisible Creator, and that providential arrangements prove that a Great Father is over all. As Herbert says, they, “walk with their staff to heaven,” they thread the stars like beads upon a string, harness the lightning, and weigh the starry orbs, and yet they have not discovered their God, who is above, around, without, and within them. They are open-eyed to all things but unto Him who fills all in all. I fear I must apply to them the language of Paul, “Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.”

This morning I shall speak as I shall be helped by the Holy Spirit, first upon *a very mournful fact*. Secondly, upon *a yet more mournful reason* for that fact, and thirdly, upon *a mournful result*, which comes out of that fact. May what is said be taken as a word of warning, and may God the Holy Spirit bless it to the conversion of everyone here present who remains as yet unrenewed. I say everyone, for there is not one among you whom I would knowingly exempt from my prayers.

I. First, we shall think upon A MOURNFUL FACT. Here was a whole nation, with but very few exceptions, of whom their leader, who knew them best and loved them best, was obliged to say, “The Lord has not given you a heart to perceive to this day.” The mournful part of it was that this was *the nation that had been specially favored of God above all others*. God had not entered into covenant with Edom or with Moab. He had not sent the light of His truth to Egypt, or to Ethiopia, or to any other of the na-

tions of antiquity. But this comparatively little and insignificant people had been selected that to it might be committed the oracles of God. They were the one candlestick of the human race. They had light in their dwellings, while all around them, brooded a darkness which might be felt. By His name, Jehovah the Lord was made known to them when He spoke to Moses in the desert, and manifested Himself to him in the burning bush. "He made known His ways to Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel." He gave to this people revelation after revelation, containing guidance, rule, comfort and instruction even as it is written, "He has not dealt so with any people." Almost all the light then given was focused upon Israel, and yet they had not eyes to see. "God speaks once, yes, twice, yet man perceives it not for need of ears which can hear." Is not this a dreadful thing? I can understand the other nations being blind and senseless, for they were in the dark, and "the times of their ignorance God winked at," but for this nation, upon whom the sun of righteousness had risen, to choose darkness and abhor the light is a horrible thing. By the preciousness of the privilege, the sin of its rejection was greatly enhanced. This is sad, sad to the utmost degree of sadness, but is it not the case with some of you? Are there not among you those who have the clearest light, and yet choose the ways of darkness? My dear hearers, be honest with yourselves and answer. Born of godly parents, singled out to be carefully instructed in the things of God, attending a faithful ministry from your youth up, reading your Bible and being thoroughly versed in its contents, and yet, for all that, without godly feeling and gracious perception. I grieve that you should have such privileges and yet remain strangers to salvation. Will it be so forever? Shall it always be said of you, "The Lord has not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, to this day"?

Note again, that not only were they a highly favored people, but *they had seen very wonderful acts performed by the Lord Himself*. Moses says, "You have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land, the great temptations which your eyes have seen, the signs and those great miracles." Does it not seem deplorable that they could see God lifting His hand against Pharaoh with plague after plague, and yet not acknowledge Him to be the only living and true God? Those plagues smote the gods of Egypt, how could Israel ever turn aside to worship such dishonored deities? Each plague was aimed against some sacred object of Egyptian worship, and the marvel is that these defeated idols should still be revered by Israel. Truly the Lord spoke with a loud voice from heaven, with a voice which even Pharaoh was compelled to hear, and yet His own people heard Him not. They saw the plagues, and did not discern the glory of their God so as to remain faithful to Him. And that Red Sea! Was not that a marvel enough? How often have I wished that I could have been there to see the eager waters leap on Pharaoh and all his hosts! What joy to have heard the sound of the timbrel, and to have seen the twinkling feet of the maidens as they danced and chanted, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider He has cast into the sea." Could men stand there and see that, and yet not perceive that the gods of the heathen are idols, and that only Jehovah is the living and true God, and could they shake off the fear and dread of this mighty God from their souls, and turn to worship a golden calf which their own hands had made? Yes, such is the deplorable wickedness of man that if God were to work over again, all the miracles of Egypt in the sight of those of you who are unbelievers, you would not be converted to His fear. You would be staggered by the wonder, but you would not be converted by the witness. Something else is needed over and above all miracles before the blinded eye will care to see, or the hardened heart will begin to feel. You also have witnessed great deeds of grace in our midst, and yet you are not convinced. You even believe in all the miracles of Scripture, and in the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus, and yet you do not trust Him. Ah me, what can I say? What can I do but mourn over you?

