

## **BOCHIM—OR, THE WEEPERS**

### **NO. 1680**

**A SERMON  
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And it came to pass, when the angel of the Lord spoke these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept. And they called the name of that place Bochim: and they sacrificed there unto the Lord.”  
Judges 2:4, 5.*

LET me give an outline of the chapter, that we may put the text into its proper setting.

God had brought His people out of Egypt, and divided Jordan that they might march through, dryshod into the land which He had promised to their fathers. He charged them to drive out the Canaanites, a race that had become so loathsome in God’s sight that He decreed their destruction, and appointed the tribes of Israel to be their executioners. It was for the good of the universal world that this pest-house should be broken up, and that the filthy races should be destroyed, and God gave His people that charge to carry out. Those who quarrel with this arrangement should remember that this is not the only instance of aboriginal tribes being driven out by a superior race. Our Anglo-Saxon nation drove out the original inhabitants of this island, who survived only in the mountains of Wales and Cornwall, and in the highlands of Scotland. It certainly will not be wise on our part as Anglo-Saxons, to condemn Israel for doing under divine command, what our forefathers did for their own aggrandizement. Alas, in more modern times lands have been seized and nations extirpated by the white man without divine warrant or reasonable excuse. We do not justify all this, but if any complain of Israel for obeying the sentence of God, let them first raise their voices against the driving out of ancient races by colonists of our own race.

The order to slay the Canaanites had a second objective, namely, that Israel might dwell alone in the land, and might keep themselves to themselves—the great nonconformists of the universe—separated from all the rest of mankind both by residence and by manners, not following the customs of the nations round about them, or falling into their sins. That they might be sanctified they were to be separated. “The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.” Now, mark and note right well that it is an evil thing, under any pretext whatever, to depart in any degree from the commandment of the Most High God. Whatever may be the law which God gives, either to the whole race or to His chosen, they will find their safety in keeping close to it. But Israel forgot this. Soldiering was hard work—storming cities and warring with men who attacked them with chariots of iron was heroic service. All this required strong faith and untiring perseverance, and in these virtues the Israelites were greatly deficient. And so in certain places, they said to the Canaanites, “Let us be neighbors. Let us dwell together.” They thought, perhaps, that they had abundant reason for this easy mode of ending the dispute, for those who would correct infallible wisdom have usually a great deal to say for themselves. Certain persons thought in those days that the religious notion of God’s requirements was too severe, that He was, after all, a mass of mercy, and that the best thing that they could do was to be kindly tolerant of these Canaanites and make the best terms they could with them. They said that perhaps, after all, it was a pity to be so old-fashioned and so rigid in carrying out the divine order, and it would be better to learn something of the civilization of the Canaanites, something of their arts and sciences, something of their theory of religion, for men ought to have liberal views, and believe that there is latent truth in all forms of worship. At any rate, it could do no harm to study their archaeology, and go to their temples and see the gods they worshipped, and get a general acquaintance with the advanced thought of the period, for the Canaanites were a greatly advanced people, they were the advanced thinkers of the period. They had thought out he-gods and she-gods, Baal and Ashtaroth, and their lesser deities were many. They were, in fact, a highly cultured people, always thinking out something fresh. So Israel said, “It was a pity to carry out the divine denunciation quite to the letter. Let us tone it down. There are many things to be learned from these people. No doubt they have their fine points, and we must not be too hard upon

their imperfections. Therefore let us enter into treaties with them and live with them.” They did live with them, and fell into their ways. Tolerance led to imitation, and Israel became as vile as the heathen, whom the Lord had condemned, and the Israelites became a mixed race, in whose veins, there flowed a measure of Canaanite blood. Yes, if you depart from God’s word by a hair’s breadth, you know not where you will end. It needs but a little to degrade the Christian into a Ritualist, and still less to turn the Ritualist into a Romanist. We shall go far if we once start on the downhill road. I would to God that in these degenerate times we had back again somewhat of the stern spirit of the Cameroonians and the Covenanters, for now men play fast and loose with God, and think that anything they please to do will satisfy the Most High. The waste and the refuse will suffice for sacrifices for Him. But as to strict obedience to His word, they can by no means abide it. Mischief will surely come of this lax state of things to the churches of this day as surely as affliction came abundantly to Israel of old.

Note, next, that whenever one sin is allowed, we may say of it, “Gad, a troop comes.” It seemed a pardonable sort of sin to be gentle to these people and not to obey God’s severer word, but then what came next? Why, soon they, the children of Jehovah, were found worshipping before the horrible Baal. Soon they had gone farther and the unclean goddess Ashtaroth became their delight, and soon they forgot Jehovah altogether amid their deities and demons. With these errors in religion there had come in all sorts of errors in morals, for every fashion of immorality and lewdness defiled the worshippers of Baal-Peer, Baal-Berith and Baal-Zebub, and the chosen people of God could scarcely be distinguished from the heathen nations among which they dwelt, or if distinguished at all, it was by their greater sin, inasmuch as they were transgressing against superior light and holding down their consciences which God had rendered by His teaching much more tender than the consciences of those about them. I said before that if you turn aside from God’s words by a hair’s breadth you know not where it will end. The rail diverges but a little where the switches are turned, but before long the branch line is miles away from the main track. Backslide a little and you are on the way to utter apostasy. The mother of mischief is small as a gnat’s egg, hatch it and you shall see an evil bird larger than an ostrich. The least wrong has in it an all but infinity of evil. You cannot say to sin, “Up to here shall you go, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed.” Like the sea when the dyke is broken, it stretches forth its hand to grasp all the surrounding country. The beginning of sin is like the beginning of strife, and that is said to be as the letting out of water, no man knows what a flood may come when once the banks are burst. So Israel went aside farther and farther from God because they regarded not their way, and did not in all things obey the Lord.

But then comes in a truth which, though it may seem black in the telling, is bright in the essence of it. God did not leave His people without chastisement. Had He left them alone, to be given up to their idols, their case would have been hopeless. For mercy’s sake they must be punished for their transgression, but this was a gracious punishment, that they might not lie and wallow in their transgression and become altogether like the swinish nations that surrounded them. God began to punish them by their own sin. He suffered the Canaanite nations to grow strong, so that they grievously oppressed Israel. He put the Israelites under the yoke of those nations which they ought to have utterly destroyed. If they would not be conquerors they would be conquered. If they would not lead captivity captive, they should be led captives themselves. The Lord laid His blows upon them thick and heavy. But, before He did this, He sent a messenger to rebuke them. It is always the Lord’s way to give space for repentance before He executes vengeance. The axes which were carried before the Roman magistrates by the lictors were bound up in bundles of rods. It is said that when a prisoner was before the magistrate, the lictor began to untie the rods and with these the culprit was beaten, meanwhile the judge looked in the prisoner’s face and heard his defense, and if he saw reason for averting the capital sentence because of the repentance which the offender expressed, then he only smote him with the rod, but the axe remained unused. But if, when every rod was taken out, the culprit was still hardened and the crime was a capital one and clearly proven, then the axe was used, and used all the more sternly because space had been given for repentance, and the rods had been used in vain. When the rod is despised, the axe is ready. It is certainly so with God, He waits to be gracious, but when patience cannot hope for penitence, then justice takes her turn, and her stroke is terrible.

The Lord on this occasion commissioned a special messenger to rebuke these people, for He sent an angel. I leave it to your own judgments to discover who this angel was, if it is discoverable. It may have