In addition to this, *these people had passed through a very remarkable experience*. They had been brought out of Egypt by miracle, and by the same power they had passed through the depths of the sea as on dry land. Moses thus describes their wilderness history, "And I have led you forty years in the wilderness: your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and your shoe is not waxen old upon your foot. You have not eaten bread, neither have you drunk wine or strong drink: that you might know that I am the Lord your God." All these forty years they lived by miracles, and yet they neither feared, nor loved, nor trusted Jehovah their God who worked all these signs among them. As a nation they did not receive the spiritual teaching which the Lord set before them. Do you blame them? Look at your home. Are they the only people who have thus offended? May I not be addressing some today whose experience has been singularly full of mercy and love? God has been strangely gracious to you, my friend. He has led you by

a way that you knew not, and if you could but see it, His hand has been conspicuously with you from the time when you left your father's house unto this day. I know not to whom I may be speaking, but I am persuaded that there are some here whose career has been especially marked by the providence of God. Yours has been no common journey of life. You have been preserved in accident and restored from sickness. The stars in their courses have seemed to fight for you, and the stones of the field have joined to defend you, and yet you do not observe the hand of the Lord in all this. The Lord has girded you though you have not known Him, He has guided you, restrained you, delivered you, instructed you even though you have not deigned to think of Him. Yes, He has saved you from the consequences of your own folly, or you would before long have been a beggar, or a mass of sores, or a prisoner in the last dreaded dungeon. He has interposed to save you from your own folly, and here you are where mercy pleads, and grace holds out her silver scepter. Alas, even to this day you have not a heart to perceive the long-suffering of God, nor eyes to see your obligations, nor ears to hear the wooing of His love, but you are still going on in rebellion against God. Shall it always be so? It is grievous that it has been thus so long. Is there no turning? Is there no relenting? Must you die in your sins?

In addition to all this sight and experience, the Israelites *had received remarkable instruction*. In the wilderness, the Lord taught them by Moses and Aaron. The tabernacle was pitched in their midst, according to the pattern which Moses had seen on the mountain, and there a worship was instituted, every part of which was singularly rich in instruction, as we all know to this day. There was not a lamb slaughtered, nor a lamp kindled, nor a handful of incense burned on the altar, nor a curtain folded up, nor was a silver socket set in its place, without some moral and spiritual significance. Had they desired to learn it, they might have discovered in the tabernacle in the wilderness great stores of teachings as to those things which make for the peace and salvation of men, but they had no heart to perceive, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear, and so the whole apparatus of teaching was lost upon them. Ah, dear hearers, you may enjoy the most clear instruction, you may have line upon line, precept upon precept, you may read God's Book itself, and you may observe the experience of Christians, and you may have all their love and affection to help you to understand the things of God, and yet for all that you may remain without spiritual perception. All the external processes of holy teaching may spend themselves in vain upon you for 40, 50, 60, or even 70 years, and you may still remain blind and unfeeling. You may know the letter of doctrine, and yet never perceive its meaning. You may see the logical nature and certainty of a sacred truth and yet never see its bearings upon yourself. Does your present condition prove this assertion? Are you also without understanding? Are you still untaught in the things of God? O that the Holy Spirit may now create in you a new heart, and bestow both spiritual eyes and ears upon you.

One thing else is worth notice. These people *had been associated with remarkable characters*. They were not all blinded, there were a few among them who were gracious, and so were made to perceive. Caleb and Joshua were there, and Aaron and Miriam, but chiefly there was Moses, grandest of men, true father of the nation. It was something to have lived in a camp where you could speak with such a man as Moses, who had seen God, face to face, so that upon his brow there rested the glow of Deity when he came down from the mountain. You, too, my friends, have met with those whose conversation has been in heaven, and whose lives are bright with communion with the Lord. If we do not see and will not see where another sees so clearly, we stand condemned. A man who considers himself highly intelligent stands with me upon the hill, and looks out upon a fair landscape, over which hangs a wonderful sky bedecked with fleecy clouds, while at our feet blooms a wealth of lovely flowers. He tells me that in all this he sees no evidence of God. Is he not blind? As for me, I feel myself surrounded by the all-embracing Deity, and His presence is the greatest fact of my consciousness—

*“God has a presence and that you may see
In the fold of the flower, the leaf of the tree;
In the sun of the noon, the star of the night;
In the storm cloud of darkness, the rainbow of light;
In the waves of the ocean, the furrows of land;
In the mountains of granite, the atom of sand!
Turn where you may, from the sky to the sod,
Where can you gaze that you see not God?”*

Now, either I am a liar or my neighbor is sadly dull of perception, and as I know that I speak the truth, I know also that he is blind. If Moses saw, he by that fact left the rest of the people without excuse. That

they would not perceive was exceedingly provoking to the Lord, for among them God was manifest in the most remarkable manner. The Lord came from Sinai and the Holy One from Paran. From the top of the smoking mountain He spoke with voice of trumpet and with sound of thunder, the earth shook and trembled beneath His feet. The Lord was among them conspicuously in the flaming pillar by night and in the shadowing cloud by day. Israel saw the glory of her God, she could not help seeing it, and yet the people refused to behold Him, and asked, "Is the Lord among us or not?" Moses said of them, "They are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them. O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" Even to the very end of 40 years of patient instruction they remained without the true knowledge of God. Ah me! This is sad, most sad, but I fear that in this congregation we have a number who are like they are. Years have not brought them grace, nor has a lifetime yielded them wisdom. They have seen God's wonders of grace upon their friends and relatives, they have also tasted of the Lord's goodness in their own lives, and they have heard His voice in the preaching of the gospel, for Jesus Christ has been set forth plainly crucified among them, and yet they have not seen the Lord, and do not hear Him even to this day. This is no new thing, but it is none the less a grief of heart to those of us who fear the Lord and feel a love for souls. Brethren, remember that these Jews in subsequent generations had great prophets among them, and what was the success of their labor? Did they not cry, "Who has believed our report?" At length they saw the Son of God among them, and how did *He* fare? Jesus Himself, with all His miracles of grace and words of love, came unto His own people and they received Him not, but cried, "Crucify Him, crucify Him." How true it is that nothing can bless men till almighty grace renews them. If one should rise from the dead, men would not repent unless they were renewed. There is no miracle that God can do, there is no marvel that omnipotence itself can perform, which can make men see, who have no spiritual eyes. Nothing can make men feel, so long as their hearts remain hardened against the Most High. "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Verily it is written with truth, "You must be born again." The unbelief of man, so long as it remains, renders blessing impossible. The gospels represent our Lord Himself as baffled by man's refusal to believe, as it is written, "He could not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief." Oh the wretchedness of this state of things, who shall deliver men from it? Who can attempt the task but God only?