been an ordinary angel, but I think it must have been *the* angel of the Lord. He is so styled in the fourth verse, and besides, He uses language which an ordinary angel could not have used. He begins, "I made you go up out of Egypt." Note, He does not say that the Lord said this or that, but the angel Himself says it—"I made you go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers." Who could this have been, then, but that covenant angel who, on other occasions, appeared to holy men, and who on this occasion preached a sermon to the assembled multitude at Shiloh? My brethren, you know that our Lord was here among men many a time before He came in mortal flesh to suffer and to die. He was here "rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and His delights were with the sons of men." He was with Abraham under the tree, with Jacob at Jabbok, with Joshua by the walls of Jericho, with Gideon at the threshing floor, and with the three holy children in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace. Not in such a body as God had prepared for Him when He took upon Himself the form of a servant, but in such a form and fashion as seemed most congruous to His divine majesty, and to the circumstances of those He visited. This angel of the divine covenant, whom we delight in, came and spoke to this people. Such is the judgment of many who have thought most upon it, but I leave it to you to decide. At any rate, it must have been grand hearing to hear an angel preach, and grander hearing still, to hear *the* angel of the covenant plead with the covenanted ones. Oh, what a sermon! What a sermon it must have been! Scarcely was such a preacher seen on earth. And yet that sermon did not do as much good as when the seafaring man, Peter, preached at Pentecost. The sermon at Bochim, if I were to sum up its results, ended in disappointment. When our adorable Christ Himself preached to the men of Nazareth, they would have cast Him headlong from the brow of the hill, so that all His eloquent words had fallen upon dead ears, and no good result had come even from *His* instruction. Be not disappointed, servant of God, if sometimes you seem to fail. Do not say, "I will give it up." Your bread has been cast upon the waters. Wait a while, for after many days you may find it. If Israel is not gathered, God will reward you for your toil. It is yours to labor, it is God's to give the results, and He does not always grant pleasing results to us at once. He did not allot great triumphs to this angel of the Lord, as we shall have to show you. It was a great congregation. It was a great preacher, and it was a great sermon, and yet there was not a great ingathering. Read the sermon through and note that though it is a short one, it is all the greater for its brevity. Sermons may grow little by being long, and a sermon may be great through being short, if it is big with thought as this angelic sermon was.

He began first by telling them what *mercies they had received*. Read the chapter. "I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers." Brethren, this subject should most readily lead us to repentance—that God should have dealt so well with us should make us grieve that we have behaved so badly to Him. Do I address a backsliding child of God? I do not think that any exercise is more likely to benefit your heart than to remember what God did for you in years gone by. He took you up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay and set your feet upon a rock. He brought you out from the iron bondage of your despair and gave you liberty. He broke the yoke of sinful habits and the chains of furious passions, and now are you wandering away from Him? Are you making something else to be the god of your spirit? If so, be ashamed of your ingratitude, and let this first head of the angel's discourse have power upon your mind. "You use no other friend so ill," and yet you have not a friend who can be compared with your God. "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice" unto your God, and sin no longer against Him.

Then the angel passed on to mention the *mercies guaranteed to them*, "I said, I will never break My covenant with you." Oh, that is a blessed theme. If indeed you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord has pledged Himself to make you perfect and to bring you home to Himself with exceedingly great joy. You shall not perish. Christ has said, "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them to Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand." You see the two hands—one inside the other and you are in the middle one, enclosed within the palm of omnipotent faithfulness. Jehovah says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." He will never break His covenant with you. Will you wander away from Him who passes by your iniquity, transgression, and sin, and does not let His anger smoke against you forever—He to whom you are joined in an everlasting wedlock which shall never know a divorce? Oh, cruel heart! Cruel heart! Can you offend against such love as this? Can you break with God when He declares that He will never break with you? The angel pleads this longsuffering,

eternally-enduring love, and pleads it well. I know of no two greater arguments than mercy received and mercy promised. Let us not sin against these. May the Holy Spirit hold us fast with these cords of love.

And then the angel came to close grips with them, and said, “You shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; you shall throw down their altars; but you have not obeyed My voice: why have you done this?” *He came to their sin.* He put His finger on their failure, their omission and their commission. He did not flinch from stating to them exactly what their transgression was, nor from demanding, “Why have you done this?” And oh, surely, this shall help to lead us to repentance when God “sets our iniquities before Him; our secret sins in the light of His countenance.” When we see our sin, we ought to be distressed by it and to flee from it, “hot foot,” as men say, and be clean rid of it once and for all. Oh, may the Spirit of God convince any wandering one here of sin, and may he then turn to God with a penitent heart. The angel expostulated in most chosen words, saying, “Why have you done this?” Why have you turned away from God? Why have you let your own enemies multiply upon you? Why have you been disobedient to the command which was given to you so positively? Know you not that he is cursed that does the work of the Lord deceitfully? You have acted disobediently, and you have brought upon yourselves a terrible retribution, but why have you done this? Backslider, are you here tonight? Have you gone aside from church fellowship and left the profession of religion? Why have you done this? Can you mention a reason which will bear the light? We know you cannot. There is no sense in sin, no justification for iniquity. Ungodliness is madness. Irreligion is irrational. Disobedience to God is a breach of every law of common sense and logic. In God’s creation it is unreasonable, unnatural, and monstrous for the creature to rebel against the Creator. Why have you done this? “Turn you, turn you; why will you die, O house of Israel?”

Then the angel completed His discourse by declaring to them that *further chastisements would surely follow.* He was not sent to preach the gospel, and therefore mercy is not His theme. He was sent to preach the law and He did preach it. Listen to the judgment which He denounces—“Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be your ruin”—so some read the passage. It was a just but terrible threat that He thus thundered in their ears. Notice it. They were to be punished by their own sin. The Lord as good as said—“You would not drive them out, and now I will not drive them out. Your negligence and time-serving shall come home to you and place thorns in your suffering flesh. Your omission shall sting you where you will feel it. You have sowed thistles, and thorns shall stuff your pillows.”

Then, next, He tells them how sharp and keen this sin should be to them. “They shall be as thorns in your sides,” pricking you in one of the most tender parts—in the very region of life itself. Wherever you turn, these sins of yours—these enemies that you spared—shall prick you in the side, and their gods shall be your ruin. You dote upon their false deities, and think them your glory, but they shall be your dishonor. The heathen may trust in them, but you shall not be able to do so. They shall be a snare and a mischief to you.

What a sermon that was! As I have said, there was a great occasion, a great congregation, a great preacher, a great sermon, and as far as one could see on the spot, a great movement produced.

Now I want you to notice what looks like a great result, and we shall talk of it under two heads. The people, when they heard this solemn discourse, lifted up their voice and wept, yet they continued as they were. *How hopeful! How disappointing!*

**I.** First, HOW HOPEFUL. One could not desire anything better, apparently, than this. *They were all attentive hearers.* There was not one that looked about him, or that forgot the pointed words that were spoken. They all seemed to open their ears wide, and take in the divine admonition. There they stood before the Lord, all of them amazed and confounded, while the angel delivered His solemn message, and then returned to Him that sent Him. It is a great thing to win people’s attention, and it is not everyone that can do it, for there are congregations that act as if the word had nothing to do with them, leaving the poor preacher to prophesy to dead walls. These Israelites took the warning and drank in the truth. They were attentive hearers, and anybody would have said, “Blessed be God, that sermon has done a great work. Blessed be God for such an attentive congregation. The nails are fastened in a sure place.”

Moreover, *they were very feeling people,* for they felt what they heard. What would you think tonight if the congregation should suddenly cry out? “They lifted up their voice and wept”—wept aloud. Orientals, you know, are generally louder in their demonstrations than we are of a chillier climate, but

still it must have been a solemn sight to notice men and women together, loudly lamenting their transgressions. I have no doubt that many who were there at that time were right with God and said, "What a wonderful opportunity! Glory be to God for such a revival! That one sermon has stirred the people through and through. Thank God that He has sent such a messenger with so fitting a message, and blessed it so, for certainly these people are all converted, otherwise they would not cry out and weep."

*They were all sorrowful hearers* as well as attentive and feeling hearers. Out of the whole company there was not one that laughed, not one that was indifferent, not one who scorned and disregarded the message, but as far as the text goes, the statement is that all unanimously lifted up their voice and wept. Heaviness was upon them. Their souls were exceedingly sorrowful. They expressed their sorrow in a great and bitter cry, and meanwhile their tears flowed abundantly, even as when the rock was smitten in the desert and the waters gushed forth. They were all turned into weepers, and they called the name of that place Bochim, or the place of weepers. You would think, "Surely this is full of promise—every eye is filled with tears as they stand before God." Alas that, such drops did not precede a shower of grace, but passed away as the morning cloud.

Yes, and *they all became professing hearers*, for as soon as ever that service was over they held another, and "They sacrificed unto Jehovah." They avowed themselves to be Jehovah's servants, and they took the sacrifice which He had appointed and offered it for their sin, and outwardly they all of them, became ardent worshippers of the Most High, and true penitents.