II. We will now hasten to spend a few minutes in descending into a still lower depth. Let us note THE MOURNFUL REASONS FOR ALL THIS. The reasons, for their incapacity to see and perceive, lay first, in *the fact that these people never believed in their own blindness.* They had no heart to perceive, and they did not perceive their absence of perception, they had no eyes with which to detect their own dimness of vision. They were such fools as to dote on their own wisdom, so poor as to think themselves rich, so hypocritical as to profess to be sincere. They thought they knew better than their God, and so they sat in judgment upon His providence and styled the provision of His wisdom "light bread." They were so quick of perception that when Moses was gone away for a little while they said, "Make us gods, which shall go before us; as for this Moses, we know not what has become of him." They showed their pretended wisdom by suspecting both the Lord and His servant Moses as soon as they fell into any difficulty. "Because there were no graves in Egypt, therefore has He brought us forth that we may die in the wilderness?" They would gladly snatch from Jehovah's hand the rod of government, and become leaders for themselves. Jeshurun forsook God that made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of His salvation. They were wise in their own conceits, and therefore it was that they could not see. Pride is the great creator of darkness, like Nahash the Ammonite it puts out the right eye. Men seek not the light, because they boast that they are the children of the day and need no light from above.

More than this, *these men never asked for a heart to perceive, eyes to see, and ears to hear.* No man has ever asked for these things and been refused, no soul has cried in its blindness and darkness, "Open my eyes," but what a gracious answer has always come. It is the prerogative of the Lord Jesus to open the blind eyes, but this He is always ready to do whenever men call upon His name. Let but the poor man cry and the Lord Jesus must and will hear him, and pour the daylight into his soul. In Israel's case there was a distinct refusal to be blest, "But My people would not hearken to My voice; and Israel would have none of Me." There was no prayer for the heavenly blessing, but an aversion to it. "You have not, because you ask not." "They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness." Rightly

those are left in darkness who will not ask God to give them light, or to open their eyes. Is not this the case with some of you? O my hearers, I must be plain and personal with you—is it not true that some of you are prayerless, Christless, graceless? What will become of you? Your case is all the more to be lamented because you are without excuse.

Then, moreover, *what little light they did have, they resisted*. When they were forced to see, it was only for a moment that they would be instructed, and then they shut their eyes, again. “When He slew them, then they sought Him: and they returned and inquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock and the high God their redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter Him with their mouth, and they lied to Him with their tongues.” When He sent fiery serpents among them, or otherwise smote them, then they perceived His presence for a while, but soon they turned back and dealt deceitfully. They took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of their god Remphan, and worshipped engraved images in secret in their tents, so that they provoked the Lord to jealousy, and He was incensed against them. They loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. They did not actually cry like Pharaoh, “Who is Jehovah that I should obey His voice?” but in their hearts they meant it. They lusted after the abominable rites of Baal-peor, and fell into filthiness in the days of Balaam, although God Himself dwelt among them in all His matchless purity and holiness. Now, this is the gravest crime of all—to leave the holy God for impure idolatries. Oh sinners that love not God, is it not because you love that which is evil? Oh, you that never sees Him or seeks after Him, is not the cause of your blindness to be found in your love of sin? “He that does evil hates the light.” This willfulness of yours, this desperate bent of your hearts towards evil, how will you answer for it? Our fear for you is great, we are afraid that you will perish through your hardness of heart. Oh that you had a desire towards God! Oh that you willed to turn to Jesus. Oh that His grace would cure you of your stiff-necked rebellions! Jesus stands here this morning and He cries, “How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not.” He waits to be gracious. Do you doubt this? He has given you all manner of good things. Do you think He would have refused you eyes to see, and a heart to feel, if these had been sought? “He gives liberally and upbraids not.” If we, being evil, know how to give good gifts to our children, how much more will our heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him? But no, men choose their own delusions, they abide in their darling sins, they perish by suicide. Like Saul, every unbeliever falls upon his own sword. “Israel, you have destroyed yourself.” Yet you delight in your destruction, and you enter into league with that which devours you. You are a prisoner, but you hug your chains! You see not, for you willfully blow out the candle. You hear not, for you cover your own ears, you are spiritually dead, but you have chosen corruption. By prejudice, and pride, and hardness of heart you have shut out yourself from love. Ah me; that such folly as this should be continued in by any whom frequent this house of prayer. Can it be possible that you are so foolish? Blessed be the Lord, many of you have eyes to see and ears to hear. Let all such adore the sovereign grace which has given these gifts to them. Let them worship the love which has sweetly conquered their stubborn will, leading their captivity captive, and giving them to feel and know and taste of spiritual things. Not to you be the glory, but to the Lord alone. To those who know not the Lord, there is shame and confusion, but to those who have known Him there is no self-glorification, for, as the wise man says, “The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the Lord has made even both of them.” To be blind of heart is our sin, but to be made to see is the gift of grace. Our misery is our own work, but our salvation is of the Lord.