Well, dear friends, all this looks very hopeful, because it is what we may expect when God presses home the law upon the consciences of men. When sin is laid before a man, should he not weep? Hope glitters in every tear. Oh, that, men were sane enough to weep for their transgressions! I am wonder that some of you can read your Bibles with dry eyes. Unsaved, and rejecting the Savior, can you read the four evangelists without weeping? That Savior whom the Jews crucified you reject, and so, in fact, you crucify Him too. Can you read the ten commandments without an aching heart? You know that these are ten great pieces of artillery, all aimed at you for your destruction, since you have offended God by the breach of His law. Why, surely, you ought scarcely to sleep at night, lest God's mighty judgment should fall upon your guilty heads while you are asleep. It is not amazing at all that people should cry out and weep. The wonder is that every sanctuary where the law is preached, and where the gospel is preached, should not become a Bochim, or a place of weepers.

Oftentimes this deep emotion does come with true conversion—often, though not always, as I shall have to show you. Men convinced of sin may well weep. I have seen a strong man weep under a sense of his guilt—weep as though the fountains of his eyes would be exhausted, and the eyes themselves would turn to coals of fire. Frequently people are unable to restrain themselves, and break out even in the midst of the congregation, and cry to God for mercy. It is not amazing. It is what we should expect. It is not undesirable, for it is an effect which frequently accompanies real conversion to God. It may well go with sorrow for sin, and sorrow for sin is essential to eternal life. Repentance is an old-fashioned doctrine, which in these days has been despised, but if I stand alone, I will bear testimony for it. They say that repentance is nothing at all—that it is merely, according to the Greek, a change of mind. That shows what little Greek they know. A little of such knowledge is a dangerous thing. It is a pity that they do not learn more. Repentance is a change of mind, but do you say that it is *only* a change of mind? That is a pretty big, "only." A change of mind, a radical change of mind, from the love of sin to the love of holiness, is that a small affair? It is always attended with sorrow and regret for past sin, and if there is a man here who thinks that he will get to heaven by a dry-eyed faith, he will be mistaken. He that never mourned for sin has never rejoiced in the Lord. If I can look back upon my past life of sin and say, "I have no grief over it," why, then I should do the same again if I had the opportunity. And this shows that my heart is as perverse as ever it was, and I am still unregenerate. Dear Mr. Rowland Hill used to say that faith and repentance were his daily companions as long as he lived, and that, if he had any thought of regret at entering heaven, it would be to think that he might have to part with his dear friend Repentance as he went through the gate. Godly sorrow is a blessed grief. Let no man speak evil of it. "Repent, and be converted" is as much the gospel as "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," and it is not to be omitted in our preaching at the hazard of doing damage to men's souls. He who has experienced holy sorrow for sin will continue to feel it. I should wonder if he did not often pull up the sluices and let his soul flow in a flood of loving regret—

*“If tears of sorrow would suffice  
To pay the debt I owe,  
Tears should from both my weeping eyes  
In ceaseless torrents flow.”*

A weeper in that sense, always repenting, is also always growing in grace. So this place Bochim looks extremely hopeful, does it not?

**II.** Now let me turn to the other side, and show you that there was nothing permanently good in Bochim’s sudden water floods. These people were made weepers through hearing the angel’s sermon, but their weeping was VERY DISAPPOINTING. I half suspect that their tears and lamentations were *produced as much by the preacher’s person as by anything else*. It was the angel of the Lord, and who would not be moved at His presence? God gifts certain speakers with the power of moving the natural feelings, and that gift abundantly rested upon the covenant messenger. Some men so preach that it were almost impossible to remain unsoftened. There is pathos about them, or there is an earnestness so intense, so manifest, that for the heart of the hearer to be touched is a natural consequence. Now, I dread lest any of you should be so moved by me when I preach, that your feeling should arise from my tone or mannerism, or because you have affection or esteem for me, for be sure of this, that which comes to you from a man will come to an end before long. A temporary cause cannot produce an everlasting change. “You must be born again;” not of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but by the Spirit of God. Everything about the preacher’s choice words, or musical tone, though proper enough as an accessory, if it becomes the principle and the power that moves you, will end in failure. That which begins with wind will end with whirlwind. That which comes of words will evaporate in words by and by. It may be a great blessing to you to hear a very useful preacher, but if you depend upon him in the least, it will be mischievous to you. Go and hear the gospel from any of my Master’s servants, and never depend in the least upon any one man, whoever he may be. Seek that your repentance may be a repentance which is worked by the Spirit of God in your heart and conscience, for if it is not so, it will one day curdle into greater depravity. Sham religion is an injury rather than a benefit. I suggest to you that you ask your heart many a question, and catechize it after the manner of Beddome’s hymn—