III. I conclude by noticing what was THE MOURNFUL RESULT of these people being so highly favored and privileged, and yet not seeing nor discerning their God. The result was, first, *that they missed a happy portion*. I can hardly imagine how happy the children of Israel might have been. They left Egypt with a high hand and an outstretched arm, their ears were hung with jewels, and their purses were filled with riches, while around them manna dropped from heaven, and cool streams flowed at their side. They might have made a quick march to the promised land, and at once entered their rest, for their God who had sent the hornet before them would soon have driven out their adversaries. “How should one have chased a thousand and two put ten thousand to flight.” In the land of promise they would have dwelt securely, and God would have given them rest. Then would the heavens have heard the earth, and the earth would have yielded such harvests that one year in seven they would have had no need either to sow or reap, but would have spent their whole time in praising God. And then a jubilee would have

come every seventh seven, in which with high-sounding cymbals they would magnify the Most High. They would have known no invading enemy, and felt neither blast, nor blight, nor mildew, in fact, they would have been the happiest nation under heaven, “He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied you.” They flung all this on one side, they would not have God, and so they could not have prosperity. They walked contrary to Him, and He walked contrary to them. They would not obey Him, and therefore His anger smoked against them.

Think, moreover, what a glorious destiny they threw aside. Had they been equal to the occasion, by God’s grace they might have been a nation of kings and priests, they might have been the Lord’s missionaries to all lands, the light-bearers to all peoples. Every arrangement was made to enable them to live a godly, holy, joyous, sanctified life. They ate angels’ food, and they might have lived angels’ lives, acting as heralds, to tell to others what wonders God had worked for them. Alas, they could not see the moral grandeur of so high a calling, and they thought more of eating flesh than of honoring the Lord and teaching His law. I would like to say to some of you that God has been setting before you an open door, and yet you have not perceived Him, nor loved Him. He would make saints of you and you are content to be money-grubbers. You have judged yourselves unworthy of the prize which He has set before you. You do not know what a happy lot you have declined. Just lately you were a young man—you are getting to middle life now—and you do not know what golden opportunities you have wasted. As Cleopatra melted pearls and swallowed them as a drink, so have you drunk down the possibilities of glory as if they were common things. What might not God have done with some of you, if your hearts had been given to Him years ago? By this time you might have achieved a lifework, glorious to God, honorable to yourself, and happy to your friends. The stuff is in you, which might have been molded into a minister, a missionary, a soul-winner, and you might have been among the happiest and best of men. Nor does the waste end with yourself; you are causing damage to many others. Your children are growing up to follow your follies, wasting their lives as you have squandered yours! Oh, had you yielded to Jesus years ago your sons might have been your honor and comfort, and your daughters your joy and delight. You have flung away such opportunities as could not be bought for gold. Thus says the Lord, “Oh 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. The haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves unto Him: but their time should have endured forever.” Happy are God’s people, but wretched are they who being placed where they could see God’s hand yet will not see it, where they could hear God’s voice yet will not hear it, but refuse the kingdom of heaven which has come so near unto them.

Another result was that while they missed so high a position, *they went on sinning*. As they did not learn the lesson God was teaching them, namely, that He was God, and that to serve Him was their joy and their prosperity, they went from one evil to another, provoking the Lord to jealousy. From grumbling and murmuring they went on to rebelling. “Let us make a captain,” they said, “and let us return to Egypt.” From being idolatrous they became lascivious, and fell into the sin of uncleanness with the women of Moab. Often they were actual idolaters, and always they were unstable of heart. So they went from one sin to another because they had not a heart to perceive, nor ears to hear their God.

Therefore *they frequently suffered*. A plague broke out one time, and a fire at another. At one time they were visited with fever, and soon the earth opened beneath them. One day the Amalekites smote them, another day fiery serpents leaped up from the sand, and they died by the thousands, being poisoned by their bites. They suffered much and often, and in all their trials they did but reap what they had sown. A man does not know what he is doing when he sins. We tell our naughty children that we have rods in pickle for them, and this is assuredly the case with the great Father, who has chastisement laid up for the people who willfully revolt from Him. He brings forth sorrow and wrath for those who harden their hearts and continue in their iniquities. Ah, my hearers, how many of you are this day reaping what your own hands have sown.

At last *this evil ended terribly*. The Lord lifted His hand to heaven, and swore that the rebellious generation should not enter into His rest, and they began to die by wholesale till Moses cried, “We are consumed by Your anger, and by Your wrath are we troubled.” Not one of the men that came out of Egypt, save only Joshua and Caleb, reached the promised land. Whenever they pitched their tents at eventide, the first thing was to celebrate the funerals of the day. The tribes marched on, and on the

march they stumbled into their graves, till the whole of that peninsula in which they had to wander up and down for 40 years became one vast cemetery, where the thousands of Israel were all buried. Who slew all these? Neither by the sword of the enemy nor by the arrow of the foe were they destroyed, but sin laid them in heaps as in the day of battle.

They could not enter in because of their unbelief. The land that flowed with milk and honey lay smiling in the calm sunlight, on the other side of Jordan, but they could not enter in because they had no heart to perceive, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear the Lord and His word. And this is the main misery of your condition, O you careless ones, that you will not be able to enter into God's rest either here or hereafter. This is the misery of it to me, that I must set Christ before some of you and you will never have Him, that I must extol His atoning blood, but you will refuse to be washed in it, that I must go on declaring my Lord's message as long as this tongue can move, and bidding you believe in Jesus Christ and find eternal life, but still, of some of you I shall always have to say, "The Lord has not given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear, to this day."

Alas, your eyes will be opened one day, in another sense. "The rich man saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom." Who was that? That was a Jew of the kind I have described, who had everything in this life, being clothed in purple, and faring sumptuously every day, but he had no heart to perceive or eyes to see. "In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments." Oh, my hearers, hell's torments will open your eyes. Will you wait till then? O you ungodly ones, you will think then. I pray God you may have sense enough to think now, while thinking will be of use to you. If there is a heaven, seek it, if there is a hell, escape it, if there is a God, love Him, if there is a Christ, trust Him, if there is sin, seek to be washed from it, if there is pardon, rest not till you have it. Oh do not mock your Savior! Do not make a game of eternal realities! Be in earnest about this and in earnest at once. If you must play the fool, trifle with something less precious than your souls. Procure toys less expensive than your own immortal destinies. Oh, that God would bless this word to you careless ones, that you may feel at once that you do not feel as you should, and begin to cry to God to give you feeling, that you may see that you do not see, and begin to cry, "Lord, open my eyes," that you may hear this morning a voice which shall make you feel that you do not hear as you ought to hear, and therefore cry to God to give you hearing. Remember that spiritual life is only from God. It is His gift, and it is not bestowed according to merit, but is given by pure grace to the unworthy. Seek it, and you shall have it, for so it is written, "He that asks receives, he that seeks finds, and to him that knocks it shall be opened." Will your ears again refuse the language of His grace? Will you still go to your farm and to your merchandise, to your labor and to your amusement, and reject the voice that calls you to glory and immortality? Will you trample upon the bleeding love of Jesus? Oh, then, what shall I do, and to whom shall I turn? I must go back to my Master, mourning with Isaiah, "Who has believed our report, and to who is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Lord, reveal Your arm, and then they will believe the report. Amen and Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—DEUTERONOMY 29.
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