*“Why, O my soul! Why do you weep?  
Tell me from where arise  
Those briny tears that often flow,  
Those groans that pierce the skies.  
Is sin the cause of your complaint,  
Or the chastising rod?  
Do you an evil heart lament,  
And mourn an absent God?  
Lord, let me weep for nothing but sin,  
And after none but Thee.  
And then I would—oh, that I might  
A constant weeper be.”*

Again, I am afraid that the repentance of these people *had a great deal to do with their natural softness*. They were tender and excitable because there was little grit in their nature; their manliness was of a degenerate type. They feared to go to battle for God, they dreaded the noise and the slaughter. They were moreover easily moved by their fellow men, and took shape from those who lived near them. They went to worship Baal because their neighbors said, “Come and worship Baal.” And they worshipped Ashtaroth because their friends said, “Come, let us reverence the goddess.” They were malleable, pliable, and ductile. We have numbers around us of that kind. What shall I call them—men of wax, creatures of India-rubber? They go to be shaped even by your finger, like clay upon the potter’s wheel, not yet hardened in the fire. No one knows what their shape will be when they leave the wheel. Some have been here for many years and have often been moved and molded by the preacher, and yet they are not saved. While stout-hearted rebels have stood in the aisles with half a sneer, and God has brought the hammer down upon their flinty hearts, broken them to pieces and now they are saved by mighty grace and rejoice in the Lord. Some have a natural tenderness which hinders the attainment of spiritual softness. Now, mark you, that which is natural may be used by God, towards that which is spiritual, but still it is not in itself spiritual. All that readiness to cry, all that readiness to receive the word with joy and to

leap at once into faith may be nothing but mental weakness. Some men weep profusely because they have been drunk, and that gives them a drop in their eye, this is a miserable business. I like the strong man who cries within, and is weary of the visible rain showers. I know really tender-hearted men who could not shed a tear for their lives, but feel a far deeper anguish than those whose griefs are shallow and watery. It is very beautiful to talk of the tears streaming down their faces, but many converts have never shed a tear, and perhaps never will. But this does not prove that they are not converted, far from it, the tear is but a natural drop of moisture and soon evaporates. The better thing is the inward torrent of grief within the soul, which leaves an indelible mark within. You know how we sang just now—

*“Tears, though flowing like a river,  
Never can one sin erase;  
Jesus’ tears would not avail you,  
Blood, alone, can meet your case;  
Fly to Jesus!  
Life is found in His embrace.”*

One grain of faith is better than a gallon of tears. A drop of genuine repentance is more precious than a torrent of weeping.

There is another thing about the weeping of these people, and that is, that it was *caused a great deal by threats of punishment*. I am afraid that they did not weep because they sinned, but they wept because God said that He would not drive out any more Canaanites. They wished to conquer more of them—more of the most disreputable sort—but they did not wish to drive them all out. Yet they mourned because those whom they had spared would now get the upper hand of them. The more comfortable sort of Canaanites they were willing to save alive, and when they found that they were to have them for thorns in their sides, then they brought out their handkerchiefs, for there was reason for selfish grief. Yes, and you may preach the fires of hell till men are willing to abandon darling lusts of the more glaring sort. To such we would put searching questions. Is there any holy salt in your tears? Is it sin that you weep for? Is it sin that you repent of? Every murderer repents at the gallows they say, that is, he repents of being hanged, but he does not repent of having killed others. He might do the same thing again if he had the opportunity. We ought clearly to discern between the natural terrors that come of vivid descriptions of the wrath to come and that real spiritual touch of God, the Holy Spirit, which breaks and melts the heart and then casts it into another mold. These people were deceived as to the depth and sincerity of their own feelings. Doubtless they reckoned themselves choice penitents when they were only cowardly tremblers, laboring under impressions which were as useless as they were transient. Their feeling was but as a meteor’s blaze, shedding strong but momentary light—

*“What sadder scenes can angels view  
Than self-deceiving tears?  
They give you hope, a hope untrue,  
Then deepen all your fears.”*

We are quite sure that these people, though they wept, were none the better for it, because if they had been, they would have cried, “Come, brethren, get your swords. Let us go and fight these Hivites and Hittites, and cast down their altars, and sweep away their images and groves.” No, they kept their idle swords in their scabbards, and made treaties with the condemned races. They used not their axes to cut down the false gods, but they said, “Let us have respect to the religion of others. There is no doubt that their idolatry is wrong, in fact, their practices are questionable, and we are very sorry for it, but we need not interfere, nor execute Jehovah’s sentence with a bare literalness.” In addition, they very likely confessed and deplored their own laxity, and went the length of saying, “It is very grievous that we should be so obstinate. It is really a dreadful thing.” I heard one say, “It is an awful thing to be a slave to the wine cup. I wish that I had never tasted it. The first opportunity I get, I will turn over a new leaf.” He did not say what the new leaf would be, but he was going to do any quantity of reforming work. Alas, he never did anything at all, for he was drunk again the next day. A beautiful penitent to look upon, but a wretched hypocrite in due time, for he returned like the dog to his vomit, and the sow which was washed to her wallowing in the mire. If you repent of sin, down with sin! In God’s name, down with sin! When repentance is hearty it is practical. When a man truly turns to God, he turns away from sin. If Satan is effectually driven out of a man, the emancipated one sweeps his house out, and purges himself of the

filth which he formerly harbored, he plucks out right-eye lusts and cuts off right-arm sins, for he feels that he can no longer transgress against his God.

Next, these people had not repented, for they did not bring their children up rightly. The next generation, it is said, knew not the Lord, neither the mighty works of the Lord. That was because their parents did not teach them. Not that parents can teach their children so that they know the Lord in their hearts, but God has so put it—“Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” That is the great general rule of God’s moral government. If parents make known the things of God to their children, it cannot be said that the children do not know the works of God. If parents teach with affectionate earnestness, their children learn at least the letter of the truth. I do not believe in your repentance for sin if you tolerate your child’s living in it. I cannot believe that you know the Lord unless you long for your offspring to know Him. A man says, “Oh, it is an evil thing, but you know, young people will have their own way, and we must not be too strict.” Sorrowfully we do foresee what will become of young people who have parents that do not love them enough to restrain them from doing evil. Well you may weep, for you are murdering the souls of your own flesh and blood. Woe unto you, with all your tears, if you have no regard for your household, and no care to bring up your children in the fear of God.

I know that these people did not repent aright, because they went from bad to worse. They went from weeping before God to worshipping Baal, like some I have heard of who are found crying in the house of God on Sunday night, and are laughing at the theater on Monday night. O base hypocrites! Penitents-at a dance! Broken-hearted sinners on Sunday, crying, “Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners,” and whole-hearted drunkards before the week is up, yelling, “We won’t go home till morning.” Look at the miserable sinners, see what they are at. Are these your weepers, these your men of tender conscience? Their Bochim is all a lie—a mere pretense. The tenderer you are, if afterwards you harden yourselves, so much the greater will be your guilt, and if you humble yourselves before God in mere appearance, so much the more terrible will be your doom if that humbleness departs, and you go back to the sin from which you professed to turn.

I know that these people were not penitents, because God did not take away the chastisement. The punishment which He threatened, He brought upon them. He gave them over to the spoilers and sold them to their enemies. But where there is a hearty repentance of sin, God will never lay punishment on a man. He will forgive him and receive him to His bosom and restore him.

To sum up in a word all that I have said, salvation lies not in feeling, but in believing. Salvation lies not in weeping, but in trusting in Christ. Repentance is not to be measured by outward manifestations of sorrow. The prophet says, “Rend your heart, and not your garments.” Let your hearts be torn away from sin, and from everything that leads to sin, and then shall you weep acceptably before God.

The Lord bless this word to those it is meant for. I do not know who they are, but He does, and may He send His blessing by His Holy Spirit. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JUDGES 2.  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—537, 530, 542.**

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